
Delta Regional Monitoring Program

Communications Plan



Prepared for
Delta RMP Steering Committee
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. REPORTING.....	4
2.1 <i>Target Audiences</i>	4
2.2 <i>Data Portals</i>	4
2.3 <i>Communication Products</i>	5
2.4 <i>Internal review process</i>	5
2.5 <i>External review process</i>	6
2.6 <i>Communication channels</i>	6
2.7 <i>Delta RMP reporting schedule</i>	7
3. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	8
4. REFERENCES	9

1. Introduction

The mission of the Delta Regional Monitoring Program (RMP) is to inform decisions on how to protect and 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. To achieve this mission, the Delta RMP developed a Monitoring Design (ASC 2015) that contains detailed assessment questions relevant to each of the program's priority management questions. This Communications Plan describes the products and processes that are being proposed to the Delta RMP Steering Committee to guide the interpretation and reporting of its data to answer the assessment questions.

2. Reporting

The reporting goal of the Delta RMP is to generate communication products that inform and educate target audiences about Delta water quality conditions and trends. The information in such products is targeted at the highest priority questions faced by managers. The program achieves its full value only to the extent that the data it produces are synthesized, interpreted, and reported in a manner accessible to its various audiences. Therefore, the proposed key information product will be an interpretive report ("Pulse of the Delta") that summarizes monitoring results and synthesizes relevant information.

2.1 Target Audiences

The target audiences for Delta RMP communication products include internal (program participants) and external stakeholders (other Delta managers and policymakers, local scientists and the scientific community at large, and the public). Delta RMP communication products aim to effectively serve these diverse audiences. To meet the Delta RMP reporting goal, the communication products need to provide objective and accessible information, distributed in a timely and effective manner.

2.2. Access to RMP Data

Delta RMP data will be the foundation of RMP communication products. Therefore, release of data to program participants and the public is an important step in the communication process. Final monitoring data will be publicly available after being reviewed and analyzed internally and after reports are produced, although RMP parties can have access to working copies of the data.

ASC will upload the provisional data to the password-protected Delta RMP TAC Google website as soon as they are available, from where they will be pulled into the password-protected workerbee space of the California Estuaries Portal. Provisional data will be provided to the TAC in a downloadable format and will be clearly marked as preliminary data.

Final data will be incorporated into CEDEN and at a minimum made available through portals such as CD3, Bay Delta Live, etc. CD3 is an innovative visualization tool for accessing water quality data that allows users to perform spatial queries to dynamically map, chart, and download data.

2.3. Communication Products

The Delta RMP will produce an Annual Monitoring Report, which documents the activities of the program each year; an interpretive main report (*The Pulse of The Delta*) that summarizes monitoring results and synthesizes the information they provide; and technical reports that document specific studies and synthesize information from diverse sources in relation to specific topics and prioritized assessment questions.

Annual Monitoring Report

The Annual Monitoring Report will present the results of the previous July-June fiscal year of sampling. Interpretation of the results will be very basic. The main purpose of this report is to share the final data with project partners and collaborators in a timely way. The Annual Monitoring Report also includes a Quality Assurance (QA) memo that summarizes any QA problems and documents any non-conformances with the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP).

Technical Reports

Technical reports will provide a more in-depth evaluation of monitoring and special study results. Technical reports will facilitate technical review of Delta RMP studies. A technical report may be appropriate for each of the monitoring elements after 2-3 years of study. The Steering Committee will plan the scope and allocate funding for each Technical Report. At the beginning of the process, a detailed content plan will be prepared under the direction of the Steering Committee, and with guidance by the Technical Advisory Committee.

The Pulse of the Delta

A summary report (*The Pulse of the Delta*) will be the main public reporting vehicle for Delta RMP information (data interpreted relative to the Program's management questions). The information in the Pulse of the Delta will include Delta RMP monitoring data as well as other relevant information. The Steering Committee will plan the scope, allocate funding, and decide when to publish a Pulse of the Delta and its theme. At the beginning of the process, a detailed content plan will be prepared under the direction of the Steering Committee, and with guidance by the Technical Advisory Committee. The first two editions of the Pulse of the Delta (ASC 2011, ASC 2012) preceded the Delta RMP's current organizational structure.

2.4. Internal review process

All Delta RMP communication products will go through internal technical review and Steering Committee approval. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is the lead group for providing technical review. Technical subcommittees or workgroups may be invited to review products or components of a product that fall in their specific expertise at the same time as the TAC. For example, the nutrient subcommittee will be invited to review nutrient synthesis reports. Before they are released to the public, all communication products require final approval by the Steering Committee. Some results would be expected to be suited for publication in the peer-reviewed literature, which would involve an additional layer of review.

2.5. External review process

The SC will decide on a case-by-case basis whether communication products should be submitted to external review. The TAC, Steering Committee, or staff may recommend additional external expert peer review for draft technical or summary reports. Depending on the timeline and specific needs, external review may be done in parallel to or following internal review.

When planning a new communication product, an advisory group representative of targeted audiences may be formed to help focus the content and outreach.

2.6. Communication channels

At this time, the Delta RMP does not have its own independent communication channels to reach internal and external target audiences. It would benefit the program to develop these channels eventually. The following sections describe the current communication channels.

Website

Currently, there are two websites with different purposes for the Delta RMP. The Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) maintains a web page for the Delta RMP that lists recent program news and updated events, SC and TAC meeting information and materials, and access to reports

(http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/delta_water_quality/comprehensive_monitoring_program/index.shtml).

