



**Delta
Stewardship
Council**

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

MEMORANDUM

Date: January 28, 2021
To: Delta Stewardship Councilmembers
From: Jessica R. Pearson, Executive Officer
Subject: 2020 Annual Report and Council Priorities Update

CHAIR

Susan Tatayon

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I am pleased to present the Council's 2020 Annual Report (**Attachment 1**) and accompanying 2020 Priorities matrix (**Attachment 2**) that provides an overview of the Council's accomplishments and progress over the past year. The attached Priorities matrix mirrors a subset of the two-year, 2020-2021 priorities matrix reviewed by the Council in January 2020. This progress will serve as the foundation for the Council's 2021 activities, which will be presented at the February meeting.

As the Council will recall, our focus in 2020 included the continuation of work on major Council commitments, including: our Delta Levees Investment Strategy work, providing statewide guidance on Delta ecosystem resilience and recovery through our Delta Plan Ecosystem Amendment, implementing key aspects of the Delta Science Plan, and developing the first-ever Delta-specific Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Strategy (Delta Adapts).

And while this past year presented a host of unique challenges, I am proud to note that Council staff was able to make progress on each of these major initiatives. Based on input received from councilmembers early last year, Council staff presented a revised draft Delta Plan ecosystem amendment to the Council in May 2020 and is working now to develop a draft environmental document to support that work. After public review and further Council deliberation, we anticipate completing the amendment in mid-2021. Delta Adapts saw extensive stakeholder engagement and interest, resulting in the anticipated release of a draft vulnerability assessment this month, after which we will initiate the development of the adaptation strategy. The Council's Delta Levees Investment Strategy continued to make steady progress with the inclusion of new best available science regarding the condition of Delta levees as part of the Decision Support Tool, and ongoing discussions with partner agencies around potential revisions to associated Delta Plan regulatory language.



To effectively respond to the major challenges facing the Delta, such as rapid climate change, aligning decision-making with science remains imperative. In support of this principle, the Delta Science Program (Science Program) advanced several initiatives in 2020. For instance, in the early part of the year, the Social Science Task Force Report was released, followed by the hiring of a social science extension expert (Dr. Jessica Rudnick) to advance the recommendations in the report and better integrate social science with the natural sciences to support Delta decision-making. Later in the year, the Science Program began developing the 2022-2026 Science Action Agenda, which seeks to identify science activities needed to fill major data gaps and inform management decisions. Through a Council-hosted workshop and multiple surveys, the Science Program developed a list of 75 management questions, which will be prioritized and serve as the basis for the next five years of Delta research. On the funding front, the Science Program released its \$9 million solicitation for research proposals in fall 2020, receiving 134 letters of intent to submit full proposals, totaling nearly \$80 million in demand for research funding.

In a continued effort to strengthen collaboration among the state and federal agencies operating in the Delta, the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC), led by Council Chair Susan Tatayon, held three public meetings in 2020. In a demonstration of the many challenges and opportunities present in the Delta, the meetings covered a wide array of topics, including: the importance of sustained funding for scientific research (Delta Science Funding and Governance Initiative); advancing restoration that focuses more on the health of the whole ecosystem rather than a species-by-species approach (Delta Plan Ecosystem Amendment); and the importance of integrating climate adaptation and resilience efforts into decision-making in the Delta and beyond (Delta Adapts).

During the development of the 2020-2021 Priorities, councilmembers also expressed a desire to strengthen our agency communications and outreach with a specific focus on how the Council's activities are advancing and informing management decisions. To that end, Council staff updated the Council's Communications Strategy to act as an overarching strategic document encompassing the goals and methods of the Council's outreach activities. Among other things, it details the efforts necessary to effectively communicate with the Council's varied audiences through strategic messaging, channels, and materials, followed by a discussion of measuring performance and engaging in meaningful partnerships. In a similar vein, the Council approved the organization's first-ever public participation plan, which underscores the Council's ongoing commitment to meaningful public engagement in its work.

In closing, the substantial progress summarized above results from a dedicated group of policymakers, scientists, planners, engineers, attorneys, communicators, and support staff I



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am proud to work alongside. As we embark on 2021, Council staff remain committed to work that creates a lasting positive impact both in the Delta and throughout California. Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to our discussion on January 28.