



DRAFT

**SUMMARY MAY 23, 2024
DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL MEETING**

For review and adoption by the Council at the June 27, 2024, meeting.

All meeting materials, presentations, and comment letters are available at
<https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/council-meetings>

MEETING SUMMARY

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Julie Lee called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM on May 23, 2024, at the California Natural Resources Building at 715 P. Street, Sacramento, CA 95814.

2. ROLL CALL – ESTABLISH A QUORUM (WATER CODE §85210.5)

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established. The following councilmembers were present and in person: Burgis, Damrell, Miller, Mehranian, Zingale, and Lee.

Councilmember Hueso joined the meeting later, as noted below.

3. Closed Session

The Council may discuss litigation matters pursuant to Government Code §11126(e)(1) and (e)(2)(C).

4. Reconvene Open Session

Chair Lee reconvened the Council Meeting at 10:23 a.m. There was nothing to report out from Closed Session.

Councilmember Hueso joined the meeting during this agenda item.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Gilbert Cosio, River Delta Consulting, commented on the Council's current rulemaking process for the Ecosystem amendment, including the outreach

surrounding the rulemaking process, financial challenges, and the opportunity to comment on the process.

Eric Almas, a Civil Engineer with Kjeldsen, Sinnock & Neudeck, commented on the Council's rulemaking process for the Ecosystem amendment including the financial challenges of Reclamation Districts, the opportunity to comment on the process and the transparency of the process.

Michael Moncrief, with MBK Engineers, speaking on behalf of the California Central Valley Flood Control Association, commented on the Council's current rulemaking process for Ecosystem amendment including Reclamation District funding, and implications of the proposed changes.

Deirdre Des Jardin, California Water Research, commented on technical representation for local equity interests in the Council's processes. She provided comments on water supply reliability recommendations for Delta Adapts and the synthesis process for how task force input was used to create recommended strategies. She included a recommendation aimed at revising Delta water quality standards as an example.

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 00:01:55.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR (ACTION ITEM)

a. Adoption of April 25, 2024, Meeting Summary

b. Consideration and Possible Adoption of Contract Amendment with AECOM to Extend the Performance Period to the Master Contract (Resolution 2024-05)

Chair Lee presented the agenda item for adopting the consent calendar.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment.

Motion (approve the consent calendar): offered by Councilmember Mehranian, seconded by Councilmember Damrell.

Vote: 7/0 - The motion was adopted (Burgis: Aye, Damrell: Aye, Hueso: Aye, Mehranian: Aye, Miller: Aye, Zingale: Aye, Lee: Aye)

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 00:15:02.

7. CHAIR'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Chair Lee shared her experience at the Locke Asian Pacific Spring Festival. She highlighted the Locke Boarding House Museum, the historic gambling hall, and school, as well as the singing and dancing performances. Lee reflected on the modern-day challenges for the town of Locke. Councilmember Burgis reported on her attendance at a lunch with the Metropolitan Water District. Councilmember Mehranian shared that the Metropolitan enjoyed the lunch.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

There was no public comment.

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 00:16:45.

8. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Executive Officer Jessica Pearson began with an update on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' nearly two-decade old policy prohibiting woody vegetation on levees. Council staff recently learned that the U.S Army Corps is considering reversing this policy, which has been in place since 2007. New research has shown that native riparian vegetation can actually strengthen soils that form the levees and protect against erosion while providing critical habitat. The Army Corps is using this new understanding to update its vegetation policy. A public draft "Best Practices for Vegetation on Levees" guidance document is out for public review and comment. You can find this at leveesafety.org; comments are due July 31.

Councilmember Burgis highlighted additional benefits of having vegetation on levees.

Pearson shared that no new covered actions have been filed. Pearson provided an overview of a recent comment letter. On May 20, Council staff submitted a comment letter to the Yuba County Water Agency regarding their Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for the Extension of the Lower Yuba River Accord Water Transfer Program.

Pearson provided an overview of two comment letters sent by Council staff this month. On April 4, Council staff submitted a comment letter to Contra Costa County's Department of Conservation and Development regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the County General Plan and Climate Action Update. On April 19, Council staff submitted a comment letter to the City of Fairfield's Planning Division regarding its Comprehensive General Plan Update, Housing Element Update, and Climate Action Plan Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Pearson welcomed Ruby Kail, a University of San Francisco McCarthy Fellow.

