Delta Stewardship Council

Committed to Achieving the Coequal Goals

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Delta Independent Science Board Member Spotlight

Jeffrey F. Mount, PhD

Jeff Mount, *member of the Delta Independent Science Board, draws on a wealth of scientific knowledge and experience to ensure that the Council uses the "best available science" in the Delta Plan.*

Photo courtesy of the Delta Stewardship Council

Along with being a professor in the Geology Department at UC Davis, Dr. Jeff Mount has also been a member of the Delta Independent Science Board (DISB) since its inception in late 2010. The Delta Reform Act of 2009 required the formation of the DISB. Before that he had been a member and chair of the CALFED Independent Science Board and various other Delta science panels. His service, combined with the academic research he's been conducting in the Delta and Central Valley, the several books and publications he's contributed to and the numerous academic awards and honors he's won, underscores his commitment to the Delta and water issues.

What kind of unique perspective/expertise do you bring to the development of the Delta Plan?

I have been conducting academic research in the Delta and Central Valley for more than 15 years. Nothing beats having that kind of experience when reviewing something like the Delta Plan. There are many physical, biological, political and economic constraints that plans can miss. This is why you have a mix of Delta ISB members, including those with direct experience with the Delta, and those from outside who bring fresh perspectives.

As a geologist who works on rivers, I tend to take the long view on actions that we might pursue in the Delta. It is not enough to resolve the crisis of the day with a quick fix. The Delta is a changing place that will present major

*See **Member Spotlight**, Page 5*

Work sessions provide more input for Delta Plan

Four more work sessions were held during September to assist the Delta Stewardship Council toward the development of the Delta Plan. The topics included success and performance measures, covered actions and governance, the economic sustainability plan, Delta as an evolving place, and the finance portion of the Delta Plan.

> **"We structured [the sessions] around the kinds of issues that have been emerging on the various chapters of the Delta Plan."**
>
> **Keith Coolidge, executive manager for external affairs**

The goal was to take a deeper look at complicated issues while gathering input from a variety of stakeholders.

"We structured [the sessions] around the kinds of issues that have been emerging on the various chapters of the Delta Plan," said Keith Coolidge, the Council's executive manager for external affairs. "The intent was to put people around the table and have a discussion."

Stakeholders were asked to address topics specifically relevant to the fifth staff draft of the Delta Plan. The comments and written responses will be considered along with all other comments in development of the sixth staff draft.

The feedback is expected to be particularly helpful clarifying the issue of covered actions, which has generated a great deal of attention and led to many questions. The Council plans to host another session about covered actions in the near future.

Coolidge says covered actions are specified in the Delta Reform Act and that the Council's and stakeholders' interpretations of the statute have become clearer through the work session. "Early consultations [regarding covered actions] are going to be critical moving forward," he said.

*See **Delta Plan**, Page 6*

Delta Vision doles out grades, urges action in the Delta

As the Delta Plan nears completion, the Delta Vision Foundation urged the Council and other state and federal agencies and stakeholders to move quickly on Delta issues.

That's the message the Delta Vision Foundation conveyed during the presentation of its Report Card to the Delta Stewardship Council during the Council's September meeting.

The Foundation released a report card last June assessing the progress made by 11 state agencies and other entities involved in implementing the actions recommended in the Delta Vision Strategic Plan. Foundation President Sunne McPeak and Executive Director Charles Gardiner offered an overview of the report and its grading scale.

The report card, derived from 35 personal interviews and assessment responses that were sent to more than 1,000 stakeholders, includes recommendations for action and improvement in achieving the coequal goals, namely restoring the Delta ecosystem and ensuring water supply reliability as also defined in the Delta Vision Strategic Plan.

The grade given the Council was a B+, which lauds the Council's transparent communication process but urges it to link performance metrics to the coequal goals.

