



ACTION ITEM

Consideration and Possible Appointment of Delta Lead Scientist

Summary

Pursuant to California Water Code section 85280(b), the Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program (Delta Lead Scientist) is appointed by the Delta Stewardship Council after consultation with the Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB). The current Delta Lead Scientist will leave on November 30, 2023, prior to the expiration of her second term. The Council has multiple near-term efforts and priorities that will require participation by the Delta Lead Scientist. The Council, in partnership with the United States Geological Survey, has identified a potential candidate to serve as the Delta Lead Scientist while the recruitment process takes place. Delta ISB Chair Dr. Lisa Wainger will present the Delta ISB's recommendation of Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers. The Council will discuss the recommendation and consider the appointment of Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers to serve as Delta Lead Scientist until the recruitment process is complete.

Requested Action

The Delta Stewardship Council is asked to consider adopting Resolution 2023-08 (Attachment 1) for the appointment of Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers for the position of Delta Lead Scientist while the recruitment for the position is completed. The Delta ISB supports the appointment and has determined that Dr. Windham-Myers meets the qualifications in the Delta Reform Act (Wat. Code, § 85280(b)). If appointed, Dr. Windham-Myers' term will begin on December 1, 2023, and will conclude June 30, 2024, unless extended by the Council. This appointment does not preclude Dr. Windham-Myers from participating in the recruitment process. The Council, at its discretion, may extend her term up to three years pursuant to the Delta Reform Act (Wat. Code, § 85280(b)(2)).

Background

The Delta Stewardship Council in partnership with the United States Geological Survey is in the process of recruiting a Delta Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program. The recruitment process is expected to be completed in summer 2024. Pursuant to California Water Code Section 85280(b), the Delta Lead Scientist is appointed by the Delta Stewardship Council after consultation with the Delta ISB.

Pursuant to California Water Code Section 85280 (b)(3), the Delta Lead Scientist

“shall oversee the implementation of the Delta Science Program.” The mission of the Delta Science Program is to provide the best possible unbiased scientific information to inform water and environmental decision making in the Delta. That mission shall be carried out through funding research, synthesizing and communicating scientific information to policymakers and decision makers, promoting independent scientific peer review, and coordinating with Delta agencies to promote science-based adaptive management (California Water Code Section 85280(b)(4)).

In August 2023, Dr. Laurel Larsen, the current Delta Lead Scientist, announced that she is leaving her post on November 30, 2023 -- seven months prior to the end of her current term. Dr. Larsen’s early departure has created a need to fill the position prior to the completion of the current recruitment process to ensure continuous science leadership for the Council and its Delta Science Program. The Council has several significant, near-term, priority efforts underway that demand the leadership of the Delta Lead Scientist, and which are expected to take place in early to mid-2024 before the recruitment/hiring process is completed.

The Nominee

In its support letter (Attachment 2), the Delta ISB has determined that Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers meets the qualifications for the Delta Lead Scientist position, as specified in the Delta Reform Act (Wat. Code, § 85280(b)):

- a) Hold an advanced degree in a field related to water or ecosystem management.
- b) Have a strong record of scientific research and publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals in a field related to water or ecosystem management.

- c) Have experience advising high-level managers in science-based decision making in the areas of water management and ecosystem restoration.
- d) Have the capability to guide the application of an adaptive management process to resource management policy decisions in the Delta.

Dr. Windham-Myers is a systems ecologist with the United States Geological Survey. She received her Ph.D. from Rutgers University in Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources and was a university professor before joining the United States Geological Survey. Her research examines processes at the interface of land and aquatic systems, including water flow, storage and quality at landscape scales. She also examines fine scale processes in sediment and in this biogeochemistry work she has studied extensively the conditions in wetlands and estuaries that sequester and release greenhouse gases, and control methylmercury dynamics. She has authored or coauthored over 100 peer reviewed papers, has represented the US on an international panel on blue carbon, and has led or served on many US workgroups developing and synthesizing evidence on effective carbon sequestration actions. Additional information on her qualifications can be found in Attachment 3.

Based on her qualifications and the support of the Delta ISB, the Delta ISB recommends that the Council consider the appointment of Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers for the position of Delta Lead Scientist and adopt Resolution 23-08 (Attachment 1) appointing Dr. Windham-Myers as the Delta Lead Scientist for a term to begin on December 1, 2023 and to conclude on June 30, 2024, unless extended by the Council.

Fiscal Information

The United States Geological Survey funds the Delta Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: Resolution 23-08

Attachment 2: Delta Lead Scientist Appointment Recommendation from the Delta Independent Science Board

Attachment 3: Curriculum Vitae of Dr. Lisamarie Windham-Myers

Contact

Lisa Wainger, Ph.D.

Chair, Delta Independent Science Board

Phone: (916) 902-6571