

# MEMORANDUM

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**To:** CSAMP Policy Group

**From:** Bruce DiGennaro, CSAMP Program Manager, Darcy Austin and Sam Luoma, CAMT Co-Chairs, Rafael Silberblatt, Facilitation Team.

**Date:** March 28, 2024

**Subject:** CSAMP Interviews

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## Introduction

The following summarizes results from interviews with members of the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program (CSAMP) conducted in February and March of 2024. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with CSAMP representatives from the following member agencies:

- Contra Costa Water District
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Department of Water Resources
- Delta Stewardship Council and Interagency Ecological Program
- Non-Governmental Organizations (Bay Institute, Defenders of Wildlife, Trout Unlimited)
- NOAA National Marine Fisheries Services
- South of Delta Water Contractors (State Water Contractors, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Valley Water, San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority, Friant Water Authority) and the Coalition for a Sustainable Delta
- Sacramento Settlement Contractors (Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority)
- State Water Resources Control Board
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The interviews included Policy Group representatives, CAMT representatives and technical staff engaged in CSAMP activities. The interviews were designed for CSAMP members to provide their thoughts regarding the benefits, challenges, and priorities of CSAMP, as well as suggestions for potential changes. Members were given a set of questions to consider beforehand (see attachment) and were also given an opportunity to provide anonymous feedback using SurveyMonkey. Responses and results of the interviews are summarized below.

## Summary of Findings

The main benefits of CSAMP were described as having a credible space where diverse stakeholders can share information, have challenging conversations, advance shared priorities, and build relationships. The top priorities identified by CSAMP members

included recovery planning, the structured decision-making process (SDM), adaptive management and improving the science-policy dialogue. There were varied opinions about the priority of working on improvements to monitoring, and how to approach this effort.

While there was general agreement on CSAMP's value to the policy dialogue, there were a number of potential changes suggested including:

- Undertaking a deliberate “pause” while current active regulatory processes reach important milestones, to then develop a new iteration of CSAMP that productively contributes to the new regulatory landscape
- Exploring how to increase engagement, effectiveness, and impact, including expanding membership of CSAMP (e.g. to Tribes)
- Minimizing duplication of effort with closely connected initiatives.
- Improving the value that CSAMP products provide for decision-makers, including better informing policies relevant to regulations and recovery (though there were different opinions on how to achieve this).

## **Benefits and Outcomes**

All CSAMP members shared a common sentiment that CSAMP allows diverse stakeholders to share information, understand one another's perspectives, learn from each other, and have meaningful conversations. One member shared that CSAMP is a “*safe place for hard conversations*”. Members also shared that it is the only forum where state and federal agencies, NGOs and PWAs, are at the same table to find common ground and advance shared goals and priorities. Members shared that the forum has built and strengthened relationships and trust over time, and that the impacts of this are invaluable.

CSAMP members described CSAMP products as professional resources that summarize the current state of knowledge and advance a common understanding of issues and activities among diverse organizations. Members also shared that CSAMP has helped to inform and narrow management options in some cases. Where CSAMP products reflect a consensus among different interests, they carry a special weight. The following efforts and products were described as among key accomplishments:

- Delta Smelt & Salmon Science Plans
- Delta Smelt Structured Decision-Making (SDM)
- Salmonids-Reorienting to Recovery
- Adult Delta Smelt Entrainment & OMR Management
- Winter-Run Life Cycle Model Stakeholder Forum

## **Challenges**

Several CSAMP members, particularly State and Federal resource agency members, expressed concerns regarding their capacity to engage in, and support CSAMP activities. Current regulatory activities such as reconsultation on the Long-Term Operation (LTO) of the state and federal water projects and development of an update to the State Water Quality Control Plan are requiring significant staff time, which is affecting the ability to staff CSAMP activities.

Several CSAMP members also noted a decline in participation in CSAMP, particularly at the policy level. This is likely due in part to the capacity issue noted above, but may also be symptomatic of other issues.