Organization	Grade	Organization	Grade
Legislature	B+	Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy	B+
Governor's Administration	B+	Delta Protection Commission	B+
Delta Stewardship Council	B+	State Water Resources Control Board	B
Natural Resources Agency	B+	California Water Commission	B
Department of Water Resources	B-	Science Programs	B
Department of Fish and Game	C+		

Courtesy of the Delta Vision Foundation

The Delta Vision Report Card gives the Council a "B+" for its current efforts, the highest mark of any agency rated. Ten other state agencies and organizations received grades, ranging from "B+" to "C+".

*See **Delta Vision**, Page 4*

Commission Discusses Draft Delta Economic Sustainability Plan with Council

Securing the economic health of the Delta is a goal of the Delta Protection Commission's Economic Sustainability Plan (ESP), a document required by the Delta Reform Act of 2009.

At the Delta Stewardship Council's September meeting, Mike Machado, executive director of the Commission, discussed the ESP, which is meant to inform and guide the Council's policies for the economic sustainability of the Delta within the overarching Delta Plan.

> **"We all know what the impact of agriculture is and what it takes to keep it going."**
>
> **Mike Machado, executive director, Delta Planning Commission**

While there is plenty of common ground between the Commission and the Council, Machado shared the Commission's feelings about the complex issues before them.

"How do you fix the Delta without destroying it?" he asked.

Machado then offered a variety of recommendations regarding agriculture, recreation, tourism and infrastructure services including:

- improving the levees;
- maintaining or enhancing the value of Delta agriculture;
- initiating a process to streamline local, state and federal regulations;
- limiting regulation of covered actions;
- creating an agency to build awareness about the region and;
- establishing a Delta Fund to implement recreation and tourism strategies

He noted that the Commission does not recommend building any type of conveyance through the Delta. Nor does it want to see tidal marsh in the South Delta

*See **Sustainability**, Page 6*

State Water Board explains flow criteria and flow objectives

At the request of the Delta Stewardship Council, Les Grober, environmental program manager for the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board), provided a brief presentation on his agency's process to establish Delta flow "criteria" and "objectives" as recommended in the staff draft of the Delta Plan.

The State Board is required to balance competing water needs in a state where water supply can be located hundreds of miles from its heaviest demand. Previous legislation mandated that it fix ailing sewer systems, build new wastewater treatment plants and tackle the cleanup of underground water sources.

The Board also adopts statewide water quality control plans such as the Bay-Delta Plan, which includes objectives for inflows to the Delta from the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers, as well as objectives for Delta outflow. All the while the Board considers a number of factors when developing and implementing flow objectives, such as competing uses for water.

The 2009 Delta Reform Act, however, requires the State Board to now "develop, implement and enforce" flow objectives for the Delta and flow criteria for high priority tributaries in the Delta watershed. Subsequently, a proposed regulation in the fifth staff draft of the Delta Plan calls on the State Board to perform these tasks by 2014 and 2018, respectively, setting a time frame for what the Board is required to do by law.

Grober explained the difference between the flow criteria and flow objectives.

"Flow criteria are just numbers; they have no regulatory basis," he said. "They provide us with a lot of useful information. But in order to become regulatory, they must go through the CEQA [California Environmental Quality Act] process. Flow objectives (on the other hand) require that you analyze more than the hydrograph and fish statistics."

However, according to Grober, developing these objectives will be no small task.

Since November 2009, the State Board has been developing flow criteria for the Delta ecosystem following direction from the aforementioned Delta Reform Act.

*See **Flow Criteria**, Page 7*

DWR updates Council on state's Delta flood emergency plan

By March 2012 a comprehensive flood emergency preparedness plan for the Delta should be complete, says Geoff Shaw of the Department of Water Resources' flood operations branch.

Shaw presented an update on the Delta Flood Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Program at the September meeting of the Delta Stewardship Council. The product of the program will be an emergency plan developed to guide the Department's actions in the event of a Delta flood emergency or levee failure.

