

May 28, 2026

Agenda Item: 8, Presentation
Meeting Date: May 28, 2026
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2026 Delta Science Plan

Strengthening Science in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta

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Delta
Science
Program

DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL

Outline

1. Background
2. The 2026 Delta Science Plan
3. Development Process
4. Next Steps

Goal:
Request for
endorsement

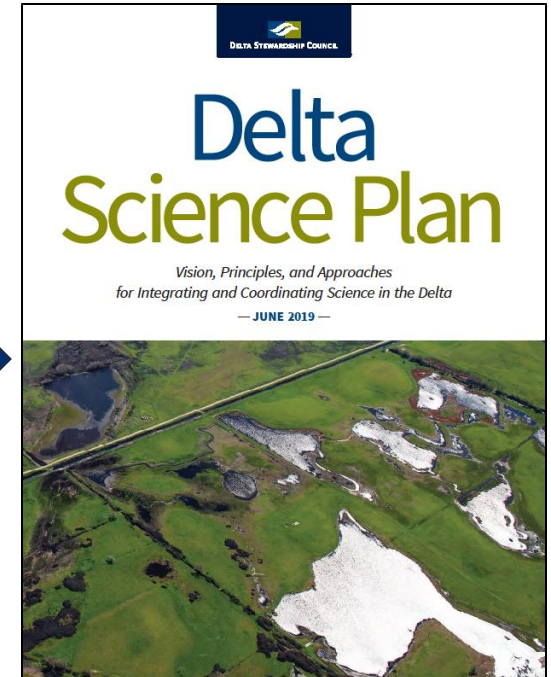
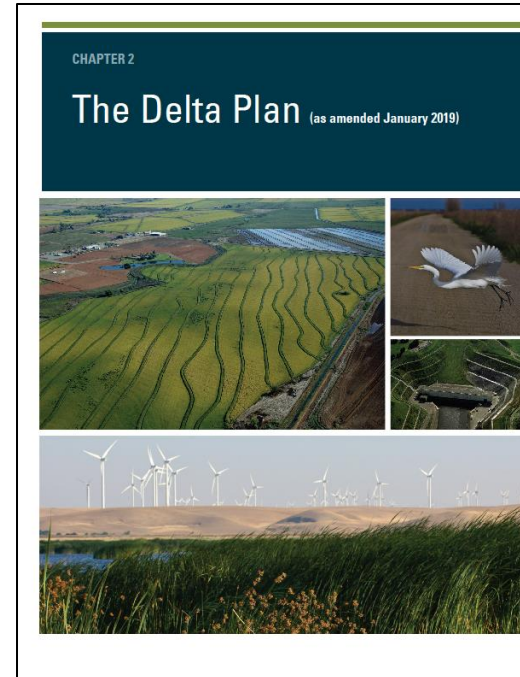


Why do we
need a Delta
Science Plan?

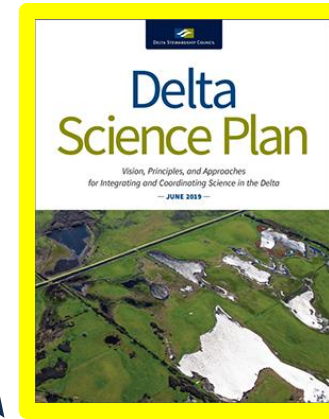
The Delta Plan

Delta Plan Recommendation G R1.
Development of a Delta Science Plan

"a comprehensive science plan that specifies how scientific research, monitoring, analysis, and data management will be coordinated among entities" (The Delta Plan)



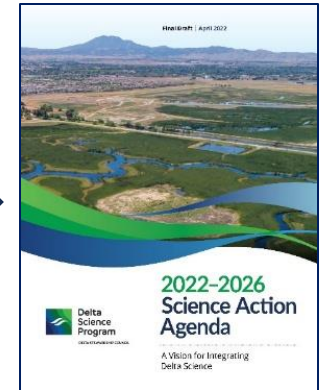
Planning



Delta Science Strategy



Reporting



Focusing



Delta Science Strategy

Establishes the foundation for achieving the vision of **One Delta, One Science** – an open Delta science community that works together to build a common body of scientific knowledge

What is in the Delta Science Plan?

