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Prospectus for Assessment of Delta ISB Recommendations

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Background

The 2009 Delta Reform Act (DRA) charged the Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB, board) to provide oversight of the scientific research, monitoring, and assessment programs that support adaptive management of the Delta. The Delta Stewardship Council (Council) appointed the inaugural 10-member board in June 2010, and the board had its first meeting in September 2010. Since then, the board has developed thematic reviews addressing the DRA charge, specific document reviews requested by the Council and others, and written memos to agency heads with calls to action, e.g., regarding integrated modeling and science to address rapid change.

The Delta ISB is approaching its 10-year anniversary in September 2020. The Council in the process of appointing six new members to replace those whose terms will end by August 2020. The timing is appropriate for doing a retrospective assessment of previous reviews and making recommendations for improvements for future reviews.

The Delta ISB performed self-assessments in June 2015 and July 2017 and instituted changes in how it approaches reviews based on the outcomes of those evaluations. In 2015, the board started developing a prospectus describing the approach for each thematic review prior to initiating reviews and invited public comment on the prospectus. In 2017, the board launched the creation of summary sheets for each review to improve communication and outreach.

Purpose of Review

The purpose of the Assessment of Delta ISB Recommendations is to (1) document the evolution of the Delta ISB's approach to planning, implementing, and doing outreach for its thematic and requested reviews, (2) assess impact of Delta ISB reviews, including implementation status of review recommendations, and (3) develop recommendations for assuring relevance and increasing value of current and future Delta ISB recommendations to target audiences.

These recommendations will serve continuing board members as well as new, incoming members who will start their work on the Delta ISB with the benefit of this retrospective assessment of Delta ISB review recommendations.

The expected outcome is that implementation of recommendations identified by this assessment will result in improved processes by the Delta ISB, Delta Science Program (DSP) staff, and Council Executive and Communications staff, which will increase awareness, usability, and use of the Delta ISB reviews by target audiences.

Product and Audiences

The assessment report will have four parts: (1) description of the evolution of Delta ISB review and outreach processes since 2010, including role of DSP staff, (2) table of ISB reviews and recommendations developed between September 2010 and December 2019, along with outreach strategies employed and implementation status, (3) written retrospective account of Delta ISB reviews and recommendations,

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and (4) suggestions for improving preparation, delivery, and outreach for future Delta ISB reviews and recommendations, including roles of DSP and Council staff.

The intended audiences include Delta ISB members (ongoing and new appointees), Delta Stewardship Council and Delta Science Program staff, and target audiences for Delta ISB reviews including State, local and federal agency staff and stakeholders.

Approach

I will document Delta ISB review and outreach processes based on information in the reviews themselves, meeting materials, and personal communication with Delta ISB members and DSP staff familiar with the reviews. I will use the same sources to develop an inventory of Delta ISB review recommendations and specific outreach performed for each review.

Part one of the assessment will be determining which recommendations have been implemented in what way by whom. Finding this information may be challenging. I will start with examples of which I am already aware, primarily those implemented by the Council or DSP. I will seek other examples through online citation searches, along with personal communication with DSP and Council staff and Delta ISB members.

Part two of the assessment will be getting qualitative feedback from target audiences on the value of Delta ISB reviews, along with suggestions for improvement. This will be an additional opportunity to learn about examples of implementation of Delta ISB review recommendations. Since this effort will likely be time intensive, I will solicit recommendations from Delta ISB on which three or four reviews to focus.

I plan to do the qualitative assessment through a combination of surveys, individual or group interviews, outreach at collaborative science and other venues such as the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team, Interagency Ecological Program Science Management and/or Coordinators Team(s), Delta Agency Science Workgroup, Delta Protection Advisory Committee, and/or panels at Delta ISB or Council meetings.

I will collate and synthesize the information into the Assessment Report.

Schedule

The current schedule is to discuss the prospectus at the March 20, 2020 Delta ISB teleconference and receive feedback on the scope and approach as well as which reviews to target for the more detailed qualitative assessment. I plan to have a draft Assessment Report available for discussion at the August 13-14, 2020 Delta ISB in-person meeting, which is expected to be a joint meeting of current and new Delta ISB members. In addition, Delta ISB chair Liz Canuel will be seeking two to three Delta ISB members to provide me with input on the assessment as it proceeds.