Delta Independent Science Board

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December 3, 2012

To: Organizers of the Biennial Bay-Delta Science Conference

From: Delta Independent Science Board

Subject: Commendations on the 2012 Conference and Suggestions for Future
Conferences

The Bay-Delta Science Conference is essential for scientists and policymakers working on this important system. Producers and users of Delta science should view participation in this conference as fundamental to their effectiveness and credibility.

We found the 2012 conference at least as informative as most major national and international gatherings. We liked its size and duration, its topical variety and focus, and its opportunities for scientific communication and collaboration. Engagement with the arts community further enriched the program and provided a perspective on the Delta that many of us do not often stop to consider. Those who had attended previous Bay-Delta conferences noted the growth in scientific knowledge and examples of scientific synthesis that are taking place in the Delta research community.

The entire Board was on hand for at least one of the three days, and nearly all of us were there throughout the conference. Nearly every session was attended by at least one Board member. We chose presentations partly for relevance to our current task of reviewing ecosystem restoration in relation to climate change. But we also chose presentations because they were near (or sometimes far) from our individual specialties. Discussions during our post-conference meeting yielded ten suggestions for future conferences:

1. Make the conference integral to the Delta Science Plan now in preparation. The Plan could identify the conference as a unique venue for building a Delta science community that advances the coequal goals through the sharing of information across boundaries between disciplines and affiliations.
2. Increase the percentage of presentations or sessions that address "grand challenges". Presentations in this mode in the 2012 conference included overviews of BDCP, adaptive management, and the historical and potential future Delta. These presentations were well attended and sparked lively discussions, both in the sessions and in the corridors.
3. Begin more sessions with invited talks that introduce the session topic in a comprehensive manner that is understandable to a broad audience. One such talk led off a fish life-cycle session.
4. Include more policy talks in sessions suitable for them, as a way of focusing the science discussions on application of the science.

5. Expand coverage of engineering issues, especially those pertaining to levees and pipelines.
6. Include more coverage of global-scale forcings on the Delta. Examples of talks that addressed this include presentations by Mike Dettinger on atmospheric rivers and Fred Feyrer's presentation about regime shifts in the Pacific Ocean and effects on fish.
7. Offer public sessions of overview talks in the evenings. These might include a virtual field trip through the Delta, using Google Earth, that could be made available online.
8. Consider inviting the local press as well as representatives from high visibility journals such as *Science* and *Nature*.
9. Request that all presenters put their findings in context, in part by requesting each abstract to contain a statement of broad implications for policy or management issues facing the Bay and Delta. Use such a statement as part of the abstract evaluation and session placement process.
10. Experiment with new options for the poster presentations. Some of us recommend increasing the proportion of poster presentations, especially if presenters are allowed to introduce their topics very briefly during related oral sessions.