



DRAFT

**SUMMARY: May 25, 2023
DELTA STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL MEETING**

For review and adoption by the Council at the June 22, 2023, meeting.

All meeting materials, presentations, and comment letters are available at <https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/council-meetings>

MEETING SUMMARY

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Virginia Madueño called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM on May 25, 2023.

2. ROLL CALL – ESTABLISH A QUORUM (WATER CODE §85210.5)

Roll call was taken, and a quorum was established. The following councilmembers were present: Burgis, Damrell, Hueso, Lee, Mehranian, Zingale, and Madueño.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. CONSENT CALENDAR (ACTION ITEM)

a. Adoption of April 27, 2023, Meeting Summary

Chair Madueño presented the agenda item for adopting April 27, 2023, meeting summary. Councilmember Mehranian recused herself from the vote due to her absence at the previous meeting.

Motion: (approve the consent calendar) offered by Councilmember Lee, seconded by Councilmember Burgis.

Vote: 6/0 - The motion was adopted (Burgis: Aye, Damrell: Aye, Hueso: Aye, Lee: Aye, Zingale: Aye, Madueño: Aye)

There was no public comment.

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/42GMHYs>, minute 00:02:25.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Chair Madueño commented on her attendance at the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) meeting along with Executive Officer Jessica Pearson.

Chair Madueño followed with a summary of the Delta Science Program's 2023 Adaptive Management Forum. She thanked Councilmember Burgis for her keynote address at the event, and thanked Council staff for their hard work.

Chair Madueño gave an overview of a Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant tour she recently attended, highlighting the Echowater Project, the second largest public works project in the country, based in Elk Grove. She attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony with Executive Officer Jessica Pearson.

Chair Madueño next spoke about the opportunity to attend the Water Education of Latino Leaders' (WELL) graduation of this year's class of fellows. WELL is an organization that trains local Latino elected officials about California water policy.

Chair Madueño closed by welcoming Councilmember Mehranian back to the Council. Councilmember Mehranian thanked Chair Madueño and expressed her gratitude and excitement to be back on the Council.

There was no public comment.

The agenda item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/42GMHYs>, minute 00:03:36.

6. EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Executive Officer Jessica Pearson congratulated Councilmember Mehranian on her appointment to the Council.

Pearson highlighted her attendance at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Echowater Project (Project), an expansion of Sacramento's wastewater treatment plant, the Regional San. The Project upgrade stems from a state water quality mandate in 2010 that set new treatment standards for Regional San—among the

toughest standards of any facility nationwide. The central goal of the Echowater project is the Biological Nutrient Removal project which is now operational. This feature virtually eliminates ammonia from the wastewater before it is discharged upstream of the Delta. The Delta Stewardship Council became involved in this project in 2017 and 2020. The Council funded a suite of research projects to develop tools and collect data prior to the plant upgrades – a research program called Operation Baseline. These investments yielded extensive mapping surveys done by the U.S. Geological Survey, which give a detailed snapshot of the whole Delta. The data from Operation Baseline is an important part of how we can determine and understand changes to the Delta downstream of the Echowater project over time. Pearson noted there is a blog post forthcoming in June about this project.

There were no covered action certifications, or comment letters submitted this month.

Pearson welcomed and introduced Emma Askea, the new Public Participation Liaison and Council Clerk, and Gabriella Chen, an intern with Arizona State University's Sacramento Scholars program.

a. Legal Update

No legal update.

b. Legislative Update (Action Item)

Legislative and Policy Advisor Brandon Chapin provided a legislative update to the Council. He began with an overview of the Delta Reform Act Refinement Trailer Bill.

Chapin next reported on Governor Newsom's infrastructure proposals. Including an Executive Order that created an Infrastructure Strike Team (Strike Team) to streamline infrastructure projects throughout the state. Additionally, the Infrastructure Bill introduced California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) judicial streamlining, extending a 270-day limit on litigation challenges currently in place for economic development projects to infrastructure-related projects. Chapin outlined water projects currently listed in the bill that could qualify for this exemption including the Delta Conveyance project, water storage projects under Proposition

One, water recycling projects, desalinization projects, and canal and conveyance maintenance projects.

