

Introduction to the Delta Regional Monitoring Program



“To inform decisions on how to protect, and where necessary, restore beneficial uses of water in the Delta, by producing objective and cost-effective scientific information critical to understanding regional water quality conditions and trends.”

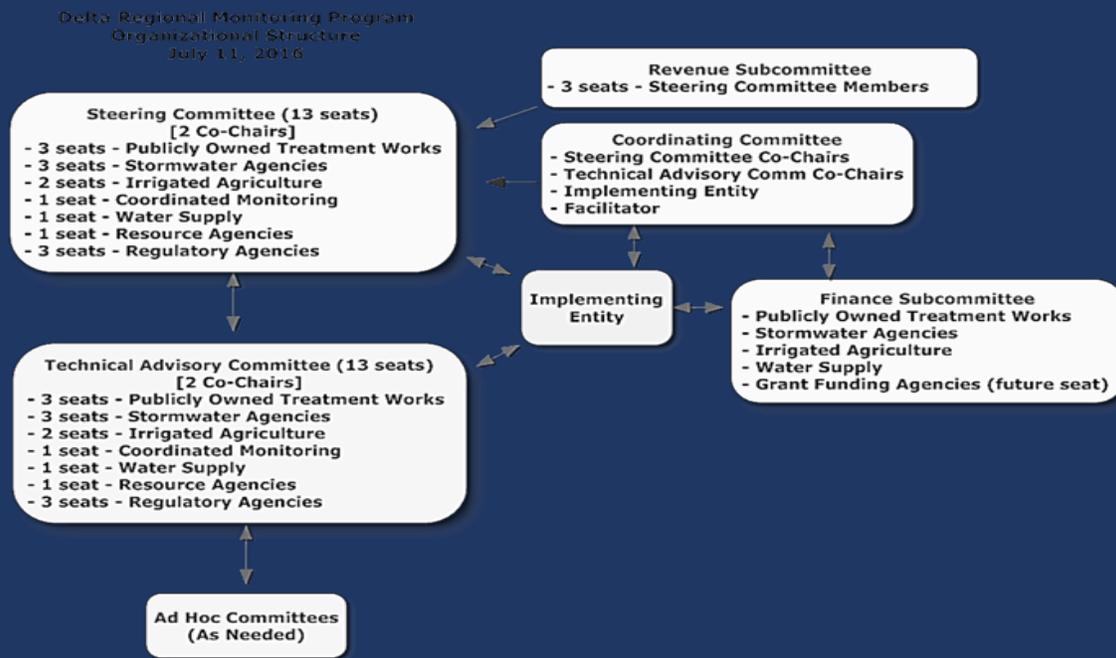
WHY WAS THE DELTA RMP FORMED?

- The Delta Regional Monitoring Program (Delta RMP) was initiated by the Central Valley Water Board with the primary goal of tracking and documenting the effectiveness of beneficial use protection and restoration efforts through comprehensive monitoring of water quality constituents and their effects in the Delta. The Delta RMP Steering Committee oversees the program direction and the day to day operations of the Implementing Entity (currently the Aquatic Science Center). The Steering Committee developed management questions to address beneficial use impairments.

WHO PARTICIPATES IN THE DELTA RMP?

- Publicly owned treatment works (POTWs), small and large municipal storm water agencies (MS4s), irrigated agriculture coalitions, Interagency Ecological Program (Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Water Resources, Bureau of Reclamation), water suppliers (including exporters), resource agencies (National Marine Fisheries Service), and regulatory agencies (USEPA, State Water Resources Control Board, Central Valley Water Board) are current Delta RMP participants. Each of these participating agencies has one or more seats on the RMP Steering Committee. The Steering Committee determines the overall budget, allocates program funds, tracks progress, and provides strategic direction and priorities for the program. Members that contribute financial resources to the program vote on budget and financial decisions. The Delta RMP actively recruits additional members and engages with the Delta Science Program and the San Francisco Bay Regional Monitoring Program.
- The Delta RMP is not limited to dischargers within the Delta but is open to entities whose discharges or project activities, including dredging operations and restoration projects, will likely impact Delta water quality. The Delta RMP focuses on Delta investigations, however, many Central Valley entities impact the Delta watershed and the management focus of the Delta RMP provides benefit to all.

Drawing a geographic nexus is important and often required for agencies to demonstrate appropriate use of ratepayer fees. For instance, the pyrethroid pesticide total maximum daily load (TMDL) will cover the Sacramento River and San Joaquin River watersheds and the Delta RMP could potentially provide the required representative TMDL monitoring.



WHY SHOULD AN AGENCY OR PERMITTEE PARTICIPATE IN THE DELTA RMP?

- Participation in the Delta RMP can satisfy portions of the monitoring requirements of NPDES or Waste Discharge Requirements permits. Dischargers which have already joined the RMP have been approved to discontinue specific individual monitoring requirements. To provide agencies a basis for deciding whether to develop their own monitoring program or to join the Delta RMP, the Regional Board in collaboration with discharger representatives developed guidance for RMP participation. Dischargers should make this evaluation with a full understanding of current and future monitoring requirements.
- The Delta RMP provides a collaborative group to resolve science questions in the Delta. Without a collaborative science process, the individual agency science burden increases. The Delta will always be a highly managed and politicized receiving water and water resource. Direct participation by local agencies and permittees in the science process will better balance the discussion of Delta protection and reasonable and efficient use of public funds.
- The Delta RMP provides a technical body to develop science programs to resolve emerging regulatory issues and Policy development. Stakeholder involvement may better incorporate management actions that are effective and efficient into regulatory policy. In this way, compliance can be measurable, achievable, and reasonable. For example, the forthcoming Pyrethroids TMDL will require monitoring and assessment. In addition, contaminants of emerging concern (CECs) are another topic area where the Regional Water Boards are tasked to develop assessment and

management programs. The effects of CECs at low levels (fractions of parts per trillion) are not well understood, and individual agency evaluations would not be an efficient means to develop the necessary management tools. The Central Valley Water Board has the authority to require monitoring for these future regulatory programs, but prefers to use the Delta RMP as the means to collect representative data or perform science investigations.

- Small agencies and entities may leverage participation from others in meetings and be represented at the Steering Committee without having to attend those meetings. Participation does not have to be a significant additional time effort for small agencies and entities with limited staff or technical expertise. The Delta RMP Steering Committee includes seats that are required to represent multiple agencies and entities rather than just their own. Many smaller agencies and entities then may participate in quarterly or semi-annual update meetings held by their Steering Committee representatives.
- The Delta RMP provides a coordinated and efficient means to pursue grant funding. Grant funding for science and monitoring programs is not generally useful on a small scale when the administrative burden may consume agency staff time beyond the benefit of the funds. A coordinated proposal is more attractive to grant reviewers, especially with built-in technical review and administration.
- The Delta RMP continues to evolve its financial model to reduce cost and increase benefits. The Delta RMP financial model was originally designed around required monitoring trades (i.e., permit requirements satisfied by Delta RMP participation). The Steering Committee evaluates funding programs and pursues grant funding. The Steering Committee has authority to allow other financing structures to support specific stakeholder needs. This may be helpful where very specialized skills are required or to develop guidance for monitoring or assessment programs.