



## INFORMATION ITEM

### **2019 Council Accomplishments and Proposed 2020-2021 Priorities**

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**Summary:** At the meeting, Council staff will review 2019 Council accomplishments and provide the 2019 Annual Report. Council staff will also present the proposed 2020-2021 priorities and seek confirmation from Councilmembers.

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#### **Background**

After almost a decade, the Council has made great strides in achieving its mission; however, significant challenges and opportunities for continued progress remain. Furthering the coequal goals is an ongoing, Council-led endeavor that requires leadership on multiple complex issues. Much of our work in 2020-2021 will be completed with local, state, and federal agency partners, through greater levels of collaboration and consensus for decision-making based on the best available science. Core Council functions, including support for the Delta Independent Science Board, support for certification or appeal of covered actions, as well as administrative functions, will continue.

#### **2019 Council Accomplishments**

The beginning of a new year is also an opportunity for reflection on the Council's work. The 2019 Annual Report (**Attachment 2**) is the Council's seventh, since the adoption of the Delta Plan, and provides an overview of the Council's accomplishments and progress over the past year. This progress, together with lessons learned from the five-year review, establishes the foundation upon which the Council's 2020-2021 priorities are built.

#### **Proposed 2020-2021 Priorities**

Last year, at the January 2019 Council meeting, Council staff proposed a workplan that included rulemaking for amendments to Delta Plan, completion of the Delta Science Plan, initiation of the Administrative Performance Measures Dashboard, and continued work on the Ecosystem Amendment and Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Strategy, among other items. Council staff made significant progress on all 2019 priorities, completing major milestones on many projects and making gains on the more complex multi-year projects. The proposed 2020-2021 priorities (see **Attachment 3**) provides additional detail and estimated quarterly timeframes for when the Council is expected to take action on initiatives as well as hear updates and presentations from Council staff and guest presenters.

The proposed 2020-2021 priorities continue to focus on three primary objectives: 1) Strengthen and implement the Delta Plan; 2) Build capacity for One Delta, One Science; and 3) Enhance Council leadership and communications. The following describes priority initiatives for each objective:

## 1) STRENGTHEN AND IMPLEMENT THE DELTA PLAN

Council staff will continue focused efforts and work on amending Delta Plan chapters (described below), as well as improving and strengthening the tracking, reporting, and implementation of the Delta Plan, consistent with the Delta Reform Act and state regulatory requirements.

- **Delta Levees Investment Strategy:** In April 2018, the Council adopted three amendments to the Delta Plan and certified the environmental analysis. The required Administrative Law and Regulatory Rulemaking process is underway, and staff is working with stakeholders to address comments on the regulatory components of the Delta Levees Investment Strategy (DLIS). Additional schedule information will be released in early 2020.
- **Delta Plan Ecosystem Amendment:** The Delta Plan acknowledges that achieving a healthy Delta ecosystem requires a comprehensive restoration approach (single blueprint) beyond mitigation for the continued operation of the state and federal water projects. This will include strategies for restoring specific areas and ecological functions for native species, consideration of changes that have occurred in the past, current land and water uses, and the future impacts of climate change and other factors. Through a public process that began in October 2017, the Council will continue to work with partner agencies, stakeholders, and the public to amend Chapter 4 of the Delta Plan, including the completion of required environmental review, adoption, and rulemaking into 2021.
- **Delta Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Strategy:** Best available science continues to improve our understanding of the effects of climate change on the environment. Staff will continue to work with stakeholders, Federal, state, and local government agencies on a Delta climate change vulnerability assessment to deepen our understanding of how climate change and sea-level rise will impact the Delta. The first phase of the project, the vulnerability assessment, will be discussed at Council meetings in spring 2020, and the second phase, the adaptation strategy, will be developed after the completion of the vulnerability assessment.
- **Implementation of the Delta Plan 5-year Review Report:** In 2019 the Council completed the first-ever mandated review of the Delta Plan. In the final report, the Council identified general recommendations and topics of emerging interest. Many of the general recommendations will be implemented by staff, but the Council will have an opportunity to weigh in on administrative procedures, staff engagement in reduced reliance, and on two whitepapers related to Delta as a Place, disadvantaged communities, and environmental justice. Staff will continue to provide updates to the Council on overall progress in the implementation of the report's recommendations.

