



**Delta
Stewardship
Council**

A CALIFORNIA STATE AGENCY

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March 23, 2026

To: Mr. Spencer Walden, Acting Manager, Bay-Delta Office

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

From: Julie Lee, Chair - Delta Stewardship Council

Delivered via email: Swalden@usbr.gov

RE: Continuous water quality and flow monitoring network in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and Suisun Marsh

Dear Mr. Walden:

I write to you on behalf of the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) to respectfully request information regarding data from a set of water quality and flow gages located at sites throughout the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers Delta (Delta). Council staff is closely tracking the handover of a long-held monitoring contract for this network of gages from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to D.R. Reed & Associates, awarded in October 2025. As of October 2025, monitoring data is no longer available for 32 of the 38 water quality and flow gages on the USGS [National Water Data for the Nation platform](#).¹ We have recently been made aware that [some data](#) from these gages is available on the California Data Exchange Center (CDEC) as of February 2026. This data transition is of great interest to the Council, given its longstanding collaboration with the USGS and its many

¹ 32 of 38 gages are not publicly reporting data on this platform, while the remaining 6 stations appear to be reporting gage height but not water quality data. This includes Middle River at Middle River, Old River at Mendota, Grant Line, Old River near Byron, Old River near Bacon, Three-mile Slough.

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research and monitoring efforts in the Delta. As the state-appointed stewards of the Delta and a partner of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), we seek to support consistent water quality monitoring, maintain the continuity of long-term datasets, and enhance monitoring efforts across the Delta. The Council would welcome a briefing on the status of this monitoring network that addresses the specific questions detailed in this letter.

About the Council

The Council is an independent state agency established by the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009. This Act charges the Council with furthering California's coequal goals of providing a more reliable water supply for California and protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. The Act further directs us to create and oversee the implementation of the Delta Plan, which serves as the long-term, legally enforceable plan to guide management of Delta water and environmental resources (Water Code sections 85054 and 85059). We are mandated in statute to provide the best possible unbiased scientific information to inform water and environmental decision-making in the Delta, which we accomplish by funding research, synthesizing and communicating scientific information to decision-makers, promoting independent scientific peer review, and coordinating with state and federal agencies to amplify science-based adaptive management (Water Code section 85280(b)(4)). Data reliability is paramount to our mission and the administration of the Delta Plan.

The Importance of Continuous, Long-term Delta Data

As you are aware, data collected through this monitoring program are routinely used by a broad coalition of agencies, management teams, and programs for various purposes. We use data from this network of stations to inform our water quality performance measures in the Delta Plan, which are essential to tracking progress towards the coequal goals. The Council's partners utilize this data to operate the state and federal water projects and meet regulatory requirements for the Delta, including State Water Board Decision 1641. These datasets also provide the scientific basis for flexible adjustments to water management. These datasets are valuable not only for current management but also for the development of predictive tools. The Council's Delta Science Program anticipates leveraging this network in several ongoing interagency modeling initiatives, including predicting harmful algal blooms, managing salinity intrusion, and modeling tidal wetland food

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webs. Through these initiatives, these datasets are essential to continued scientific discovery and our ability to ensure science informs decision-making throughout the Bay-Delta system. This work is especially important as climate change and emerging contaminants pose greater threats to Delta water quality. The Council's statutory duty to advance the coequal goals of a more reliable water supply and enhancing the Delta ecosystem hinges on access to real-time water quality data and flow measurements, which these monitoring stations provide.

The importance of continuous, long-term data streams was emphasized by the Delta Independent Science Board (ISB), which was created by the Delta Reform Act and directed to provide oversight of scientific research, monitoring, and assessment programs that support adaptive management of the Delta. (Water Code section 85280) In 2022, the ISB reviewed [the suite of monitoring activities and programs in the Delta](#), stressing the need for robust data collection and that “monitoring programs should ensure the data produced are accessible and shared with the public and other agencies.” These findings emphasize that accessible data enhances public trust in science and supports better scientific decision-making and adaptive management.

Information of Interest to the Council

The [Performance Work Statement](#) for the aforementioned contract states: “For continuous monitoring stations, data are collected at high temporal resolution (every 15 minutes) across a network of stations...The recipient will provide various modes of data delivery including...real-time posting of in situ field data and timely posting of discrete data to a public repository [e.g., Environmental Data Initiative (EDI), California Data Exchange Center (CDEC)].”

Given these requirements laid out in the Performance Work Statement, we are particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

- Could you clarify the duration of the contract? Are there steps that Reclamation may take to reliably maintain this contract should it change hands again?
- Could you clarify the quality assurance and quality control protocols for data posted on CDEC by the contractor?
- We are aware that the contractor is currently posting [some data](#) for 19 gages, however, the data does not seem to be available for October 2025 through January 2026. Could you identify whether data from this timeframe will be posted retroactively, and when? Will this posted data include all previous water

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quality and flow metrics measured by USGS, or will some metrics remain offline indefinitely?

- Could you clarify how Reclamation intends to maintain the same or better level of data integrity and accessibility previously provided by USGS in administering the network of monitoring stations?

The Council concurs with the Performance Work Statement, which acknowledges the value of this data and its timely posting by stating: “These products provide information for evaluation and understanding of ecosystem responses to management actions in the Bay-Delta.”

Council Collaboration with Reclamation

The Council values its partnership with Reclamation on peer review, science funding, and key initiatives like the Delta Crosscut Budget. This collaboration spans various topics:

- **Scientific peer review:** The Delta Science Program provides unbiased reviews for water and environmental decisions in the Delta, coordinating 11 reviews at Reclamation’s request since 2010. These reviews generated recommendations that improved scientific methods and informed management actions, building stakeholder trust.
- **Funding science:** Partnering with Reclamation, the Delta Science Program has invested over \$20 million in research through contracts and joint proposal solicitations for the Delta Research Awards and the Delta Science Fellows Program since 2018. This partnership promotes co-production of science and informs water and environmental decision-making in the Delta.
- **Tracking science and restoration funding:** The Council collaborates annually with Reclamation through the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee to produce a Delta Crosscut Budget, tracking funding trends across the Bay-Delta system to advance science and restoration progress.

Closing Comments

Thank you for your dedication to Delta science endeavors thus far and your continued strong partnership with us. Given the information outlined in this letter, we would welcome a meeting with you and your staff to better understand Reclamation’s approach to the handoff of this monitoring contract and how we can

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be of support to your efforts. We look forward to further collaboration to ensure that reliable data is publicly accessible for such an important region.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or our Executive Officer, Jessica Pearson, at jessica.pearson@deltacouncil.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

Julie Lee

Julie Lee