Councilmember Mehranian asked if there was a body that qualifies a project to be exempt, pertaining to the 270-day litigation exemption, what criteria qualify a project to be exempt, and if there was a prioritized list of these exempt projects. Chapin offered to provide a more thorough answer after further review of the bill, and outlined the list of water projects listed in the bill were specifically named as projects that could be streamlined.

Pearson and Chapin discussed the Executive Order, which created the Strike Team. Chapin stated that the composition of that team would include most of the Secretaries in the Governor's cabinet, the Office of Planning and Research, and a few other representatives. He mentioned that this team could be responsible for deciding which projects might be eligible for the CEQA litigation exemption. Chief Counsel Jorge Aguilar provided a brief overview of the Strike Team.

Chapin followed with a report on the Governor's 2023-24 May Revise Budget proposal, highlighting the projected deficit increase and an upcoming proposed climate bond, as well as \$40 Million in funding for the San Joaquin floodplain. Councilmember Hueso provided additional context concerning the deficit, stating that there is a large portion of the population of California that is part of a tax deferral, causing additional funds to come into the state in October when that portion of the California population will pay their taxes. Chapin stated that the legislature will have until June 15 to pass this budget. The trailer bills will also go through the same process as the budget, with anticipated approval on or around June 15.

Councilmembers Burgis and Hueso discussed the federal government's budget process and any implications that may have for the state. Chapin stated that the Governor discussed the federal government's budget during his address and that Chapin would get more detailed information for the Council. Councilmember Mehranian and Chair Madueño asked clarifying questions about the May 2023-24

Budget revise. Chapin confirmed the budget reduction number for the salinity barrier projects and that the San Joaquin floodplain project funding was reinstated.

Executive Fellow Viet Long provided an overview of bills SB 231 and SB 586. Chapin provided an update on bills that did not pass in time for the legislative deadline, including AB 1488 and the salinity barrier bill.

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/42GMHYs> minute 00:17:03.

7. LEAD SCIENTIST REPORT (INFORMATION ITEM)

Dr. Larsen welcomed back Councilmember Mehranian. She then opened with a discussion of the Yolo Bypass and past studies of this floodplain and introduced two recent studies done in the Yolo Bypass funded by the Council.

Floodplain trophic subsidies in a modified river network: managed foodscapes of the future? Anna M. Sturrock, Mollie Ogaz, Kelly Neal, Nicholas J. Corline, Ryan Peek, Dana Myers, Sierra Schlupe, Marissa Levinson, Rachel C. Johnson, and Carson A. Jeffres. *Landscape Ecology* (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10980-022-01526-5>.

In this first study, the investigators sampled zooplankton and the gut content of chinook salmon downstream of the Yolo Bypass and a floodplain that is naturally inundated most years (the Cosumnes River), as well as more distant locations throughout the Delta. They found that salmon stomachs were fuller during wet years and downstream of floodplains when cladocerans, a large body zooplankton, were more abundant and constituted a larger proportion of the fishes' diet. This effect extended downstream to the West Delta and Chipps Island in wet years. The study suggested that floodplain inundation has large-scale benefits for zooplankton populations, food webs, and chinook salmon.

Multiple trophic pathways support fish on floodplains of California's Central Valley
Bobby J. Nakamoto, Carson A. Jeffres, Nicholas J. Corline, Mollie Ogaz, Christina J.

Bradley, Joshua H. Viers, and Marilyn L. Fogel. Journal of Fish Biology (2022).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jfb.15248>.

In this study, the investigators used a relatively new set of methods to trace the original source material (i.e., the material coming from the base of the food web) to tissues within consumers such as salmon, rainbow trout, and American shad. The method identifies the source of amino acids (i.e., components of proteins) within tissues by quantifying carbon isotope “markers” that can be uniquely linked to algae, bacteria, fungi, and plant material through statistical models. Findings indicated that while algae were the dominant food source within the tissues of most consumers, bacteria, fungi, and plant material were the dominant sources for some individuals. Although more work is needed to quantify precisely how inundated floodplains and wetlands enhance native fish abundance, this study was important for demonstrating that detrital supply to food webs is important to account for. Ongoing studies funded through the Delta Science Program’s 2021 Proposal Solicitation Notice are further investigating this issue.

These two studies highlight the potential for the accumulation of multiple benefits for food webs that result from the reconnection of channels to floodplains and wetlands. Councilmember Mehranian and Dr. Larsen discussed the overall conclusion of these studies supporting the hypothesis that managed use of floodplains enhances the Delta food webs.