A number of long-standing CSAMP representatives, both on the Policy Group and on CAMT retired over the past two years. This has contributed to the participation issue, but has also affected institutional knowledge and leadership.

One of the other challenges that surfaced during the interviews was the ongoing tension around the nature and degree of involvement in regulatory issues. The importance of developing and distributing information that could be used to inform policies, including regulatory policies, was a common theme. Some members favored directly addressing regulatory issues such as evaluating the effectiveness of specific regulations, while others suggested that CSAMP might be best suited to focus on longer-term recovery issues in the “non-regulatory” space.

## **Priorities**

CSAMP’s existing 2022-2024 priorities are listed below. CSAMP members were asked to provide input on these priorities to guide the next three years of CSAMP work. Generally, CSAMP members agreed with these priorities and did not suggest alternatives. There were various suggestions about how to approach these priorities to increase effectiveness and impact.

### *1. Facilitate Recovery Planning & Adaptive Management*

The Delta Smelt SDM process and Re-orienting to recovery were commonly cited as appropriate CSAMP efforts in this realm. Members expressed a desire to continue working on, and conclude both. For Reorienting to Recovery, proposed next steps included optimizing the process with modeling, and broadening engagement. Many CSAMP members expressed the importance of translating CSAMP’s recovery work into implementation, management, and direct actions to improve the chances of species recovery, but specific means of accomplishing that were not proposed.

### *2. Improve Science-Policy Dialogue*

Overall, there was universal recognition of CSAMP’s important role in broadening the Science-Policy dialogue. One organization called the Science-Policy Dialogue effort, the “*foundational bread and butter of CSAMP.*” Most CSAMP members see this effort as an opportunity to expose policy makers, or their representatives, to activities and studies across entities (e.g. Delta Smelt supplementation, salmon survival in the Delta, Delta Smelt modeling). Members noted that CSAMP products (e.g. entrainment paper, salmon gap analysis) have been beneficial to dialogue in other venues.

### *3. Advance Improvements in Monitoring*

Overall, there was varied interest in CSAMP continuing to pursue this priority due to uncertainty about how to approach it, unknowns of similar efforts, and concerns about impact and funding. CSAMP members expressed a range of opinions about next steps. Some members suggested that other organizations and efforts are more

appropriate to tackle improvements in monitoring, particularly around technology and monitoring techniques. Other suggestions included:

- Limiting the focus to key questions, goals and metrics associated with monitoring;
- Better understanding the monitoring landscape and how the various efforts talk to each other in order to identify a clear potential role for CSAMP; or
- Keeping monitoring a priority but making it a lower priority and committing fewer resources.

## Potential Changes

There were various recommendations and potential changes to CSAMP suggested during the interviews. Many CSAMP members shared similar sentiments but differed on details as to how to achieve those. Suggestions tended to focus on the overall direction of CSAMP, and its overall effectiveness, impact and engagement.

Overall, most CSAMP members expressed an interest in CSAMP exploring how to:

- Evolve to the current regulatory and monitoring landscape.
- Clearly identify where and how CSAMP can be most useful.
- Broaden reach and engagement.
- Increase impact, especially around decision-making.
- Create a renewed sense of collaboration and commitment.

Several CSAMP members suggested that the overall direction and focus of CSAMP be reassessed. There were suggestions to assess the organizational structure, as well as its relationship to other forums to determine the most appropriate and effective role for CSAMP. One CSAMP member said, *“there’s a need for something that stitches all the processes together that is not designed to replace or supplement them, but to connect and empower them.”*

Many members shared a desire to not be duplicative, but yet connect more to current processes (BDP, LTO, 5-yr Status Reports, ITP, Water Quality Control Plan). Several members recommended that CSAMP consider how to adapt to the evolving regulatory landscape and associated capacity issues.