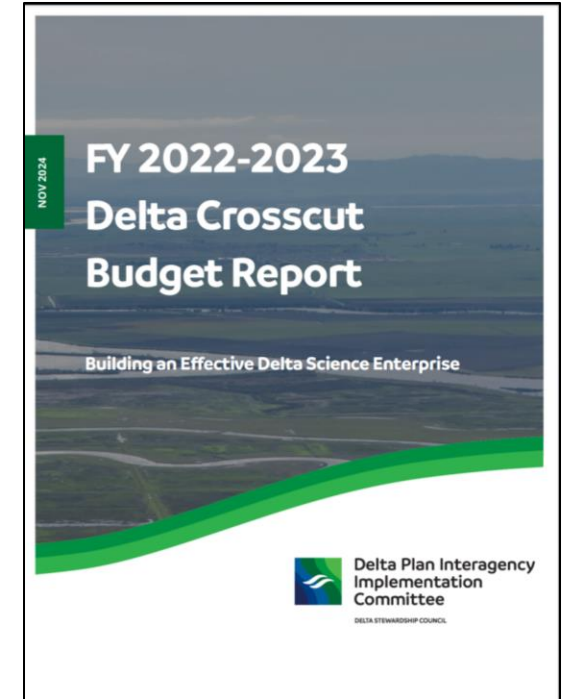
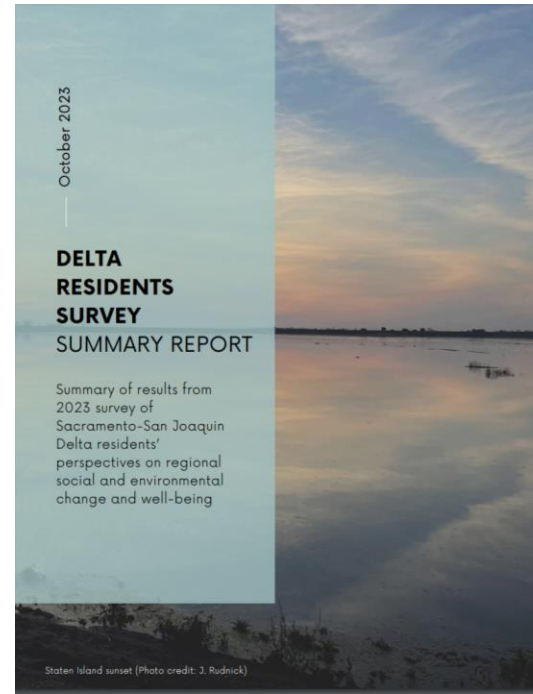
Actions and Resources informed by and created for the greater Delta science community



Delta Science Plan Successes

- Social Science Task Force (2020)
 - Delta Residents Survey (2023)
- First Annual Crosscut Budget (2020)
- Delta Science Tracker released (2023)
- Monitoring and model development

Appendix 1: Implementation successes:
Status of 2019 Delta Science Plan and
relevant outcomes



The 2026 Delta Science Plan

Grand Challenge

1. high impact potential
2. feasible to address

(National Research Council, 2001)

24 actions that collectively strive to tackle four grand challenges to Delta science



1. Scientists and managers must anticipate a world in which environmental conditions and regulations may be fundamentally different from those faced today



2. Environmental change is outpacing the traditional pace of science



3. Flows of scientific information remain decentralized and poorly connected to communities and decision makers



4. Other ways of knowing, including Traditional Knowledge, remain siloed from decision making

Action Highlights



Action 1.2: Support horizon scanning to detect and understand emerging signals



Action 2.5: Utilize mechanisms of sharing information more efficiently and effectively




Action 3.5: Incorporate social science data and disciplines in management decision frameworks



Action 4.4: Build trust through intentional and reciprocal working relationships

Eight Resources provide practical and useful information for the Delta science community

- A. Data governance
- B. Social science
- C. Science communication
- D. Research funding
- E. Conflict of interest
- F. Science governance
- G. Scientific review and scientific advice
- H. Science workshops



Delta
Science Plan
2026

RESOURCE A

Data governance, portals, and online resources

Introduction

This resource provides a basic overview of open data principles and practices that may be useful for anyone working directly or indirectly with scientific data in the Delta. The purpose of the resource is to: 1) provide one possible interpretation of open data and describe a practical approach to the data lifecycle; 2) provide background on the history and evolution of open data in the Delta; and 3) highlight key guiding documents and online resources that are relevant to the Delta science community.

