

**Delta Protection Commission Meeting
November 19, 2020**

AGENDA ITEM 10: Delta Stewardship Council Science Activities

Prepared by: Natasha Nelson

Presented by: Amanda Bohl, Delta Stewardship Council; Dr. Mark Lubell, UC Davis Department of Environmental Science and Policy

Requested Action: **Receive report on Delta Stewardship Council science activities**

Type of Action: Information

Background: The Delta Stewardship Council (Council) and Delta Science Program are engaged in a number of collaborative science activities in support of *One Delta, One Science*. This staff report and the related presentation will discuss these current efforts.

Social Science Program Activities

The development of a social science program for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) was fueled by a 2017 paper by the Delta Independent Science Board (Delta ISB) titled “Review of Research on the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta as an Evolving Place.” This call to action in supporting social science in the Delta highlighted the need for broad and immediate action. Subsequent social science actions that the Council has undertaken include formation of the Social Science Task Force (Task Force), multiple internal hiring of social scientists, and opening the window to funding new social science investigations. The real fruits of this seminal paper are now being seen in 2020.

The Task Force was convened in late 2018 by the Council and consisted of six social scientists charged with developing a strategic plan to strengthen and integrate social sciences into the science, management, and policy landscape of the Delta. Executive Director Vink gave an overview of the Commission at the Task Force’s kickoff meeting in January 2019. Presentations and discussion highlighted multiple common themes regarding ways to engage more social scientists and stakeholders and provide funding for social science in the Delta.

The Task Force hosted a workshop at UC Davis in July 2019 titled “Human Dimensions Research in Delta Environments.” The workshop highlighted social science research to address Delta management needs and the integration of social and natural sciences in other systems. Commission staff attended the workshop. The Commission provided comments on the Task

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Force's draft strategic plan in February 2020, concurring that social science integration into the Delta Science Enterprise would be essential to developing and sustaining decision-making processes that incorporate deliberate measures of learning and adaptive management and can be responsive to the needs of the communities affected by management decisions. In February 2020, the Delta ISB also commented in support of a broader approach to social science. The Task Force's final strategic plan was released in April 2020 (see Report section at www.deltacouncil.ca.gov/social-science).

The Council is in the process of hiring a social scientist in cooperation with California SeaGrant. A panel (including Amanda Bohl and Dr. Mark Lubell) participated in the selection of the candidate.

The Science Action Agenda (SAA) was developed by and for the Delta science community to prioritize and align science actions to inform management decisions. It seeks to identify and fill knowledge gaps and promote collaborative science. The SAA is updated every four years and the Delta Science Program has initiated the planning process for the 2022 to 2026 update. The SAA is important because it prioritizes science actions, guides science investments, and promotes collaboration and transparency. The first phase of the update is the identification of approximately 100 high priority science questions to ensure that science actions better inform policy and management. Following determination of the management questions, science actions to address management needs will be identified.

In parallel, the Delta ISB and the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee is developing a long-term science needs assessment. The purpose of the science needs assessment is to identify how to support forward-looking science across the Delta science enterprise looking at what might be needed in light of rapid climate change and other large changes on the horizon.

The development of the science needs assessment is being supported by the October 2020 science needs assessment workshop and four pre-workshop discussions held from April through September of 2020. Major themes from the discussions and the workshop include:

- We need to deepen our understanding of the linked physical, chemical, and biological processes in the Delta, to support more reliable prediction of the effects of a changing climate, evolving demand for water, and future policy and management decisions;
- We need better science infrastructure, including data management systems that can maintain and provide easy access to analytics and to the rapidly expanding universe of data representing the history and state of the Delta and its ecosystems; and
- We need to assure we are working efficiently, including effective program planning and coordination across programs within the science enterprise.

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In October 2020, the Council held a two-day workshop on the science needs assessment update and clarified its relationship to the SAA. The two-day web-based workshop considered how to support forward-looking science across the Delta science enterprise. Commission staff attended the workshop’s “Delta as Evolving Place” breakout. Staff submitted comments on the highest priority social science research needed to support future decisions.

The Council is finalizing a solicitation for high-quality social and biophysical science studies in the Delta that advance the 2017 to 2021 SAA. The Council anticipates establishing a list of eligible projects for their science funding as a result of this solicitation. To date, Commission staff have not been asked to participate in the selection of projects. Dr. Lubell can provide a perspective on how this solicitation is being seen by the universities and how future solicitations could be presented.

The Bay-Delta Science Conference is scheduled to be held via remote means in April 2021. A session on Delta as Evolving Place will be suggested for the conference agenda.

Panelists

Amanda Bohl is the special assistant for planning and science at the Council, serving as the coordinator of the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee. She has previously held positions at the Delta Conservancy and serves on the board of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy.

Dr. Mark Lubell is a UC Davis Professor in Department of Environmental Science and Policy, as well as their Director of the Center for Environmental Policy and Behavior since 2010. He has authored or co-authored nearly 100 papers on social networks, governance, and policy making, and has been an active participant in the recent social science planning work at the Council.

Recommended Action: Receive presentation and consider potential involvement of Commission staff in these efforts.

Relationship to Vision 2030 (Commission strategic plan):

Education and Outreach (Strategic Theme)

0.1 Ensure consistent, proactive communication between and among Delta interests and decision makers.

1.3 Foster two-way communication throughout the Delta.

1.3.3 Foster communication between Delta interests for improved, coordinated action.