Other recommendations from CSAMP members included:

- Undertaking a deliberate “pause” while current active regulatory processes reach important milestones, to then develop a new iteration of CSAMP that productively contributes to the new regulatory landscape
- Expanding the membership of CSAMP to include more environmental groups, the fishing community, Tribes and academia.
- Addressing and resolving interests and concerns regarding a possible role for CSAMP in implementation of the Voluntary Agreements (VA).
- Increasing the reach and utility of CSAMP’s products, including finding the appropriate venues to share the products, such as through published papers. One

CSAMP organization described CSAMP's products as "*extraordinary and incredible resources that are vastly underappreciated and underutilized*". Another organization described the need to "*catalyze the science and reap the benefits of collaboration.*"

- Identifying the gap between CSAMP outputs and adoption/buy-in and impacts on key decision-making processes.
- Creating more timely and applicable products with more "teeth" that can be communicated effectively and directly synced to specific decisions, actions, and regulatory initiatives.
- Focusing on disagreements between CSAMP members early on to understand tension points rather than focusing on areas of agreement, which some members identified as a constraining and limiting factor.
- Continuing to find common ground and collaborate. One CSAMP member said, "*when we stop talking, that's when we get into trouble*".

# ATTACHMENT

## CSAMP Member Interview Questions (2024)

CSAMP is seeking feedback from its members regarding:

- Benefits and outcomes of CSAMP;
- Priorities for CSAMP; and
- Potential changes moving forward.

The following questions were developed by CAMT to guide interviews with CSAMP member representatives. The questions are intended to stimulate conversation around the above three topic areas, and to help you prepare for the interview. Interview responses will be compiled into a brief summary report and used to establish CSAMP priorities for the next three years.

1. Benefits and Outcomes – Using the following questions as a guide, please describe from your perspective what you see as benefits, achievements and challenges of CSAMP.
  - a. What do you see as benefits, achievements and challenges (including limitations and shortcomings) of CSAMP?
  - b. Overall, is participation in CSAMP helping, or hindering, your organization's ability to realize its interests? How?
  - c. What outcomes would increase the return on investment (in terms of time and resources) that your organization derives from participating in CSAMP?
  - d. Are there examples where CSAMP work has had an influence on your organization's decisions (e.g. LTO or other regulations)?
2. CSAMP Priorities – Using the following questions as a guide, please provide feedback on CSAMP's existing priorities (see attached), and input on potential new priorities for the next three years.
  - a. Are there existing CSAMP priorities that you think CSAMP should continue to pursue? Are there new priorities you would like to see added to this list? Why?
  - b. Are there existing CSAMP priorities that in your opinion aren't working well enough for your organization to warrant continuing to pursue them?
  - c. Is your organization willing to commit resources (e.g., funding, staff time) to support CSAMP moving forward if the path forward is aligned with your organization's priorities?
3. Potential Changes – Please identify changes that you feel would improve the overall value and performance of CSAMP.
  - a. Are there changes you would make to improve CSAMP processes and outcomes?
  - b. Do you see opportunities for consolidating or streamlining efforts with other organizations or research teams?

# Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program

## Purpose and Priorities – 2022-2024

### Purpose

*Work with a sense of urgency to collaboratively evaluate current hypotheses and management actions associated with protection and restoration of species of concern, current and future federal and state regulatory authorizations for the SWP and CVP, and other local and state management actions, to improve performance from both biological and water supply perspectives.*

### Priorities for Calendar Years 2022-2024

Serve as a forum for dialog and information sharing, with the goal of facilitating mutual understanding and identifying common ground regarding science and adaptive management.

Focus on:

- Communications and understanding different perspectives (e.g. AM dialog);
- Completing in-progress technical work and letting others take up future investigations;
- Identifying areas where members can speak with a unified voice; and
- Discussing metrics and monitoring (i.e. are current monitoring programs providing the data on metrics of interest needed to inform management decisions?).

Specific priorities are:

1. **Facilitate Recovery Planning and Adaptive Management** - Work together to advance common goals for the recovery of species of concern in the Delta and Central Valley using an adaptive management approach. Improve coordination, integration and synthesis of information across agencies and projects.
2. **Improve Science-Policy Dialog** – Utilize CSAMP as a venue to present and discuss the state of knowledge, uncertainties and disagreements regarding the science underlying specific management actions. Identify and discuss emerging science, including science regarding long-term management challenges such as climate change, drought and rapidly changing environmental conditions in the Delta.
3. **Advance Improvements in Monitoring** – Work collaboratively to identify and assist agencies on incorporating improvements into the monitoring enterprise.