"There's no one in this room that doesn't understand that the sooner you are prepared the safer you will be," he told the Council.

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> **Geoff Shaw, DWR**

The development of DWR's emergency plan is important to the Council because the Delta Reform Act of 2009 mandates that it is the policy of the state to "reduce risks to people, property, and state interests in the Delta by effective emergency preparedness, appropriate land uses, and investments in flood protection" (§ 85020g).

DWR's Delta Flood Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery Program consists of three components: development of DWR's Delta response and recovery plan; coordination of DWR's plan with other Delta flood emergency response agencies; and design and implementation of flood emergency response facilities within the Delta.

DWR received $80 million in bond funding for flood emergency preparedness that is used to fund the program. The majority of that funding will be used to build new water-side emergency facilities.

"We have a few stellar locations in mind," Shaw said.

*See **Emergency Plan**, Page 7*

Science Board plays key role in Delta Plan development

The Delta Stewardship Council listens to a great deal of feedback, absorbs input and weighs a variety of recommendations, but science lies at the heart of everything the Council considers.

This is why it's so important for the Council to work closely and effectively with the Delta Independent Science Board (ISB), which is a standing body of nationally and internationally prominent scientists with the expertise to evaluate the broad range of scientific programs that support adaptive management of the Delta.

Delta ISB Meeting update

DATE:	Thursday Oct. 20-Friday Oct. 21
TIME:	9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
LOCATION:	980 Ninth St., second floor Park Tower Conference Room Sacramento CA, 95814

The Delta Reform Act of 2009 established the Board, whose members are appointed by the Council. The Act also created the Council. The Board provides oversight of the scientific research, monitoring and assessment programs that support adaptive management of the Delta through periodic reviews of each of those programs.

At its next meeting Oct. 20-21, the Delta ISB will hear and evaluate preliminary information from a variety of agencies and non-governmental organizations and decide which programs they will review. Once that is decided, the Delta ISB will then develop a schedule.

Information about each of the programs will be organized into the categories of water supply reliability, ecosystem restoration, water quality and reduced risk in the Delta.

Courtesy of the Delta Science Program

The Delta Independent Science Board will hold its next meeting Oct. 20-21 in Sacramento.

***Delta Vision**, Continued from Page 2*

"Everyone across the board is talking about the coequal goals – that is a significant accomplishment," McPeak said. "But we need a Manhattan Project kind of approach to the Delta. We're in a war and we all need to fight together."

Five broad recommendations were also part of the report card asking the Council to:

- Implement near-term actions now
- Improve coordination among agencies and appointed bodies
- Link strategies and actions for workable solutions
- Optimize the value of independent science
- Refine the funding and financing plan

"We want this report card to be a positive force to encourage parties to act. This is not a "gotcha" process," McPeak said. "We hope this helps processes to get to implementation."

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>
> **Sunne McPeak, Delta Vision Foundation president**

Council member Pat Johnston, however, voiced concern about agencies working together, when in some cases they're required to monitor one another.

"This recommendation seems to conflate the [Bay-Delta Conservation Plan] process with the Delta Plan process. We have a statutory responsibility 'not be in the same locker room,'" Johnston said.

Meanwhile, Council member Gloria Gray expressed her gratitude for the report.

"This report card is insightful and frank and should be a wake-up call for leadership in and around our state," Gray said.

"We've had various stakeholders give us grades, too," McPeak joked.

The other agencies receiving grades include the state legislature, the governor's administration and the Natural Resources Agency, among others.

To view the Delta Vision Report Card, click **HERE**.

To learn more about Delta Vision, click **HERE**.

***Member Spotlight**, Continued from Page 1*

challenges over the course of many decades. Ignoring those changes only ensures that they are more costly to deal with in the future. That is why I nag so much about taking future conditions into account when planning.

What is your interest in water policy?

I am a fluvial geomorphologist by trade, but inherently interested in how this work translates into and/or constrains water management policy and on-the-ground actions. It's great to talk about stuff. It's better to actually do stuff.

