

ACTION ITEM

**Consideration of Contract with U.C. San Diego/California Sea Grant for
2017 Class of Delta Science Fellows**

Summary: Since 2003, the Delta Stewardship Council and its predecessor agencies have funded a Delta Science Fellows Program in collaboration with U.C. San Diego and California Sea Grant. During this time, more than \$10 million has been invested in more than 80 Science Fellows to conduct research on high-impact issues related to the Bay-Delta estuary. This request seeks authorization for the Executive Officer to enter into a new contract with U.C. San Diego/California Sea Grant to continue research under the Delta Science Fellows program.

Requested Action

Contingent upon Legislative approval of the Council's proposed Fiscal Year 2016-17 budget, authorize the Executive Officer to enter into a new three-year contract with U.C. San Diego/California Sea Grant to provide \$1,525,927 to support a new class of Science Fellows to conduct research on high priority research topics.

Background

As identified in the Delta Reform Act, the mission of the Council's Delta Science Program is "to provide the best possible scientific information for water and environmental decision making in the Bay-Delta system." We do this in part by initiating, evaluating, and funding research to fill critical gaps in our understanding of the current and changing Bay-Delta system.

Since 2003, the Council's Delta Science Program has partnered with U.C. San Diego/California Sea Grant to fund Policy Fellows who work in the Council's offices in support of the Council's high priority tasks, and Science Fellows who conduct research on high priority issues identified in the Delta Plan, by the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee (DPIIC), and by other stakeholders (see Table 1).

Table 1. Delta Science and Policy Fellows

Class	Funding Source	Amount	Fellow Type (Science/Policy)	Council Action Approval Date
2004 - 2011	Proposition 50	\$7.58M	Science	CALFED Approval
2012	Proposition 50	\$1.8M	Science and Policy	Nov. 18, 2011
2013				
2015	General Fund	\$1.996M	Science and Policy	July 23, 2015
2017	General Fund	\$1.5M	Science	April 28, 2016 (Pending)

California Sea Grant is one of 33 state programs funded by the National Sea Grant College Program as part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Matching funds come from state agencies (such as the Council) and private sources. California Sea Grant is administered by the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at U.C. San Diego.

This program pairs the next generation of Delta scientists with agency and academic mentors to conduct research targeting high priority Delta issues. To date we have invested more than \$10 million in nearly 80 graduate and postdoctoral research fellows who have worked on Delta-related projects. This research often complements and enhances other research projects supported by the Council and other agencies and institutions and has become integral to implementation of the Interim Science Action Agenda and associated High-Impact Science Actions (HISA).

The HISA reflects a consensus among the 17 State and federal agency directors on DPIIC about the most-pressing near-term research needs for the Delta. These include the endangered Delta smelt, food webs and the benefits of restoring shallow water ecosystems, management goals and strategies for controlling aquatic invasive species, and advancing the use of emerging technologies, such as remote sensing in Delta monitoring.

Class of 2013

The Fellows funded as part of the Class of 2013 are finishing their research, with the final work to be achieved by July 31. The results and associated management implications are detailed on Attachment 1. Highlights include:

- A new model that can be used to predict river temperatures and their response to stream flow management (e.g., evaluate the effectiveness of flow releases in modifying high water temperatures).
- Airborne imaging that can help inform management and policy development by facilitating the detection and sources of pollution thereby providing data to help assess the impacts of wetland restoration and climate change.
- Assess synergies between the development of waterfowl habitat and the needs of the salt marsh harvest mouse (federally and State listed as endangered).

Class of 2015

At the Council's March 2016 meeting, Lead Scientist Dr. Cliff Dahm discussed the program with the Council, highlighting awards to the 10 pre- and post-doctoral researchers chosen to be the 2015 class of Delta Science Fellows through funding approved by the Council in July 2015. Attachment 2 provides information about the recipients, their respective research topics, and how their research relates to HISA. Research was funded under all four priorities including: 1) assessing the effects of drought on the Delta; 2) effectiveness and implications of habitat restoration actions; 3)

developing decision support tools for management of estuarine and migratory species; and 4) science supporting the enhancement and protection of the cultural, recreational, natural resource, and agricultural values of the Delta. These contracts will expire in 2018.

Overall FY 16/17 Funding for Science Investigations and Science Fellowships

The Science Fellows are a key mechanism for implementing several actions identified in the Delta Science Plan. Fellows are selected through a competitive solicitation process, with resulting proposals undergoing the Delta Science Program's rigorous review and selection process administered by California Sea Grant. A key selection criterion is whether the proposal addresses one of the four topics identified under the HISA.

Of the anticipated \$4.95 million General Fund resources for critical science investigations proposed in the Governor's budget for FY 2016/17, \$1,525,927 is dedicated to the 2017 Delta Science Fellows Program.

Contract with U.C. San Diego/California Sea Grant

Staff is seeking approval for the Executive Officer to enter into a new 3-year contract with U.C. San Diego/California Sea Grant for \$1,525,927 to fund approximately six new Science Fellows, with each fellowship lasting for two years.

The term of the contract will be from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2019. More information on the Delta Science Fellows program is available on the Council's website at: <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/science-program/delta-science-fellows-program>. Attachment 3 shows how funds are expected to be expended over the fiscal years.

The Executive Officer has delegated authority up to \$500,000 to enter into contracts and interagency agreements on the Council's behalf. Because this contract would exceed that amount, it requires Council authorization.

Fiscal Information

Funding for this request is included in the Council's base budget and is contingent upon Legislative approval of the Governor's proposed FY 16/17 budget.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: 2013 Class of Science Fellows
Attachment 2: 2015 Class of Science Fellows
Attachment 3: Budget

Contact

Marina Brand
Program Manager

Phone: (916) 445-5031