

INFORMATION ITEM

Delta Stewardship Council Fellows Presentations

Summary: Current California Sea Grant and CivicSpark Fellows (Fellows) serving at the Council will provide brief presentations on their work and how it relates to the Delta Plan.

BACKGROUND

Since 2013, the Council has hosted numerous Fellows to foster the development of future leaders in environmental science and policymaking. These Fellows are recent post-graduates that are interested in exploring a career path in the public sector. Fellows gain valuable experience by working with Council staff to support high priority tasks for a year.

The Council's Fellows are selected and matched to the Council through agreements with two existing year-long Fellowship programs: California Sea Grant's State Fellows Program and the CivicSpark Fellow Program. The California Sea Grant State Fellows Program places Fellows in municipal, state, and federal agencies in California with a marine resource focus. CivicSpark is a Governor's Initiative AmeriCorps program operated by the Local Government Commission and dedicated to building capacity for local public agencies to address community resilience issues. CivicSpark Fellows are matched with state, local, and community-based organizations, and must serve on a project that benefits at least one local public agency. To date, the Council has hosted 25 State Policy Fellows and 2 CivicSpark Fellows.

TODAY'S PRESENTATIONS

At today's meeting, the Council will hear from four current Fellows; three Sea Grant State Fellows and one CivicSpark Fellow.

Annie Merritt

CivicSpark Climate Fellow
Planning Division

Annie grew up in Oakland, CA, and graduated from the University of California, Davis with a degree in Environmental Science and Management and a minor in Professional Writing. Before joining the Council, Annie interned with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) in Bozeman, MT, researching scientific and policy information relevant to NRDC's large carnivore conservation efforts. Last year, Annie served as a CivicSpark Climate Fellow with the Council, and she is serving a second year to continue supporting Delta Adapts and other Council projects. As a fellow, Annie supports outreach for Delta

Adapts by conducting outreach with community-based organizations that serve vulnerable populations throughout the Delta and Suisun Marsh. To date, Annie and other Council staff have reached out to over 40 community-based organizations. Another significant aspect of Annie's work has been to prepare a climate change vulnerability assessment specific to the City of West Sacramento, as part of her CivicSpark project work supporting a local government agency. As part of this work, Annie used the social vulnerability index prepared for the Delta Adapts vulnerability assessment as a model to create a similar index for the City of West Sacramento. The index is designed to measure communities' sensitivity and adaptive capacity to climate impacts.

Byron Riggins

California Sea Grant State Policy Fellow
Delta Science Program, Collaborative Science and Peer Review Unit

Byron is a native Philadelphian who will complete his master's degree at San Francisco State University (SFSU) this fall. His Master's research centers on investigating the ecological structure and function of *Fucus distichus*—a brown alga native to the west coast of North America and threatened by sea level rise and urbanization. While at SFSU, Byron also interned for the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW). At ELAW, he reviewed free trade agreements and environmental impact assessments for implications on marine resources.

Since joining the Council in March 2020, Byron has led and supported key initiatives for the Council, including: the monthly Lead Scientist's Report for Councilmembers; development of the flagship Science Action Agenda publication; establishment and coordination of the Council's Delta Diversity Team; a science-communication video for National Estuaries Week on the importance of the Bay-Delta ecological connection; and an independent project looking at the implications of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Byron is passionate about intersectional environmentalism, as he recognizes the simultaneous need to protect both the earth and its peoples. What Byron has found particularly rewarding at the Council is being able to collaborate with experts across disciplines, at the nexus of science and management, and on a variety of Delta issues.

Cheryl Patel

California Sea Grant State Policy Fellow
Delta Science Program, Science-Based Adaptive Management Unit

Cheryl completed her Master's degree at San Francisco State University, where her research focused on food web interactions in the Cache Slough Complex and northern Sacramento River. For her thesis, she investigated zooplankton diet using quantitative genetic analysis. Coming from a background of ecological research in the Bay-Delta, she

started her Fellowship ready to experience how such research is used to inform natural resource management agencies.

Due to her background at a zooplankton research laboratory, Cheryl currently supports the Zooplankton Synthesis Work Group. She is helping to organize a public symposium in October about zooplankton ecology and synthesis opportunities using existing data. The work group previously produced an integrated zooplankton dataset to make monitoring data in the Delta more available to users.

Cheryl is also supporting the Science Needs Assessment Workshop (SNAW) and discussion series, and the Delta ISB's Monitoring Enterprise Review (MER). The SNAW seeks to generate productive discussion about long-term planning for the needs of the science enterprise for the next 25-50 years. She is supporting the MER through analyzing responses to questionnaires and the reports that are part of the MER.

Cheryl is also working on a synthesis effort related to habitat restoration projects, in particular on food web dynamics in the context of restoration in the Delta. The effort is "working up" the food web from primary producers to fish and gathering resources to produce a synthesis and annotated library of the scientific literature.

Molly Williams

California Sea Grant State Policy Fellow
Planning Division

Molly comes to the Council with a varied background, having been a teacher and a microbiologist before graduating from the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management in 2019. Following a desire to work in conservation and environmental data science, she moved to Sacramento early this year to start her Fellowship with the Planning & Performance Division. Her main focus has been the Delta Adapts initiative, to which she contributed analyses of storm surge, water supply sensitivity, potential flood risk zones, and visualization of social vulnerability data. In addition, she has participated in early consultation and reviewed sustainable groundwater management plans and their potential impact on the Delta.

FISCAL INFORMATION

Two different contracts fund the Council's Fellows. The California Sea Grant State Policy Fellows are supported by a \$2 million agreement with the University of California, San Diego, that goes through September 2022. The contract also covers the Delta Science Fellows Program (a different type of Fellowship for Delta science researchers). The CivicSpark Fellowship is funded through a \$31,500 contract with the Local Government Commission through June 2021.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

None

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