Explain your desire/willingness to sit on the Delta ISB.

Every scientist interested in policy issues should sit on a board like the Delta ISB. You learn a lot in the process and, done right, it can make a significant difference in outcomes.

What has your experience on the Delta ISB been like to date?

I have enjoyed the interaction with other scientists on the Board, working with Delta Science Program staff, which I admire greatly, and getting to watch the complex management of the Delta evolve over time. That said, I am often frustrated by our failure to use the horsepower of the Delta ISB more fully and effectively. But this is a new day and we are working those kinks out in this new format. I am very optimistic.

What should the public and stakeholders know about the Delta ISB's efforts?

Most people do not understand that the Delta ISB, under the 2009 legislation, is principally a review board. That is, the Delta ISB is supposed to provide assurances that the science used to support decision making is the best available, and to make recommendations where it can be improved. It is not a think tank, nor is it there to settle disputes in the manner of a National Research Council Committee. This is, in effect, an oversight board.

Much of your focus seems to be on seismic matters and levee conditions. What is your perception of the condition of the levees and what does the future hold?

I am perhaps most notorious for sounding the alarm about the aggregate risks associated with the levees and the very high costs associated with mitigating that risk. But most of my work, particularly with my colleagues at UC Davis and the Public Policy Institute of California, has been on how to manage the Delta for a broad range of goals, including water supply reliability and ecosystem improvements. Levees are simply one component of that management since levees define the Delta landscape and control its hydrology...something lost in most debates about the future of the Delta. That said, no amount of wishing it were not true will change a fundamental fact: every review of the Delta levees conducted by independent scientists and engineers from around the world has concluded that the levees are fragile and that conditions are changing in an unfavorable way. We are really only arguing about how fragile and how to prioritize investments.

Who have you worked with in the past? And what have you done for them?

I have helped a number of non-profits and agencies over the years on river management and restoration issues and I currently serve on the Board of Directors of the non-profit American Rivers. I have also served on the State Reclamation Board (precursor to the Central Valley Flood Board), and sat on innumerable review committees.

What are you most passionate about professionally? What most excites you about your work and the contribution you can make?

I genuinely enjoy seeing good quality science translated into actions on the ground. And this applies to all aspects of water management, with my favorite being floodplain restoration, such as those efforts carried out by The Nature Conservancy at the Cosumnes Preserve. Perhaps the most satisfying work in my career, however, has been the association with the faculty at the Center for Watershed Sciences at UC Davis–Jay Lund, Peter Moyle and Richard Howitt in particular–and Ellen Hanak from PPIC. Only once in a career do you get to work with people of that caliber who have such broad, synthetic knowledge. Our most recent effort, "Managing California's Water: From Conflict to Reconciliation," was a lot of work and a lot of fun at the same time. I am very lucky to have stumbled on these folks.

please visit our website
deltacouncil.ca.gov

Sustainability, Continued from Page 2

because that could eliminate a large amount of agricultural land, which is considered the most important enterprise in the Delta.

Machado said 50 percent of jobs in the Delta region are directly connected to farm employment and the multipliers for the industry are considered enormous. For instance, milk is worth $2 billion to the Delta annually, but the dairy products milk yields are worth $12 billion. There are also fears that the businesses that support agriculture will disappear and that mitigating compensation for lands and businesses will be lost.

"We all know what the impact of agriculture is and what it takes to keep it going," Machado said.

The Commission is also concerned that too much land will be dedicated to ecosystem restoration, which it feels will hamper agricultural development in the region.

Council Member Randy Fiorini said dedicating land for restoration is inevitable to meet the requirements of the Delta Reform Act. He felt the Commission's proposal needed to account for that point more effectively.

"The reality is [restoration] will happen. But there needs to be a formula to show [the number of acres] that can be transformed and then develop an economic impact proposal from that."