Pearson closed by highlighting the Outreach Highlights Report and Active Projects List included in the Councilmember packets and online.

a. Legal Update

There was no legal update.

b. Legislative Update (Action Item)

Legislative and Policy Advisor, Brandon Chapin, began with an overview and update on the following bills: AB 2614, SB 586, and SB 1139.

Councilmember Mehranian and Chapin discussed how frequently the Water Quality Control Plans from the Water Board are updated.

Chapin closed with a review of Governor Newsom's 2024 May Revise, including an update on the Flood Subventions program and an update on potential bonds.

Councilmember Burgis and Chapin discussed the continuing budget challenges ahead.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

Public Comment

Deirdre Des Jardin, California Water Research, commented on SB 586 and the need for more urgent flood control in West Sacramento and in the Mossdale Tract.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 00:21:50.

9. LEAD SCIENTIST REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Delta Lead Scientist Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers began with an overview of the article highlight for this month.

*“Dry Me a River: Ecological Effects of Drought in the Upper San Francisco Estuary”
Rosemary Hartman, Elizabeth B. Stumpner, David H. Bosworth, Amanda Maguire,
Christina E. Burdi, Interagency Ecological Program Drought Synthesis Team. 2024
San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science 22(1).
<https://www.doi.org/10.15447/sfews.2024v22iss1art5>*

The Interagency Ecological Program (IEP) Drought Synthesis Team published an article in the March 2024 San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science journal entitled “Dry me a River” using a 46-year data set from 1975-2021 to assess impacts of droughts and mechanisms driving the changes. This multi-year analysis of multi-sector effects of drought on the Delta contributes to a key topic in the Delta’s 2022-2026 Science Action Agenda. Dr. Windham-Myers reviewed the different kinds of drought, this paper focused on hydrological drought.

The IEP Drought Synthesis Team created a conceptual model to describe how drought affects the upper SF estuary. The conceptual model suggests that freshwater flow is the key driver of the length of time water remains in a particular location (typically referred to as the water residence time) and other water transport dynamics. During drought, flows are reduced, less water is exchanged between locations and water residence times are longer. Reduced flows in turn affect habitat connectivity, which is crucial to numerous organisms and nutrient exchange between aquatic and terrestrial systems. The majority of food-web responses in the conceptual model could be attributed to the effects of drought on

water movement patterns (through a decrease in water transport rates, an increase in water residence time, or both). Responses may have also been influenced by drought-associated increases in salinity, changes in water quality, or variations in the top-down effects of increased predation and increased grazing rates on phytoplankton and zooplankton. Their models also demonstrated how region-specific responses to drought are important when considering impacts, as the upper SF estuary is a complex and dynamic ecosystem. These analyses contribute a better understanding of how prolonged decreases in freshwater flow during droughts affect the SF estuary's ecosystems. Dr. Windham-Myers shared the importance of this paper and the Delta Science Program's role in the creation of this paper.

Councilmember Burgis and Dr. Windham-Myers discussed whether there was any connection to Harmful Algae Blooms and this work, as well as the long-term climate impacts of drought in the Delta.

Chair Lee and Dr. Winham-Myers discussed the history of the drought records.

Dr. Windham-Myers provided highlights of past and future activities of the Delta Science Program:

- A panel presentation to the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC) to present the Delta Cyanobacteria Harmful Algal Blooms Monitoring Strategy. The final strategy, with incorporated comments, will be coming out this summer.
- The Delta Research Awards, in partnership with the California Sea Grant, released its call for proposals for the 2025 Delta Research Awards.
- The Delta Science Program has completed one review, for the analytical and methods approaches of Reclamation's Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and State Water Project (SWP).

Dr. Windham-Myers highlighted future events and applications upcoming:

- The Delta Science Program and California Sea Grant are excited to announce the 13th round of Delta Science Fellowships, with support for the 2024-2026 academic years.
- The 2024 biennial State of the Estuary Conference, originally planned for March 12-13, has been rescheduled for May 28-29, 2024, in Oakland, CA at the Scottish Rite Center.
- The UC Davis Coastal and Marine Sciences Institute (CMSI) and the Delta Science Program are hosting a one-day symposium exploring food webs research from the San Francisco Estuary to the Pacific Ocean on May 31, 2024.
- The Delta Science Program announced the call for abstracts is now open for the 2024 Bay-Delta Science Conference! This year's theme - "Cultivating Connections in a Dynamically Changing Environment" - recognizes the need for diverse perspectives to confront the multiple challenges in a dynamically changing environment such as the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Dr. Windham-Myers closed with a review of the By the Numbers report.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

Public Comment

Deirdre Des Jardin, California Water Research, commented on new drought research, and building connections in the climate research community.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 00:39:11.