Dr. Larsen followed with a report of recent Delta Science Program Activities. She summarized her attendance at the Community Surface Dynamics Modeling Systems Workshop in Boulder, Colorado. Dr. Larsen next reported on the May 4 Adaptive Management Forum, which had a thematic focus on governance for adaptive management and was well attended. Dr. Larsen outlined key takeaways from the meeting. An archive of the forum is available at <https://www.youtube.com/@DeltaCouncil/videos>. A detailed report will be provided in a forthcoming Lead Scientist’s report. There will be a second Adaptive Management Forum that will take place on June 27.

Dr. Larsen summarized her attendance at the 2023 California Water and Environmental Modeling Forum (CWEMF) where Program Manager Dylan Stern gave a presentation focused on the Council’s investments in modeling biogeochemistry

and ecological dynamics. Other presentations at CWEMF were relevant to current independent peer review panels facilitated by the Delta Science Program, which Dr. Larsen will report on in more detail at a future Council meeting.

Dr. Larsen highlighted the UC Davis Coastal and Marine Sciences Institute and Delta Science Program Joint Symposium focused on the influence of extreme heat on organisms, communities, and socio-ecological systems. A more detailed report on this meeting next month.

Dr. Larsen updated the Council on the ongoing Decision-Making Under Deep Uncertainty Seminar series. This series began on April 26 with a seminar titled “Navigating Deep Uncertainty: Insights on Climate Resilience Planning”. The next scheduled seminar in the series will take place on June 14 at 1 pm and will feature Robert Lempert, principal researcher at the RAND Corporation and director of the Frederick S. Pardee Center for Longer Range Global Policy and the Future Human Condition, along with Andrew Schwarz, the State Water Project climate action coordinator for the California Department of Water Resources.

Dr. Larsen closed with a brief discussion on the “By the Numbers” report. Councilmember Burgis and Dr. Larsen discussed the relationship between snowpack melt, water temperatures, and algal blooms. Dr. Larsen highlighted a presentation given to the Delta Independent Science Board on early winter flooding in the Delta for the councilmembers to reference, an archive of the presentation can be found here: https://cal-span.org/meeting/disb_20230327/.

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/42GMHYs>, minute 00:44:00.

8. Possible Appointment of the Delta Lead Scientist (Action Item)

Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB) Chair Dr. Lisa Wainger provided an overview of this topic and put forth the Delta ISB recommendation to reappoint Dr. Larsen as Delta Lead Scientist. The Council appoints the Lead Scientist for the Delta Science Program after consultation with the Delta ISB (California Water Code Section

85280(b)). The Delta ISB recommended that the Council reappoint Dr. Laurel Larsen for a second term through June 30, 2024. Councilmember Zingale, Mehranian, Burgis, Damrell, and Chair Madueño shared their support and appreciation of Dr. Larsen's work. Dr. Larsen thanked Council staff for all their support in this work and shared her appreciation of the Councilmembers' comments.

Motion: (Appointment of the Delta Lead Scientist for a second term) offered by Councilmember Zingale, seconded by Councilmember Mehranian.

Vote: 7/0 - The motion was adopted (Burgis: Aye, Damrell: Aye, Hueso: Aye, Lee: Aye, Mehranian: Aye, Zingale: Aye, Madueño: Aye)

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/42GMHYs>, minute 01:11:18.

9. CONSIDERATION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL OF A CONTRACT WITH THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO (UCSD), CALIFORNIA SEA GRANT (SEA GRANT), FOR THE DELTA SCIENCE PROGRAM 2023/2024 DELTA RESEARCH PROPOSAL SOLICITATION (RESOLUTION NO. 2023-04) (ACTION ITEM)

Program Manager Dylan Stern (Delta Science Program) began by congratulating Dr. Larsen on her second appointment as the Delta Lead Scientist and welcoming back Councilmember Mehranian. Senior Environmental Scientist Dr. Jill Harris (Delta Science Program) and Research Coordinator Dr. Lian Guo (Sea Grant) presented with Stern and provided an overview of the 2023/2024 Delta Research Proposal Solicitation, a competitive solicitation for research that advances the understanding and management of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun March system. The contract with UCSD Sea Grant would be for a not to exceed amount of \$7,037,224, with \$6,000,000 of that amount for awards to successful applicants. Stern highlighted that the 2023/2024 Delta Research Proposal Solicitation would not

be possible without partnership with Sea Grant, which has facilitated the previous two Delta Science Program research proposal solicitations in 2018 and 2020.

