

With respect to a list of science issues relevant to the BDCP, the ISB might see its role as one of providing some definitive observations on the “right” science for each issue. There is a more modest objective that could be useful and more doable, given the time that the ISB has to devote to this task.

This more modest objective would be to provide, for each issue, the following:

1. Points of general agreement among the Bay-Delta science community, with observations, at ISB’s discretion, about the ISB’s concurrence or lack thereof with these points
2. Points of disagreement among the Bay-Delta science community, with observations, at ISB’s discretion, about the ISB’s concurrence or lack thereof with these points
3. Specific reasons (sticking points) for each disagreement, with ISB’s observations, at ISB’s discretion, about the validity of these reasons
4. Important uncertainties about each issue (as opposed to disagreements)
5. Recommendations about near- and longer-term steps (that is, implications for adaptive management) to narrow disagreements and lessen uncertainties.

This objective would obviously require that the ISB solicit opinions from the Bay-Delta science community, and this step, in itself, would be useful in informing the ISB about the science issues and, in the process, getting help in completing the BDCP review. This objective would also provide useful information to the BDCP and other Bay-Delta management processes. Finally, it would relieve the ISB from the more difficult task of attempting to provide definitive scientific judgments on each issue, without removing the opportunity for doing so at the ISB’s discretion.

The ISB could even consider the above steps as fulfilling its obligation to review the BDCP, leaving the determination of the implications of its findings to the BDCP agencies and staff, who are better able to carry out this step. The ISB could also assist in or independently carry out this “implication” step.

The general advantage of this approach is that it lets the ISB do what it is expert at doing, dealing with the relevant science, and does not necessarily impose on the ISB the obligation to deal with the arcane requirements of state and federal environmental laws nor with 20,000 pages of narrative, somewhere in which the relevant science issues and their implications occur (although not in the same location).