# CSAMP Activities in Support of 2022-2024 Priorities

The following lists specific CSAMP projects that were identified in 2022 to support CSAMP's 2022-2024 priorities. This list does not include updates, briefings and other communications activities that CSAMP has conducted over the past two years to improve the science-policy dialog.

## Completed Activities

### 1. Adult Delta Smelt Entrainment and OMR Management

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective - Use Delta Smelt life cycle models to examine the population level impacts of adult Delta Smelt entrainment, and discuss findings with the CSAMP Policy Group.
- b. Funding Support – Funded by CA Department of Water Resources, US Bureau of Reclamation and Metropolitan Water District of Southern California with CSAMP members each providing staff to participate in the Delta Smelt Scoping Team.
- c. Status – Completed in 2023. All four studies identified in 2015 have been completed.
- d. Background – In 2015, CSAMP commissioned a series of four scientific investigations intended to examine management of Old and Middle River (OMR) flows and entrainment of adult Delta Smelt. The first three investigations (Studies 1, 2 and 3) examine factors affecting entrainment, mechanisms and hypotheses associated with the movement of adult Delta Smelt and proportional entrainment losses. The fourth study examines the potential effects of proportional entrainment losses on the Delta Smelt population.

### 2. Fall Occupancy Study

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective - Complete CAMT study, discuss findings with the CSAMP Policy Group and consider additional analyses to better understand factors affecting Delta Smelt occupancy and abundance in the fall.
- b. Funding Support – US Bureau of Reclamation
- c. Status – Completed in 2022
- d. Background – In 2016, CSAMP commissioned a modeling study to examine the relationships between outflow in the fall and the survival and abundance of Delta Smelt. A manuscript outlining the study and its findings was published in *Estuaries and Coasts* in July 2022.



## Ongoing Activities

### 3. Delta Smelt Structured Decision Making (SDM)

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective – Complete Phase 3 of the SDM process to identify management actions to achieve CSAMP goal for Delta Smelt, and discuss steps for implementation.
- b. Funding Support – Funded by State Water Contractors with CSAMP members each providing staff to participate in the Technical Working Group (TWG).
- c. Status – Ongoing. CSAMP had substantive presentations and discussions on findings of this project in June and December 2023. The SDM TWG is currently preparing a final report, with a draft expected in March 2024.
- d. Background – This project was initiated in 2020 and involves a 3-phase process that includes explicit articulation of hypotheses regarding factors affecting each life stage, identification of potential actions that could address population bottlenecks and evaluation of those actions using existing life cycle models.

### 4. Salmonids - Reorienting to Recovery

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective – Support completion of Phases 2 and 3, including engaging stakeholders to identify values, modeling planned and proposed recovery projects and using a structured decision making (SDM) process to identify additional actions to achieve recovery objectives.
- b. Funding Support – Funded by Delta Stewardship Council and US Bureau of Reclamation.
- c. Status – Ongoing. CSAMP initiated Phase 1 of this project in 2020 with funding from State Water Contractors. In 2022 and 2023, CSAMP members have participated in the project Planning Team, and have engaged in ongoing stakeholder discussions.
- d. Background - The Reorienting to Recovery initiative for Central Valley salmonids includes three phases of work. Phase 1, completed in 2021 involved a collaborative technical effort to develop a framework for defining objectives for recovery. Phase 2, initiated in 2022, involved extensive stakeholder outreach to solicit broader input on the definition of recovery, compile a comprehensive listing of planned projects intended to advance recovery, and gain a mutual understanding of the diverse values associated with salmon recovery. Phase 3, initiated in 2023 involved evaluating the benefits of ongoing and proposed management actions using existing models to assess their collective ability to achieve specific objectives and participants' values. Phase 3 is expected to be completed in 2024.

