

Comments on the Delta Independent Science Board's Draft Review of the Interagency Ecological Program (6/14/19)

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Provided by Steven Culberson, IEP Lead Scientist, to Edmund Yu, Senior Environmental Specialist *for transmittal to the Delta Independent Science Board*

- 1) The ability of the Lead Scientist and the Coordinators Chairperson to respond effectively to call for change or re-implementation of operational objectives is limited by the nature of the interagency cooperation that underlies the IEP structure. While we posit the interagency cooperation we seek desirable, effective response to suggestions may involve fundamental restructuring of the IEP. It is not clear as of this writing that the IEP Directorate supports such a restructuring, and therefore, supports making effective responses to calls for reform.
- 2) Regarding the issue identified as “overlap” with other entities working in the Delta (Recommendation #3): can you specify particular overlapping missions or sampling programs?
- 3) Consider being more aggressive in calls for institutional and/or governance reform (Recommendation #4). From my perspective the monitoring is sufficient, the analysis excellent but limited by shortfalls in resources (positions and time available for working with and reporting on the data collected), and the operational interactions at the Agency level hampered by conflicting priorities and incompatible mechanisms for recognition and promotion of participating scientists. Expectations for the IEP far outweigh the resources devoted to the mission and Program implementation, particularly regarding analysis, interpretation, and communication. We can do better, be more relevant, and produce more effective products, but people need more time and resources with which to derive such value from the already collected data (and improve data collection).
- 4) I found the quoted surveys and interviews especially illustrative of several IEP conundra. I learned much from understanding particular gripes, compliments, and suggestions individuals had for the Program. It is most effective to NOT HAVE ATTRIBUTION of these quotes, since this may lead to dismissal or amplification of sentiments otherwise best received in a neutrally-offered (anonymous) way.
- 5) If there is a perception that interviewees and survey respondents should receive recognition for having so responded, perhaps they can be identified in an appendix, and perhaps then only by professional affiliation or organization.
- 6) How do you articulate or discover the value of long-term datasets that were sufficient in design to begin documentation of status and trends that MAY NOT have value for explicitly management or operational purposes but have grown into important data collections in their own right – but for which no agency wants to be financially responsible?

- 7) Due to the dispersed nature and management of IEP resources, centralized functions (web sites, communications products, data portals, analytical libraries, publications archives) have been difficult to create, let alone effectively administer. Can the Delta Science Program be given appropriate resources to become the progenitor of these functions that can then be made available to the IEP?