

1 DRAFT

2 January 9, 2012

3 To: Members of the California State Senate and Assembly

4 From: Richard B. Norgaard, Chair, Delta Independent Science Board

5 Re: The Delta Science Program

6 The 2009 Delta Reform Act mandates that agencies use the best available science to guide
7 planning and decision-making to achieve the coequal goals of water supply reliability and
8 ecosystem health of the Delta. The Act establishes the Delta Independent Science Board
9 (DISB) to provide oversight of science in the Delta.

10 As stipulated in the Act, the DISB will conduct comprehensive, periodic reviews of agencies
11 and programs that provide science for Delta management. On December 1-2, 2011, the
12 DISB held hearings where invited stakeholder groups, water-user groups, agency
13 representatives, and legislative staff discussed the status of Delta science and how it might
14 be improved to meet the coequal goals. These discussions were frank and wide-ranging
15 and are proving to be a useful guide as the DISB moves forward with its reviews.

16 Although there were somewhat divergent opinions about Delta science programs, there
17 was surprising agreement on the value of one program in particular: the Delta Science
18 Program (DSP). The DSP provides multiple functions that all parties considered essential.
19 These include conducting peer review of research, syntheses of important scientific issues,
20 communication of science with the public and decision-makers, coordination of scientific
21 activities among agencies, supporting an online science journal, and administration of a
22 grants program. Perhaps most importantly, the program is seen as fair, transparent and
23 unbiased. This is an important asset in the polarized environment of the Delta.

24 As part of our oversight responsibilities, the DISB will conduct a formal review of the
25 program. Even before this review, however, we have identified a key issue that should be
26 considered by the legislature in the near future. The DSP relies on general obligation bond
27 funding for its activities, and this funding will run out soon. The DISB believes that bonds
28 are an inappropriate way to fund an essential operation of this kind. To maintain its vital
29 role in helping solve problems in the Delta, the DSP must have stability in its funding
30 sources. The boom and bust cycle of funding typically associated with bonds is damaging to
31 programs of this type and undermines credibility and trust. *The DISB strongly recommends*
32 *that the legislature, in collaboration with the Delta Stewardship Council, develop a stable*
33 *funding mechanism for this essential program.*

34 We are well aware of the budgetary constraints facing the State. We are also aware of the
35 critical importance of bringing the best available science to bear on the multiple issues that
36 must be addressed in crafting a sustainable future for the Delta ecosystem, its human
37 inhabitants, and (of course) its water. The DSP plays a critical role in meeting this need.

38 We thank the legislature for taking the time to consider this issue. A stable, well-funded
39 Delta Science Program is fundamental to meeting the coequal goals for the Delta.