



ACTION ITEM

Consideration and Possible Approval of Contract No. DSC261188 with the Regents of the University of California San Diego, California Sea Grant, for the 2028 Class of Delta Science Fellows and 2027/2028/2029 Classes of State Policy Fellows
(Resolution No. 2026-06)

Summary

Council staff recommends that the Council adopt Resolution No. 2026-06 to approve a new contract (DSC261188) with the Regents of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), California Sea Grant, for the 2028 Delta Science Fellows Program and 2027/2028/2029 classes of Delta State Policy Fellows Program. The total not to exceed contract amount would be \$2,765,199.91 to fund the 2028 class of Delta Science Fellows and three Delta State Policy Fellows per year in 2027, 2028, and 2029. This agreement would support these two long-standing programs that provide fellowship opportunities for early career scientists and have a proven track record of nurturing the growth and diversity of the region's scientific community.

Requested Action

Council staff requests that the Council adopt Resolution No.2026-06 to approve a new contract DSC261188 with the Regents of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), California Sea Grant, for a not to exceed amount of \$2,765,199.91 and a term from January 1, 2027, through August 30, 2030, for the 2028 Delta Science Fellows Program and the 2027/2028/2029 classes of Delta State Policy Fellows Program. The Resolution would authorize the Executive Officer to execute this contract and also to approve and execute any amendments that do not increase the total authorized not-to-exceed amount.

The Executive Officer has delegated authority up to \$750,000 to enter into contracts and interagency agreements on the Council's behalf. Because this agreement exceeds that amount, this contract requires Council approval.

Background

Since 2003, the Delta Science Program (first as part of CALFED and subsequently through the Council) has partnered with UCSD/California Sea Grant to fund Delta Science Fellows (graduate students and postdocs conducting research at academic institutions) and State Policy Fellows (recent graduates with advanced degrees who work in the Council's offices in support of the Council's priorities). Since 2003, 122 graduate and post-graduate level researchers have been supported through the Delta Science Fellows program. The partnership expanded in 2013 to include the State Policy Fellows, which has supported an additional 55 students.

California Sea Grant sponsors and administers scientific research, fellowships, and panels of scientific advisors that contribute to the growing body of knowledge about coastal and marine resources and help solve contemporary marine-related problems. California Sea Grant is the largest of the 34 nationwide Sea Grant programs and draws on the talents of scientists and engineers at public and private universities, as well as other research institutions throughout the state. It is administered by UCSD and is based at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla, California. The California Sea Grant program is funded by the National Sea Grant College Program, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, with matching funds from State and local resources.

As identified in the Delta Reform Act, 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 Bay-Delta system "through funding research, synthesizing and communicating scientific information to policymakers and decisionmakers, promoting independent scientific peer review, and coordinating with Delta agencies to promote science-based adaptive management," (Water Code Section 85280(b)(4)). The Delta Science Program does this in part by initiating, evaluating, and funding research to fill critical gaps in our understanding of the current and changing Bay-Delta system.

This agreement with UCSD/California Sea Grant will enable the continuation of a long-standing partnership between the Delta Science Program and this entity to provide fellowship opportunities for early-career scientists. This program is essential to fostering the growth and diversity of the region's scientific community.

Delta Science Fellowships

This program pairs the next generation of Delta scientists with academic and community mentors to conduct critical science investigations targeting high-priority Delta issues. Numerous past Delta Science Fellows have continued to work in science (in many cases the Delta region) building on the work they conduct as Fellows to launch full careers centered on developing scientific information for improved management. Research funded by the Delta Science Fellows program is critical for addressing the priority science actions in the Science Action Agenda (SAA), a four-year science agenda for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta that aims to fill gaps in knowledge, promote collaborative science, and build science infrastructure. Delta Science Fellows are selected through a competitive solicitation process, with resulting candidate proposals undergoing a rigorous review and selection process administered by California Sea Grant. A key selection criterion will be whether the proposal addresses one of the six overarching management needs identified in the SAA. If the Council approves the current funding request, the 2028 Class of Delta Science Fellows will continue to focus on the highest priority research topics by addressing the actions identified in the SAA.

State Policy Fellowships

The State Policy Fellows are recent post-graduates interested in exploring a career path in the public sector at the science-policy interface. State Policy Fellows work with Council staff in the Science and Planning Divisions for typically 12-month fellowship periods to support the Council's high-priority tasks. Though not all inclusive, previous work performed by Policy Fellows includes:

- providing support to the Delta Independent Science Board;
- assisting in Delta Plan amendments and updates;
- communicating outcomes and impacts of Delta Science Program funded research;
- assisting the Delta Lead Scientist on the monthly "Lead Scientist's Report" to the Council, including gathering data for and presenting the "By the Numbers" report;
- expanding the Delta Science Tracker to communicate the implementation and outcomes of science activities across the Delta, and;

- contributing to updates and to the implementation of the Science Action Agenda and Delta Science Plan.

The current request will fund a total of nine State Policy Fellows across calendar years 2027, 2028, and 2029.

Fiscal Information

The budget information is summarized below.

Budget Category	01/01/2027 – 08/30/2030
Personnel	\$332,986.00
Delta Science Fellowships	\$1,430,300.70
State Policy Fellowships	\$570,384.00
Travel	\$26,882.00
Indirect Costs	\$365,529.43
Other Direct Costs (e.g., Workshops, Panelists)	\$39,117.78
Total	\$2,765,199.91

List of Attachments

None.

Contact

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A recording of the presentation will be available on the Delta Council's YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/@DeltaCouncil>.