## 2) BUILD CAPACITY FOR ONE DELTA, ONE SCIENCE

Council staff will continue building capacity in the Delta-wide science community by initiating the review and update of the Science Action Agenda, convening workshops

and forums to advance understanding of funding and management needs, and further scientific understanding of the Delta through funding critical science investigations.

- **Science Action Agenda (2022-2025):** The Science Action Agenda is a critical component of the Delta Science Strategy and identifies a shared set of science actions to guide priorities in science investments across the Delta in support of statewide management needs. The current Science Action Agenda should be implemented over 2017-2021. Council staff will begin the effort to update the Science Action Agenda through an extensive outreach process, beginning in late 2020, with the target of publishing an updated Science Action Agenda in late 2021.
- **Science Funding and Governance Initiative Recommendations:** Over the past two years, Council staff has been working closely with Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) members, stakeholders, and the Delta Independent Science Board to develop a set of recommendations and actions for increasing science funding. In 2019, these recommendations and actions were presented and endorsed by DPIIC. Those recommendations and related actions include: implementing common accounting and reporting protocols for science funding, the development and completion of a critical review of science funding, updating the Science Action Agenda, identifying Delta-wide and issue-specific management questions, and facilitating a science needs assessment workshop. These recommendations will be carried out over 2020-2021 – with the science needs assessment workshop planned for early 2020.
- **Implementation of the Delta Science Plan:** In 2019, the Delta Science Program completed a comprehensive review and update of the Delta Science Plan. Implementation of the Delta Science Plan will be a continuous and ongoing effort involving multiple agencies and collaborative science organizations. New actions for implementation in the 2019 update include: the formation of an independent Social Science Task Force (Task Force), evaluating and improving monitoring coordination, expanding science synthesis efforts, and developing science implementation plans. The Delta Science Program began implementation of the Task Force, establishing the process in 2019, and charging them to develop a strategy for strengthening and integrating social sciences into the science, management, and policy landscape of the Delta. The Task Force released a draft Strategy report in December 2019. Following public review the report will be finalized for implementation in early 2020. The Delta Independent Science Board is near completion of a review of the Delta Monitoring Enterprise. Various efforts associated with the Interagency Ecological Program (e.g. the Invasive Aquatic Vegetation synthesis) and the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (e.g. the Delta Smelt Science Plan) have been addressing synthesis and collaborative science implementation plan actions. The State of the Bay-Delta Science will release its third edition in 2021, with leadership from the Delta Science Program. The Delta Science Program will continue leading implementation of actions to grow the capacity of the collaborative modeling community, and will highlight progress at a full-day workshop in early 2020 for the Integrated Modeling Steering Committee.

- **Funding for Critical Science Investigations:** In FY 2018-2019, the Council, along with partners at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the US Bureau of Reclamation, issued a competitive solicitation that resulted in the award of \$16.9 million in funding. Building on this major accomplishment, the Council will continue to work with partners to leverage funding sources, provide grant administration, and issue a second competitive solicitation in the near future. In 2020, the Council will complete review of applications and be asked to approve over \$1 million in awards for Delta Science Fellowships, which fund graduate students and post-docs to complete research in the Delta. The Council will also consider funding over \$1 million in research to support additional multi-year investigations for Operation Baseline, an initiative to understand the ecological effects of imminent upgrades to the Sacramento Regional Sanitation District's Wastewater Treatment Plant.

### 3) ENHANCE COUNCIL LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNICATIONS

Council staff will continue to further the role and mission of the Council through the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC), and completion of a public participation plan and communications strategy to foster inclusive and open engagement in Delta stewardship.

- **Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee:** Established by law, the DPIIC serves as a forum to discuss, consider, and orchestrate the timely implementation of actions identified in the Delta Plan and supporting Delta Science Plan. This multi-agency effort provides leadership and accountability, highlighting where agency alignment and action can have the greatest positive impact. Meetings will focus on ecosystem restoration, science support for decision-making, science funding and governance, and climate change, among other topics.
- **Communications Strategy and Public Participation Plan:** Given the complexity and breadth of issues covered by the Delta Plan, the Council plays an important role as a translator of policy and scientific information. Based on input from councilmembers at two retreats in 2019, and an in-depth messaging and branding analysis, the Communications Strategy will lay out a path forward for the Council to enhance its public messaging and profile. The draft strategy will be discussed with the Council in early 2020. The Public Participation Plan will outline how the Council will continue to ensure it has a process where all viewpoints are heard and that decisions made by the Council are publicly accessible and transparent. The plan will also establish public engagement best practices for the Council, its staff, and the public. The plan will be brought to the Council for approval in early 2020.
- **Other Activities:** Staff will also engage in other activities that advance the Delta Plan, as time and resources allow. Emerging opportunities or circumstances may necessitate responses by the Council that could shift emphases. As Council staff track other activities that affect the Delta, we will alert the Council to actions that may significantly affect Delta Plan implementation, so that priorities can be adjusted as necessary and desired by the Council. In addition, Council staff will host a wide range of workshops, symposia, and brown bags throughout the year.

