



ACTION ITEM

Contract with the University of California, Davis to Fund San Francisco Estuary & Watershed Science (SFEWS) Journal Publication

Summary

San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science (SFEWS) is the only open-access journal focused on science for water and ecosystems in the Estuary and its watershed. Staff strongly recommends that the Council support the five-year renewal of the contract with University of California, Davis (UC Davis) to fund the SFEWS publication and outreach.

Requested Action

Approve Resolution #2025-03 authorizing the Executive Officer (or delegee) to enter into a new five-year contract with UC Davis in the total not to exceed amount of \$2,670,752.10 for the continued publication of the SFEWS online journal for a term from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2030.

The Executive Officer has delegated authority up to \$750,000 to enter into contracts and interagency agreements on the Council's behalf. As this contract exceeds that amount, it requires Council authorization.

Background

As identified in the Delta Reform Act, the mission of the Delta Science Program is "to provide the best possible unbiased scientific information to inform water and environmental decisionmaking in the Delta." (Water Code § 85280(b)(4).) The Delta Science Program fulfills this mission, in part, through funding research and facilitating science communication, including the peer-reviewed publication of research findings in SFEWS. SFEWS is the only major regional outlet for peer-reviewed content of recent scientific findings for the Estuary. Numerous SFEWS articles are cited in the influential National Academy of Sciences book, *Sustainable*

Water and Environmental Management in the California Bay-Delta. The relevance of SFEWS to regional policy has grown (Luoma 2020) as evidenced by citations supporting water management regulations (Luoma and Muscatine 2019). The public, state and federal staff and leadership, stakeholders, and university personnel have come to rely on SFEWS as a trusted source of credible, peer reviewed scientific information on the Bay-Delta and as a major outlet for publishing their latest studies and findings. There is no other freely-available, open-access, peer-reviewed journal for readers and authors like SFEWS. This public outlet of Bay-Delta scientific and resource management discussions is critical to advancing our understanding of Bay-Delta management issues.

Since the journal's inception in October 2003, page views and downloads have grown to nearly 20,000 per issue release, up from 800 when the journal was new. SFEWS plans to maintain current publication rates, producing 15–20 research papers per annual volume, while working to increase journal access, improve visual presentations, and expand readership in several ways consistent with rapidly changing technology:

- Publishing conceptual models for key Delta issues (e.g. 2013) and special issues of the State of Bay-Delta Science (SBDS) as in 2016, 2022, and 2024;
- Encouraging grantees and fellowship holders funded by the Council to submit research results to SFEWS;
- Encouraging submission of synthesis papers including summaries of collaborative science symposia which might otherwise go undocumented;
- Discussing the role of peer review in the face of advancing technologies and urgent need to adapt to a rapidly changing world (Luoma, in review);
- Promoting SFEWS through social media outlets and at local conferences and workshops;
- Using new digital tools that allow the scientific and management communities to more widely and reliably find the content that SFEWS publishes.

Fiscal Information

The publication of SFEWS is a shared effort of the Council, UC Davis, the California Digital Library (CDL), and the US Geological Survey (USGS). The Council provides

direct financial contributions, while the CDL, UC Davis, USGS, and others provide in-kind services that represent approximately 33% (\$762,000) of the total costs of publication. In-kind services from the CDL include the journal's electronic publishing platform, direct web access to the journal, and IT support. UC Davis provides an independent, university-based "home" for the journal and manages the SFEWS contract with the Council. The USGS supports computer and IT services for the Editor-in-Chief.

The proposed new contract would be for a total not to exceed amount of \$2,670,752.10 from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2030, or an average of \$534,150 per year. This amount is comparable to the cost of the current contract (\$461,175 per year), with an increase of approximately 15% to cover cost of living increases and to compensate for previous contract under-budgeting for consulting and related services.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: Resolution 2025-03

References

Luoma, S.N., and Muscatine, L.D. Dec 2019. Sixteen Years of San Francisco Estuary & Watershed Science: A Retrospective. *San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science*.

Luoma, S. N. Dec 2020. Signs of optimism beyond 2020. *San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science*.

Luoma, S. N. (in review) Peer review in a rapidly changing world.

Contact

Henry DeBey
Deputy Executive Officer for Science
Email: (916) 213-3525

Steven Culberson
Program Manager III
Email: (916) 893-8679