



INFORMATION ITEM

Lead Scientist Report

Summary

The 13th biennial Bay-Delta Science Conference (BDSC) will take place in Sacramento from September 28–30, 2026. Co-hosted by the Council and U.S. Geological Survey, this is a premier venue for communicating scientific research that informs management of the Bay-Delta. The conference also encourages relationship-building and collective problem-solving between scientists, engineers, resource managers, policymakers, and community partners. This year's theme, "The Opportunity of Change: Building and Being the Future Together," invites attendees to reimagine the role of science and collaboration in envisioning and creating the future. Sessions are intended to showcase the policy and management relevance of scientific research, and cover topics ranging from fishes, to wetland restoration, to harmful algal blooms. The conference also features art exhibits, performances, and posters.

The Bay-Delta Science Conference, September 28–30

Since 2000, the biennial **Bay-Delta Science Conference** (BDSC) has been co-hosted by the Council and the U.S. Geological Survey as a premier forum for presenting scientific research and analyses that inform management of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta). The conference is an important regional venue for communicating scientific findings, advancing interdisciplinary understanding, and synthesizing knowledge relevant to Bay-Delta science and management. However, BDSC is more than that. The conference is also a creative space where scientists, engineers, resource managers, policymakers, and community partners can come together in meaningful dialogue across disciplines and perspectives to build new relationships and engage in innovative problem-solving.

This year's theme is **"The Opportunity of Change: Building and Being the Future Together."** It invites attendees to acknowledge and confront the many ways our world is changing and to reimagine how we can collaborate to build a more connected, resilient, and equitable system. Throughout the conference, participants will be encouraged to consider the role of science and scientists in the future of the Bay-Delta, how individuals and the collective can move beyond silos and embrace diverse voices and ways of knowing, and how change can help us to envision and frame new futures.

The conference takes place **September 28–30** at the **SAFE Credit Union Convention Center** in downtown Sacramento, with a plenary on the first morning followed by concurrent oral sessions running throughout each day. Art exhibits and performances are woven throughout the conference and will be highlighted at an evening poster and art reception on September 28. This year's programming celebrates the interdisciplinary nature of working in the Bay-Delta, showcases the policy and management relevance of scientific research, emphasizes Tribal perspectives and Traditional Knowledge, and highlights youth voices.

The full BDSC program can be viewed here:

<https://www.baydeltascienceconference.com/conference/schedule>. Sessions cover a broad range of topics relevant to Bay-Delta management, including fishes, algal blooms, wetlands restoration, subsidence and greenhouse gas emissions, climate resilience, water allocations, social science, technological advances, and more. To make it easier for attendees to organize their time, sessions are grouped into thematic tracks such as ecology and food webs, water quality, decision science, and managing competing water demands. Council staff are facilitating numerous sessions and presenting on topics such as adaptive management, collaborative modeling, managing subsidence, and the Delta Plan.

New this year, the BDSC planning committee arranged a **pre-conference workshop on how to communicate science to policymakers**. This training was delivered by the California Council on Science and Technology and was free to conference presenters. Building on this, conference organizers curated a Policy & Management Showcase that explicitly bridges the gap between science and decision-making. These sessions are intended for policymakers and anybody interested in learning more about the steps needed to turn science into action.

For more information about BDSC, including the logistics for attending, please see the **conference website**: <https://www.baydeltascienceconference.com/>.

Delta Science Program Activities

US Bureau of Reclamation Peer Review

Earlier in September, the Council's Delta Science Program launched an independent scientific peer review requested by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation on *New Lines of Evidence for Effects on Fish from the Long-Term Operations of the Central Valley Project and State Water Project*. Fish can be carried into water project facilities by diverted water in a process called entrainment. The review panel is currently assessing models, statistical analyses, and literature reviews that aim to better understand the potential harm of water operations on listed fish species. The panel is composed of three subject matter experts: Dr. Nancy Monsen (Nancy E. Monsen Ph.D.), Dr. Erin Bray (San Francisco State University), and Dr. Stephen Brandt (Oregon State University). Interested parties are invited to submit input related to this review. Visit the Delta Science Program peer review website (<https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/delta-science-program/scientific-peer-review>) for more information on submitting public comment, to view the charge to the panel, and to access the final report that is expected to be posted in November.