Major events are shown in the milestone schedule, although additional events will occur throughout the time period.

### **Core Functions**

In addition to the priorities, Council staff will continue to perform the core functions that support Delta Plan and Delta Science Plan implementation. In addition to carrying out the core functions of the Delta Science Program and Planning Division, staff will provide support for core administrative functions such as procurement, contracting, accounting, operations and management, and human resources development. In addition, staff will ensure that the Council is kept apprised of other activities that would impact the Council's work, such as major covered actions and significant legislative and policy initiatives at state and federal levels.

- **Delta Plan Performance Measure Tracking and Reporting:** Staff tracks and reports on administrative performance measures, funding, programs, and related activities in the Delta to inform the success of Delta Plan policies and recommendations. The Council provides several public-facing database systems to track Delta Plan implementation and will further incorporate best practices for environmental data management in 2020. In addition, the Delta Plan identifies output and outcome performance measures to track the impacts and effects of the Delta Plan. These indicators rely heavily on quantifiable targets and data analysis from partner agencies. In 2020, staff will develop management plans for the performance measures to formalize the process for reviewing, updating, and communicating user-friendly information.
- **Regulatory Role and Covered Actions:** Staff supports Delta Plan consistency certification of covered actions through early consultation, science support, comments on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documents, training for agencies and stakeholders, and maintenance of the online certification system. Depending on project proponent timeframes, additional covered actions or appeals may appear before the Council in 2020.
- **Adaptive Management:** Staff provides adaptive management services to support covered actions in the certification process, and provides resources, advice, and technical support through the Interagency Adaptive Management Team (IAMIT). In addition, Council staff supports the Independent Science Board in their efforts to review adaptive management programs in the Delta and provides advice to the Council on a wide range of issues.
- **Independent Scientific Peer Review, Advice, and Synthesis:** The 2019 Delta Science Plan emphasizes the importance of independent scientific peer review for increasing the credibility of scientific information for decision-making and determining best available science, as required by statute. Independent scientific advice is analogous to peer review and uses outside experts to provide guidance at key points in project planning, implementation, or evaluation. The Delta Science Program will continue to provide peer review, advice, and synthesis services to support state and federal agencies' Delta decision-making.
- **Ongoing Agency and Science Communications:** Staff will provide meeting support, the development of an annual report, publications, video blogs, factsheets, website updates, and presentations; as well as science

communications support for seminars, brown bags, symposia, and workshops that serve the entire Delta science community. The Bay-Delta Science Conference is the major scientific conference for the estuary with over 1,000 attendees, and the 11<sup>th</sup> biennial conference is scheduled for spring 2021. Staff will also continue to support meetings of the Council, the Delta ISB, and DPIIC; including logistics, preparing reports and briefing panels, and post-meeting follow-up. (See Attachment 3 for additional information.)

- **Other Activities:** Staff will also engage in other activities that advance the Delta Plan, as time and resources allow. Emerging opportunities or circumstances may necessitate responses by the Council that could shift emphases. As Council staff track other activities that affect the Delta, we will alert the Council to actions that may significantly affect Delta Plan implementation, so that priorities can be adjusted as necessary and desired by the Council.

### **Fiscal Information**

The proposed 2020-2021 priorities are within the Council's existing budget for FY 19/20, FY 20/21, and FY 21/22, including additional positions and funding pending approval of the FY 20/21 budget. Where necessary, Council staff will contract with outside experts and consultants to assist on work products.

### **List of Attachments**

Attachment 1: Council Priorities 2020-2021 Memo

Attachment 2: 2019 Annual Report (provided at the Council Meeting)

Attachment 3: Proposed 2020-2021 Milestone Schedule

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