Research and monitoring generate large amounts of data in the Delta, which are used to deliver management-relevant science to decision-makers (Baerwald et al., 2020). But these data are not always collected or formatted in standardized ways that allow them to be combined with other similar data, or they may be difficult to access or understand (Hale et al., 2015). To increase the efficiency of data use and re-use, the Delta science and management community has moved toward an "open data" framework to facilitate collaboration, ensure transparency, and increase the capacity for data synthesis, all of which can help generate new insights on the system and its management (Baerwald et al., 2020).

35

*Mock-up

Development Process



Grand Challenges
Essay released
and presented to
the Council
(Nov 2024)



99 participants over 2 days generated **533 strategies** to address the grand challenges

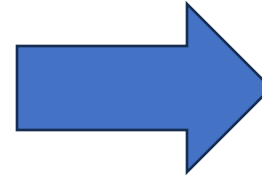
Delta Science Plan Workshop
(Feb 2025)

Grand Challenges Essay released and presented to the Council (Nov 2024)



Delta Science Plan
Workshop
(Feb 2025)

99 participants over 2
days generated **533**
strategies to address
the grand challenges



24 Actions

Grand Challenges
Essay released
and presented to
the Council
(Nov 2024)



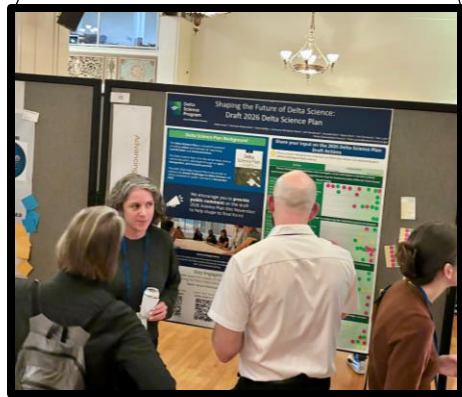


Delta Science Plan
Workshop
(Feb 2025)



Grand Challenges
Essay released
and presented to
the Council
(Nov 2024)

State of the
Estuary Poster
(Oct 2025)

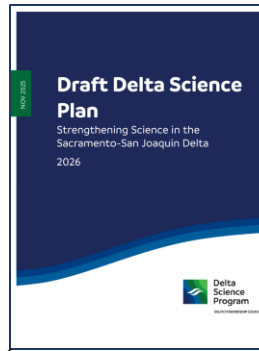


84 Action
rankings

4 comment letters, 22 emails, 15 survey responses, and Delta Independent Science Board review resulted in **>200 individual comments**



Delta Science Plan Workshop (Feb 2025)



Draft 2026 Science Plan released (Nov 2025)

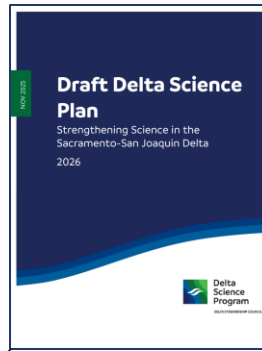


State of the Estuary Poster (Oct 2025)

Grand Challenges Essay released and presented to the Council (Nov 2024)



Delta Science Plan
Workshop
(Feb 2025)

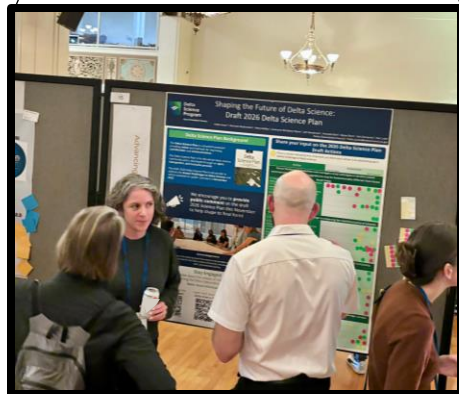


Draft 2026 Science
Plan released
(Nov 2025)

Present to Council
(May 2026)

