

Delta Stewardship Council DRAFT Charge to the Delta Independent Science Board

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Reform Act of 2009 (Act) establishes the Independent Science Board (ISB), whose members are to be appointed by the Delta Stewardship Council (Council), which was also created by the Act as an independent agency of the State of California. The Act also creates the Delta Science Program and a lead scientist who report to the Council. Together the Delta ISB and Delta Science Program provide the scientific support and oversight the Council needs to make decisions based on sound science.

Purpose of the Delta ISB

The purpose of the Delta ISB is to review the application of science and the effectiveness of science practices throughout the Delta in accordance with the Act and as outlined in this Charge to the Delta ISB. The overall objective of Delta ISB oversight is to help make the science underlying Bay-Delta programs, the application of that science, and the technical aspects of those programs the best that they can be.

Independence of the Delta ISB

At all times, the Delta ISB will exercise its independent judgment. In pursuing this obligation, the ISB may seek advice from entities or individuals not part of the ISB. Its findings, comments, and reports will be transmitted directly to the Council, or to other entities identified in the Act as receiving these findings, comments and reports, and made public without editing or censorship by any person or entity.

Statutory obligations of the Delta ISB

The specific charge for the Delta ISB, including four (4) requirements set forth in the Act as well as additional tasks and responsibilities needed to fulfill statutory needs of the Delta Stewardship Council and the Delta Science Program, are as follows:

Requirements in the Act:

1. “The Delta Independent Science Board shall provide oversight of the scientific research, monitoring, and assessment programs that support adaptive management of the Delta through periodic reviews of each of those programs that shall be scheduled to ensure that all Delta scientific research, monitoring, and assessment programs are reviewed at least once every four years.” (WC 85280(a)(3))
2. “The Delta Independent Science Board shall submit to the council a report on the results of each review, including recommendations for any changes in the programs reviewed by the board.” (WC 85280(a)(4))
3. “The department (of Water Resources) shall consult with the council and the Delta Independent Science Board during the development of the BDCP (Bay-Delta

Conservation Plan)...The Delta Independent Science Board shall review the (Bay Delta Conservation Plan) draft environmental impact report and submit its comments to the council and the Department of Fish and Game.” (WC 85320(c))

4. “After consultation with the Delta Independent Science Board, the council shall appoint a lead scientist for the Delta Science Program.” (WC 85280(b))

Additional Tasks and Responsibilities:

5. Understand the technical underpinnings of Delta programs and plans, including the Delta Interim Plan and the Delta Plan. As a group, the Delta ISB should attain and sustain an up-to-date understanding of the Council’s and other state and local agencies’ proposed actions and the state of the science applicable to those actions.
6. Regularly evaluate the science agenda for the Delta. Provide evaluation of the implementation of a strategic, balanced, and proactive science agenda across Delta programs. Evaluate technical priorities, adequacy of funding, peer review, use of outside experts, and the successes and weaknesses of investments in scientific knowledge. Evaluate progress on the development of an authoritative body of knowledge relevant to each Delta program’s goals and objectives. Help identify where important gaps in knowledge or the science effort might exist, with an emphasis on considering interconnections among various Delta programs.
7. Review balance and credibility of analyses and syntheses. Provide insights as to whether the analyses and syntheses of the state of the science being applied to specific issues under the purview of the Program are balanced and credible, including insights on how to improve such analyses and syntheses in general or in the case of specific issues.
8. Identify emerging issues and significant interconnections among Delta programs. Through program reviews, help to anticipate issues and identify areas of interconnection among programs that might otherwise be missed by more specialized boards and panels; suggest solutions, where needed, to interconnecting issues (e.g., technically-based actions, workshops, reviews, program collaborations, or new research).

The Delta ISB will review activities of science programs and projects for balance, rigor, and use of best available science. Like all technical expert bodies, the Delta ISB will not make policy decisions, but will provide the scientific foundation for such decisions to the Council and other agencies and organizations. The comments, advice and information from the Delta ISB is expected to increase scientific credibility, improve research clarity, advance the debate about Delta issues, and seek better connectivity between science, management, and policy.