**10. DELTA LEVEES INVESTMENT STRATEGY (DLIS) RISK REDUCTION ANALYSIS
(INFORMATION ITEM)**

Chair Lee introduced Erin Mullin, Supervising Engineer, and Ashok Bathulla, Senior Engineer.

Mullin and Bathulla presented results on the risk reduction analysis developed using data from the Department of Water Resources 2023 Delta Levee Investment Strategy (DLIS) report to the Council. The presentation addressed DLIS background information, the decision support tool (DST), the DWR Report to the Council, and an overview of completed projects from 2019-2023.

Councilmember Burgis and Mullin discussed completed projects, remaining funds, investment prioritization, flooding/drainage in high water events, and clearer language regarding population/property in the report. Vice Chair Miller offered praise on the significance of their work. Mullin offered a point on funding decisions being made before the regulation was in place, and what we are seeing now are legacy decisions—moving forward it will help DWR make more informed decisions.

Councilmember Hueso, Councilmember Burgis, Mullin, and Pearson spoke on levee levels, the historical context of levee decisions, historical flooding, island landscape changes (islands vs. bowl shape landscape), Delta changing from historically dry to presently more wet, island drainage/flooding, widening levees, historical reclamation, and progress in levee and building engineering/science.

Chair Lee closed the discussion with a clarification on the 20 remaining projects that were planned before the DLIS regulation went into effect.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

Public Comment

Deirdre Des Jardin provided comments on the political imbalance towards ecosystem benefits and water supply and the problematic nature of putting water supply and ecosystem enhancement on equal footing with protecting life and property—resulting in vanishing funds for levee upgrades for small Delta communities.

Gilbert Cosio provided comments on the possibility of the Council having a workshop on levees, Delta-specific standard for levees in the joint DWR-U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study Bulletin 192-82, and the need for consistent funding.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 01:05:02.

11. DELTA WATERMASTER UPDATE (INFORMATION ITEM)

Chair Lee introduced Jay Ziegler, Delta Watermaster.

Ziegler provided updates on Enhancing the OpenET Reporting Platform, the 2024 Delta Measurement Experimental Consortium (DMEC) Work Program, the Delta Alternative Compliance Plan (Water reports status as of Jan. 25, 2024), and the State Water Resource Control Board's Workshop on Voluntary Agreements.

Chair Lee thanked Ziegler, echoed his comments on the need for science collaboration, and opened the agenda item up for discussion.

Vice Chair Miller and Ziegler discussed accessible data and the science partnership between the Watermaster office and the Delta Lead Scientist. Councilmember Burgis added a note on how technology and data collection aid in the predictive choices for the future before discussing how differing regions in the Delta address reporting, supply, and diversions with Ziegler.

Chair Lee asked for public comment.

Public Comment

Diedre Des Jardins provided comments on modeling for the Voluntary Agreements being based on 20th-century hydrology, new research showing the hydrology has changed, the gap in peer review regarding climate change, and human beneficial use objectives changing (potential for not being able to be met).

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 01:49:45.

12. PACIFIC FLYWAY CENTER PROJECT PRESENTATION (INFORMATION ITEM)

Chair Lee introduced Eva Bush, an environmental program manager with the Council, and Veronica Cornett, the Pacific Flyway Center Project Manager.

Bush and Cornett presented an update on the progress and status of the Pacific Flyway Center Project. The presentation addressed the project's background, a

development video, a breakdown of phase 1 of the project, acknowledgment of active partners, and an invitation to the Council to visit the worksite.

Councilmember Zingale thanked Cornett and Bush for the update before inquiring about the history of opposition to the project. Councilmember Burgis and Cornett discussed solar/wind power interactions with wildlife and whether there have been any approaches or pressure from those enterprises.

Chair Lee thanked the presenters, acknowledged the invitation, and asked for public comment.

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/3KS7mT0>, minute 02:17:42.

13. PREPARATION FOR NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

The next Council meeting will take place on June 27, please refer to the posted meeting notice 10 days before the meeting for further information or updates.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

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