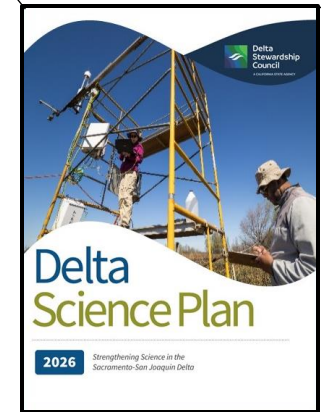
Grand Challenges
Essay released
and presented to
the Council
(Nov 2024)

State of the
Estuary Poster
(Oct 2025)



Interagency
Ecological Program
Workshop
(March 2026)

Final released
(Summer 2026)

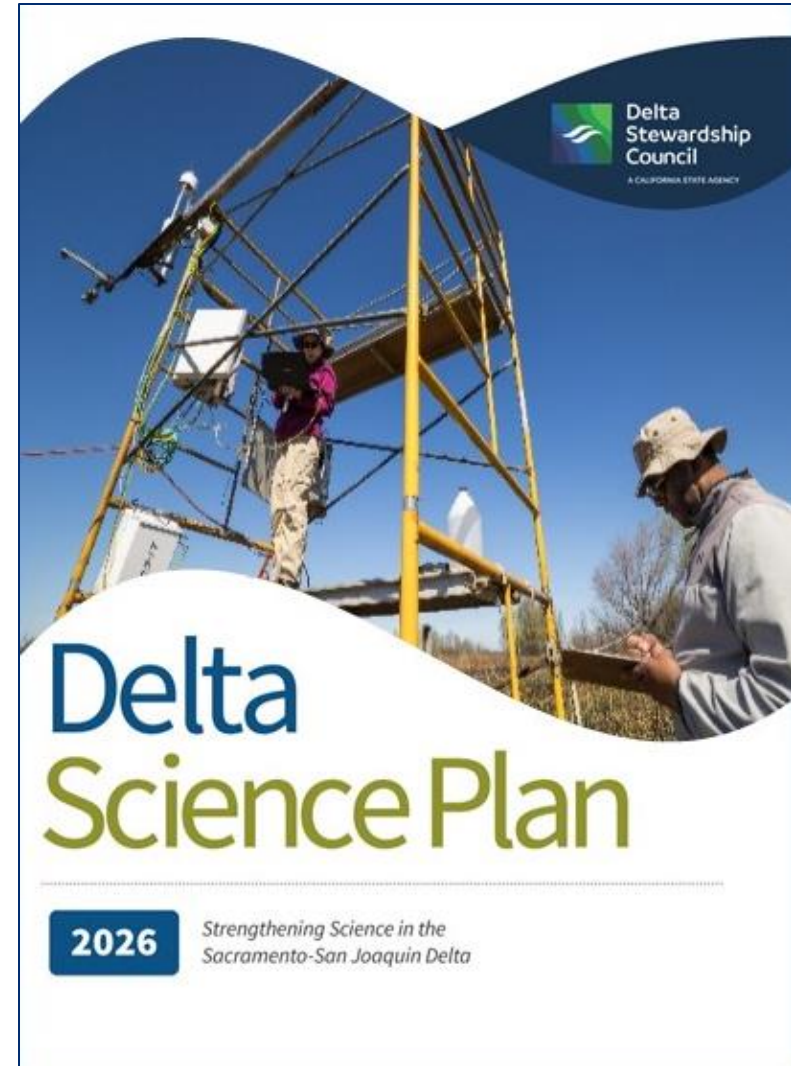


2026 Delta Science Plan

- 4 grand challenges
- 24 Actions
- 8 Resources



Learn more



*Mock-up

Next Steps

Outreach



Tracking

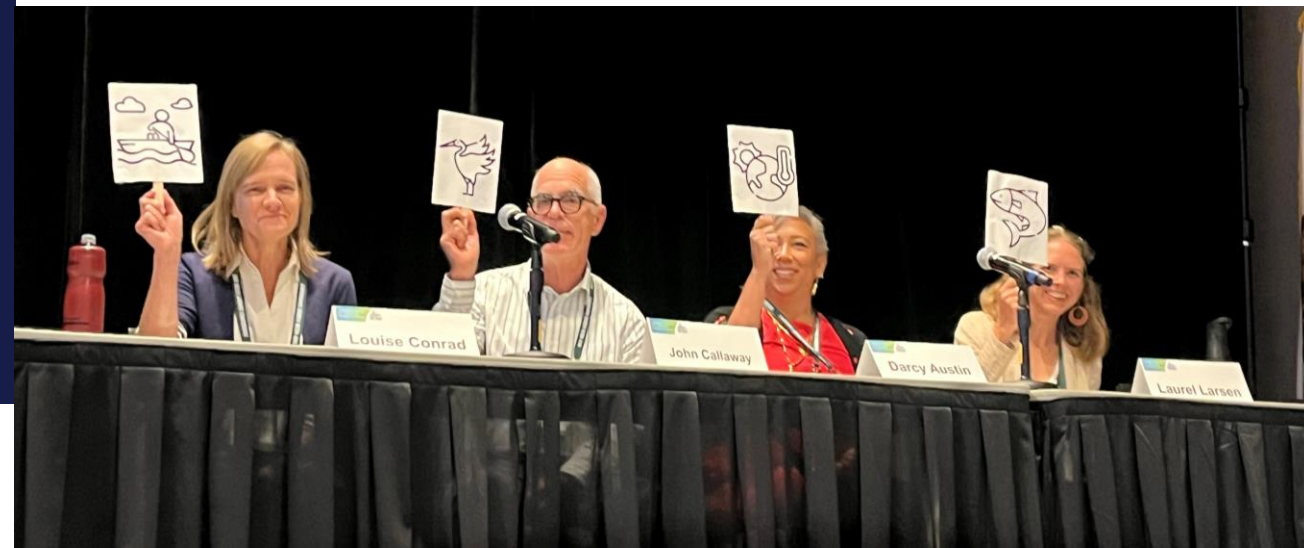
Implementation



Learn more



Bay-Delta Science Conference: 2024 Delta Science Plan Town Hall



Request

Council endorsement of the
draft 2026 Delta Science Plan



Learn more



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Delta Stewardship Council



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Grand Challenge 1: Scientists and managers must anticipate a world in which environmental conditions and regulations may be fundamentally different from those faced today

- **Action 1.1:** Support the ongoing shift from single species to holistic monitoring and management of ecosystems
- **Action 1.2:** Support horizon scanning to detect and understand emerging signals
- **Action 1.3:** Strengthen links between models and data for more streamlined and informed decision-making
- **Action 1.4:** Focus on regional resilience to climate change
- **Action 1.5:** Improve connectivity between executive, management, and staff/scientist levels
- **Action 1.6:** Build stronger science and management goal alignment



Grand Challenge 2: Environmental change is outpacing the traditional pace of science

- **Action 2.1:** Expand support for adaptive management and monitoring to inform decision-making in a changing Delta
- **Action 2.2:** Invest in enhanced tools and expertise in cutting-edge technology to anticipate near-future conditions