Dr. Guo provided an overview of the work and programs that Sea Grant supports as well as a history of its work and partnership related to the Delta. Dr. Harris outlined the purpose of this contract, highlighting that the Council would make decisions regarding the solicitation, establish review criteria, and make final award selections. Sea Grant would aid with the implementation of those decisions, including managing the review process and potentially administering resulting awards. Dr. Harris reviewed the new aspects for the 2023/2024 Delta Research Proposal Solicitation, including incorporating the 2022-2026 Science Action Agenda, supporting social science and interdisciplinary projects, and requiring a Letter of Interest from a Delta community partner, resource manager, or decision-maker. Dr. Harris followed with a review of the projected timeline for the research solicitation and the broader impacts that the Delta Science Program is looking to accomplish with this solicitation including robust community engagement elements, positive impacts on vulnerable communities including Environmental Justice communities, and projects with elements of outreach and training.

Councilmember Zingale and Council staff discussed what measures are being taken to diversify the applicant pool and reviewers of the proposals, how the Environmental Justice criteria will be measured for success, as well as a question of the contract value and how that relates to similar proposals in the field. The process and policies in place are aimed at diversifying the applicant and reviewer pool, as well as measures being taken to bring Environmental Justice to each step of this process. Additionally, Council staff provided an overview of the budget, including the projected five-year timeline and tasks associated with administering the awards.

Councilmember Mehranian inquired about, and staff outlined, the outreach strategy in place to distribute information to potential applicants. Staff clarified the social science component in the research solicitation proposal. Councilmember Lee and staff discussed the importance of the work done to administer and track these projects. Chair Madueño expressed appreciation for this meaningful partnership

and the research this proposal would fund and emphasized the value of the questions asked by the Councilmembers.

Motion: (Approve Resolution 2023-04) offered by Councilmember Lee, seconded by Councilmember Damrell.

Vote: 7/0 - The motion was adopted (Burgis: Aye, Damrell: Aye, Hueso: Aye, Lee: Aye, Mehranian: Aye, Zingale: Aye, Madueño: Aye)

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/42GMHYs>, minute 01:22:48.

10. DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES WEST FALSE RIVER DROUGHT SALINITY BARRIER PROJECT UPDATE (INFORMATION ITEM)

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) presented the West False River Drought Salinity Barrier project. Supervising Engineer Robert Trang discussed the need for the project and the efficacy of previous salinity barrier installations. Trang followed with an overview of water quality changes in the central Delta in years of severe drought and outlined the salinity barrier site selection process. He provided an overview of the proposed project spanning from 2025-2034, the objective, and timeline of the project.

Councilmember Lee and DWR staff discussed the salinity barrier as a permanent fixture and the potential negative consequences. DWR staff discussed lessons learned from previous installations, the cost of a permanent structure and effects on harmful algal blooms, aquatic weeds, and changes to fish migration and predation.

Dr. Larsen highlighted a paper published based on studies the Council funded to study the ecological impacts of the drought barrier. Councilmember Burgis

expressed appreciation for this formal process and discussed shortcomings of past barrier installations, and the impact on the area's ability to handle stormwater flows with DWR staff. DWR staff noted the importance of monitoring systems in place to explore the effects more deeply.

Chair Madueño discussed the need for additional modeling and monitoring to explore other options to use instead of the barrier. DWR outlined the more thorough project process with more engagement and research. Dr. Larsen highlighted a collaborative process done in partnership with Council staff, DWR, State Parks, UC Davis, and communities in the area looking at nature-based solutions for this area.

There was no public comment.

The item is viewable on the linked agenda at <https://bit.ly/42GMHYs>, minute 02:53:13.

11. PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

Before adjourning the meeting Chair Madueño highlighted a blog post about what the Council heard during the Tribal listening session last month. "How we can all be Guardians of the Delta" <https://deltacouncil.ca.gov/blogs/how-we-can-all-be-guardians-of-the-delta>.

The next Council meeting will take place on June 22 and 23. Please refer to the posted meeting notice 10 days before the meeting for further information or updates.

The meeting adjourned at 11:59 AM.

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