Council Member Pat Johnston raised the idea that the two different groups may be approaching the situation in two different ways, adding that the Council has one charge and the Commission seems to have another.

"What parts of the report are consistent with the Delta Plan?" he asked. "The prism that the Commission views the coequal goals [of water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration] is a potential impediment to economic activity. It seems that you're looking at this with only one value, economic value."

"The report is not deficient in how we look at coequal goals," Machado responded. "We need to work through acceptance of the recommendations in the Delta Plan. Our concerns are from a local government perspective."

As Chair of the Commission, Council member Don Nottoli noted that "It's an economic plan…but it also focuses on a way of life," he said. "People may say, 'you met the coequal goals and the Delta evolved, but what did it evolve to?'"

The Delta Protection Commission released the latest version of its Economic Sustainability Plan on Oct. 10, 2011.

The Delta Protection Commission does not want tidal marsh in the South Delta, fearing it would eliminate a large amount of agricultural land. The Commission expressed its views during a recent Council meeting where Commission members also explained the recent version of the Economic Sustainability Plan.

To view a draft of the ESP, please click **HERE**.

Delta Plan, Continued from Page 1

"This will help folks really understand early on in the projects what's likely to occur."

Coolidge says Delta residents would also like more of a say in the process.

Work session participants also want to see the development of more immediate goals and more time-based metrics. Coolidge says that often the staff draft of the Plan uses the phrase "progress toward" when describing achievement and measurement. The participants felt that language does not offer a real sense of progress.

Council Member Gloria Gray, who was instrumental in arranging the work sessions, said these exchanges with the public are invaluable in helping the Council and staff create a Delta Plan.

"The line of communication is open," she said. "There is always an opportunity to talk. [The public] has an opportunity to give their perspective."

To view summaries of the work sessions, click **HERE**.

To view the latest staff draft of the Delta Plan, click **HERE**.

To view the draft proposed regulations, click **HERE**.

Emergency Plan, *Continued from Page 3*

DWR is developing new modeling software that will allow it to better analyze a disaster against a set of scenarios resulting in a strategic plan of action.

"With the new modeling concept we can examine thousands of scenarios to develop the best strategies possible," said Shaw. "It'll say, 'here's our plan, here's what it will cost, and here's how long it will take.'"

Council Chair Phil Isenberg asked if there was a plan in place to repair or restore the current Delta export system from effects of a multiple levee failure disaster.

Shaw said the Emergency Program is intended to respond to Delta flood emergencies or levee failures and does not contain details on how to operate or restore the state's water export system.

Joe Grindstaff, the Council's executive officer, urged DWR to consider adding to its Program a section on how to manage and protect the state's water export system in response to massive salinity intrusion caused by a multiple levee failure.

"It's possible that we could have a multiple levee failure," Grindstaff said. "With quick action you could prevent salinity intrusion with coordination from upstream agencies who could release more water into the Delta. You might not have enough time to get an executive order in place that gives the governor the authority to make reservoir releases."

The Department of Water Resources' flood operations branch is developing a program to guide the Department's actions in the event of a Delta emergency or levee failure. DWR presented an update on the program to the Council during a recent meeting.

Flow Criteria, *Continued from Page 3*

The 2014 date is an ambitious timeframe because it requires the State Board to analyze the science for the flow criteria, review the subsequent environmental documentation, adopt the objectives, and hold a water rights proceeding to implement the objectives.

While this can be done concurrently, the State Board would need an augmentation or a redirection of resources to hire more staff and divert its focus primarily to this effort, according to Grober.

To view the State Board's Delta Activities Update, click **HERE**.

To view the current version of the staff draft of the Delta Plan, click **HERE**.

By law, the State Water Resources Control Board will develop and test flow "criteria," which in conjunction with socio-economic and water needs will allow the agency to set flow "objectives" in the Delta. The main difference between these terms is that flow objectives will have regulatory power and thus will have to be more rigorously vetted.