- **Action 2.3:** Support scenario-based models that allow us to test management interventions that consider radically different future conditions
- **Action 2.4:** Support actions to cut green tape and streamline decision-making practices
- **Action 2.5:** Utilize mechanisms of sharing information more efficiently and effectively
- **Action 2.6:** Implement more responsive and targeted funding structures



Grand Challenge 3: Flows of scientific information remain decentralized and poorly connected to communities and decision-makers

- **Action 3.1:** Support free and open data
- **Action 3.2:** Support collaborative venues for efficient flow of information
- **Action 3.3:** Increase research coordination at the watershed and estuary scale through systems thinking
- **Action 3.4:** Improve social science literacy
- **Action 3.5:** Incorporate social science data and disciplines in management decision frameworks
- **Action 3.6:** Proactively identify opportunities to leverage independent scientific peer review processes to enhance the rigor, transparency, and credibility of science underpinning management and policy decisions
- **Action 3.7:** Increase funding opportunities and capacity for social science research and collaborations



Grand Challenge 4: Other ways of knowing, especially Traditional Knowledge, remain siloed from decision-making

- **Action 4.1:** Respect tribal data ownership and confidentiality
- **Action 4.2:** Support more co-produced and community-engaged science
- **Action 4.3:** Explore ways to expand funding that supports and engages community and tribal expertise
- **Action 4.4:** Build trust through intentional and reciprocal working relationships
- **Action 4.5:** Embrace more ways of knowing