Research Impact Assessment report released

Since 2010, the Council's Delta Science Program has invested \$43.9 million in 143 scientific research projects to further its mission to provide the best possible unbiased scientific information to inform water and environmental decision-making in the Delta. To highlight the science and management impacts of the funded research, the Delta Science Program developed a robust, research-backed approach for evaluating scientific research impacts. This approach was drawn from the field of Research Impact Assessment. Using this framework, the Delta Science Program collected and analyzed impacts data from the 2019 Delta Research Awards and 2020 Delta Science Fellowships. The findings will be included in the Delta Science Program's inaugural research impact report. The report will present various impact metrics such as publications, media coverage, community engagement, and citations in important regional management documents. One management impact from this cohort of funded research includes a wetlands greenhouse gas tracking

model that will be used by the California Air Resources Control Board. The report will be available on the Delta Science Program's Research Funding and Fellowships website (<https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/delta-science-program/research-funding-and-fellowships>).

COEQWAL launch

COEQWAL, the Collaboratory for Equity in Water Allocation, is a collaborative, community-engaged research project focused on improving water management planning in California. Funded through the University of California Climate Action Initiative, the project brings together researchers, public agencies, Tribes, community groups, water districts, NGOs, and other water users. Together, they are developing accessible data, modeling tools, and water management scenarios that allow people to explore how water could be allocated equitably across California. This is especially important as climate change creates new pressures on the state's interconnected water system and on its different uses by communities, agriculture, ecosystems, and more.

On September 3, 2026, COEQWAL held a public event at the CNRA Headquarters in Sacramento to celebrate the launch of its new web platform. The platform makes COEQWAL's research, water data, modeling, and planning tools more accessible, helping users explore different water management scenarios using a hands-on interactive web tool. More than 100 people from state agencies, universities, Tribal organizations, and community groups gathered in person and online to learn about the project and view the new platform.

Highlights of the event included:

- Opening and closing remarks by Delta Lead Scientist Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers
- An overview of COEQWAL, along with project vision and next steps
- A panel discussion on advancing water and climate solutions, advancing equity, improving technical tools, and navigating regulatory challenges
- An explanation of the University of California Climate Action Initiative, the \$100 million research program that funded the COEQWAL project

The event concluded with a networking reception and an interactive demonstration of COEQWAL's website and tools on large touchscreens.

See the project website to learn more about the COEQWAL project: <https://coeqwal.berkeley.edu/>. Some members of the COEQWAL team have joined with other researchers to work on a new project to engage with Tribes and explore water use and operations in the Delta, which was funded as part of the Council's 2025 Delta Research Awards.

On Your Radar

California Council on Science & Technology and the California Natural Resources Agency present Science Day
October 5–6, Sacramento (CNRA Building)

- Annual event at the California Natural Resources Agency headquarters connecting California scientists with policymakers
- Symposium-style panels, breakouts, and posters aimed at driving science-informed policy solutions
- Council staff have submitted abstracts to present posters on the Delta Science Plan, facilitating independent peer review, and the impact of research funding
- Learn more about the event here: <https://ccst.us/scienceday/>

Resilient California Summit

October 20–22, Sacramento (SAFE Credit Union Convention Center)

- Inaugural summit focused on policies, partnerships, and practices needed to build resilience to climate change in California
- Mix of interactive sessions aimed at sparking collaboration, ideas, and tool sharing
- Council staff are partnering with staff from the Delta Conservancy and Delta Protection Commission to run a session on Delta climate resilience
- Learn more about the summit here: <https://resilientcaliforniasummit.org/>

By the Numbers

Science Program staff will summarize current numbers related to Delta water and environmental management. The summary figures (Attachment 1) will inform the

Council of recent counts, measurements, and monitoring data driving water and environmental management issues.

Fiscal Information

Not applicable.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: By the Numbers

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A recording of the presentation will be available on the Delta Council's YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/@DeltaCouncil>.