

Alternative Recommendation Section for the Delta ISB's IEP Review

Delta Independent Science Board
June 4, 2019

Background: On June 14, 2019, the Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB) released a public draft of its review of the Interagency Ecological Program for formal public comments. Below is an alternative section for the “Recommendations” section of the Delta ISB review by Dr. Dick Norgaard for consideration at the Delta ISB’s meeting on July 11, 2019.

Recommendations

Our recommendations fall into three broad categories.

1. IEP funders need to: a) reconsider and recommit to a set of shared goals, or mission, for IEP, b) provide transparent direction and participation toward reaching the goals, c) possibly reorganize IEP appropriately around the goals, and d) commit to steady funding so that IEP as a monitoring and research organization can function effectively.
2. Core monitoring and reporting functions of IEP need to be maintained and enhanced.
3. Science-driven research and improved synthesis need strong support within IEP or through a wholly new venue.

Elaboration

1. **Reconsider and Recommit.** For a variety of reasons – administrative changes, budget uncertainties, stakeholder frustrations with water availability or with Delta protection, the new complications of climate change – IEP funders need to reconsider their shared goals and recommit to IEP. This is a risky, broad, procedural recommendation open to many possible outcomes. The following more specific recommendations may help bring the process to a successful closure.
 - a. Effective interagency programs need clear goals and committed leadership. Periodically, interagency organizations need to rethink and re-formalize their mission. This is especially important in times of social, political, and environmental change.
 - i. The mission of IEP should be determined in the context of related research programs to reduce redundancies and increase complementarities between programs. The findings of the Monitoring Enterprise Review should provide guidance.
 - ii. Agencies that are unable to commit to the shared goals should not be allowed to participate on their own terms. If some agencies are allowed to work within IEP on different terms, this should be explicit and transparent.
 - iii. Simply going through the effort of reconsidering the goals of IEP, even if few changes are made, can strengthen the organization.
 - b. Transparency, from the leadership at the top all the way through the organization, is essential. Existing IEP procedures are currently quite well spelled out but apparently not always well followed. A full commitment to transparency is key.

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- c. It may be appropriate to change the organizational structure in light of the new goals and levels of commitment. Quite different structures, including the possibility of organizing as a Joint Powers Agreement, should be considered to provide greater organizational stability.
 - d. Perhaps a new interagency organization dedicated to regulatory driven monitoring, related research, and data management should be considered, leaving IEP or another venue for research driven by science and environmental change.
 - e. Steady funding, including commitment to long-term funding, early commitment to the funding of new ventures, and the flexibility to fund new projects as new conditions arise, is essential. Steady funding is needed to sustain existing staff, train new staff, invest in new equipment, and maintain facilities.
- 2. Sustain Core Monitoring.** Scientists have been monitoring and cataloguing research data in the Delta for decades. The historical environmental record in the Delta is among the best available anywhere in the world.
- a. Sustaining core monitoring is essential.
 - b. The accessibility of monitoring and other data needs to be improved in order to better capture the value of this asset.
 - c. Monitoring priorities need to be formally reconsidered on regular intervals. Some monitoring can be dropped, and new monitoring efforts to detect new conditions are essential.
 - d. New monitoring technologies need to be adopted. Systematic adoption of improved monitoring technologies into existing programs should be encouraged. Methods should be developed to ensure that the value from the existing long-term datasets is maintained and comparable. A standing committee within IEP should regularly assess new methods, implement these methods when warranted, calibrate existing with new monitoring methods, and sunset methods that are no longer needed.
 - e. Users and uses of IEP data and analyses are poorly documented, which leads to an undervaluation of IEP and its products. IEP should analyze who uses their information, conduct a stakeholder needs assessment, and assess what information is most desired and useful.
- 3. Assure Science-driven Research.** More encouragement and steady financial support for science-driven research in support of adaptive management is needed within IEP or through another venue.