See <https://csamp.baydeltalive.com/recovery/reorienting-to-recovery>

## 5. **Salmonid Behavior and Survival in the South Delta**

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective - Utilize CAMT Salmon Technical Work Group (TWG) to identify and synthesis new research findings regarding the effects of export operations on salmonid behavior and survival in the south Delta, and discuss findings with the CSAMP Policy Group.
- b. Funding Support – Funded by National Marine Fisheries Service with CSAMP members each providing staff to participate in the TWG.
- c. Status – Ongoing. The TWG is currently preparing a final report, which is expected to be available in April 2024.
- d. Background – The Salmon TWG met with researchers throughout 2022 and 2023 to explore and synthesize new research findings with regard to specific questions identified by CAMT regarding San Joaquin salmonid survival in the south Delta.

## 6. **CAMT Monitoring Assessment**

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective - Complete CAMT Monitoring Assessment, discuss findings with the Policy Group and support agencies in identifying potential improvements to the monitoring enterprise.
- b. Funding Support – Conducted by CSAMP member staff
- c. Status – Ongoing. Two of three tasks have been completed, as described below. Based on discussions in 2022, the Public Water Agency (PWA) offered to develop a proposed process for identifying potential improvements in monitoring. The PWAs are currently vetting this proposed process with experts in the system, then intends to bring it back to CSAMP for further discussion later in 2024.
- d. Background – In 2021, CSAMP initiated an effort to improve understanding of monitoring activities in the Delta. The effort involved three components, one focused on what can be learned from past and ongoing monitoring reviews, one focused on documenting the objectives of CSAMP members regarding monitoring and one examining potential improvements to the monitoring enterprise. Findings from the first task were documented in a report released in December 2021. Findings from the second task were documented in a report released in August 2022. CSAMP has also received updates on, and provided input to the ongoing 6 Agency Redesign effort which is examining potential improvements to several pelagic fish surveys in the Delta.

## Paused or Transferred Activities

### 7. Adaptive Management Workshop

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective - Schedule a special session of the Policy Group to share and discuss different perspectives regarding adaptive management and how it can be better employed in the Delta.
- b. Funding Support – Not currently funded.
- c. Status – Transitioned to Delta Science Program (DSP). In 2022, CAMT formed a subteam to explore the scope and focus of a possible Adaptive Management Workshop. Acknowledging that the DSP already has a reoccurring Adaptive Management workshop, a decision was made to transition this initiative to the DSP rather than continuing to pursue a CSAMP only effort.
- d. Background – The 2022-2024 CSAMP Priorities identify this activity as a potential future initiative.

### 8. Winter Run Life Cycle Model (WRLCM) Stakeholder Forum

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective - Host monthly forum to facilitate dialog between model developers and stakeholders regarding updates to the WRLCM.
- b. Funding Support – Initially funded by US Bureau of Reclamation. Not currently funded.
- c. Status – Funding for this forum expired at the end of 2022, and there was not support for continuing the forum.
- d. Background – In 2019, CSAMP held a series of workshops to discuss the WRLCM. These workshops lead to formation of a monthly stakeholder forum focused on understanding and improving the existing WRLCM.

### 9. Delta Smelt Program Manager

- a. 2022-2024 CSAMP Objective - Facilitate a conversation regarding the need for a program manager to guide implementation of actions identified through the Delta Smelt SDM process, to aid coordination with other Delta Smelt actions and to implement recommendations from the CSAMP Delta Smelt Science Plan.
- b. Funding Support – Not currently funded.
- c. Status – Paused. CAMT initiated conversations regarding establishment of a full-time Delta Smelt Program Manager in early 2022, but did not continue the effort due to limited support for such a position.
- d. Background – The 2019 CSAMP Delta Smelt Science Plan suggested establishment of a Delta Smelt Science Manager. In 2020, CDFW provided a partial staff position to track Delta Smelt management actions and science, as recommended in the Science Plan. The staff position was reassigned to drought management in 2021.