ASC maintains a Google site for the TAC that features a basic home page with an interactive event calendar and a link to the Water Board's Delta RMP page (<https://sites.google.com/a/sfei.org/delta-rmp/home>). The TAC Google site also features a password-restricted area that provides access to technical materials, archived documents, and collaborative workspace for members of the TAC and its subcommittees.

In the future, program participants and external stakeholders would benefit from a single website for online information about the program, access to documents, and the schedule of upcoming events.

Email subscription list

Currently, distribution of communication products relies on external communication channels of program partners and participants; including the Delta Water Quality Issues Lyris email list (maintained by Water Board staff) and the Delta eNews electronic newsletter (maintained by California Department of Water Resources).

An integrated Delta RMP website and email list would allow for announcements to be archived for easy access outside of the email applications.

Social Media

Additional considerations would be a social media presence such as a Twitter feed and/or Facebook page to raise awareness about the program and to garner support for its activities and interest in its findings.

Public Notice of Meetings

All meetings are open to the public and publicly noticed through the Delta Water Quality Issues Lyris list. Agenda and materials (except the draft minutes) are posted on the Water Board's Delta RMP web page at least one week in advance. Water Board staff is responsible for maintaining the web page and sending emails through Lyris.

Annual Meeting

An Annual Meeting would provide an opportunity for the diverse groups involved in the Program to interact. It also provides outreach to groups not directly involved in the program and a venue for obtaining input from external stakeholders. The SC will decide when to hold an annual meeting and the theme and objectives of the meeting.

2.7. Delta RMP reporting schedule

Table 1 provides an overview of the Delta RMP reporting cycle. This schedule was developed by assuming that monitoring will be conducted on a July-June fiscal year basis and that the fall is a good season to release Pulse reports.

Basic data will be reported through various web portals and Annual Monitoring Reports. Data will be collected on fiscal year basis, with each monitoring year ending on June 30. Results will be quality assured and uploaded to web portals for public access by March 1. The Annual Monitoring Report will present these data with minimal interpretation by March 1.

Interpretation of the data will be completed less frequently, in consultation with the Technical Advisory Committee, and at the direction of the Steering Committee. It is anticipated that technical reports will be produced on a rolling basis every 2-3 years (i.e., some report is expected each year). The technical reports will synthesize results and make recommendations for monitoring adaptations and future studies.

The Pulse of the Delta (ASC 2011; ASC 2012) is envisioned as the main interpretive reporting vehicle for Delta RMP results. The themes of the Pulse of the Delta will be outlined by the Steering Committee based on prior technical reports. The Pulse of the Delta will be released in the fall season to provide maximum impact of the program during the Bay Delta Science Conference and the State of the Estuary Conference.

Table 1. Delta RMP reporting cycle.

Deliverable	Frequency	Release date
<i>Data uploads</i>		
Provisional data (available to TAC members)	Variable	Variable
CD3	Annually	March 1
CEDEN	Annually	Pesticides/toxicity data: February 1 All other data: March 1

Deliverable	Frequency	Release date
California Estuaries web portal	Annually	March 1
<i>Reports</i>		
Annual Monitoring Reports (including QA report)	Annually	March 1
Technical Reports	Variable	Variable
Pulse of the Delta	Variable	Fall

Table 2 presents the proposed reporting schedule for the first four years of the Delta RMP, building toward a Pulse of the Delta in the fall of 2018. The general concept is that nutrient synthesis reports in FY15/16 and FY16/17 and technical reports for Current Use Pesticides and Pathogens in FY17/18 would provide the majority of the content for the Pulse of the Delta in FY18/19.

Table 2. Proposed Delta RMP reporting schedule through FY18/19.

	FY15/16	FY16/17	FY17/18	FY18/19
Pesticides	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring
		Data Report on FY15/16	Data Report on FY16/17	Data Report on FY17/18
			Technical Report on FY15/16-FY16/17	
Mercury		Monitoring	Monitoring	
			Data Report on FY16/17	Data Report on FY17/18
				Technical Report on FY16/17-FY17/18
Nutrients		Monitoring	Monitoring	Monitoring
			Data Report on FY16/17	Data Report on FY17/18
	Technical Reports on Sensor & IEP Data	Technical Report		
Pathogens	Monitoring	Monitoring		
		Data Report on FY15/16	Data Report on FY16/17	
			Technical Report on FY15/16-FY16/17	
Pulse of the Delta				Pulse (Fall '18)

3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The key interpretive product of the program will be the Pulse of the Delta, which will be produced at regular intervals (e.g., annually or every two years). Analyses will emphasize past trends, current status, and projected future trends. Pulse topics could also eventually include causal analyses and more complex syntheses. The over-arching objective will be to answer the priority management questions *using the most appropriate and credible scientific methods*.

The exact methods for data analysis are not prescribed in this plan because doing so would limit the options for the program. Instead, program participants will develop the interpretation of Delta RMP data collectively in a science-based and collaborative process.

With oversight by the TAC, program staff and technical leads will conduct the relevant analyses by evaluating the data in light of the assessment questions, the best scientific methods, and any stated benchmarks or performance targets. A solid review process (see Section 2) ensures that information generated by the program is high quality, objective, relevant, and approved by the SC. The flowchart in Figure 1 summarizes the process for planning, technical development, and production of the Pulse of the Delta.

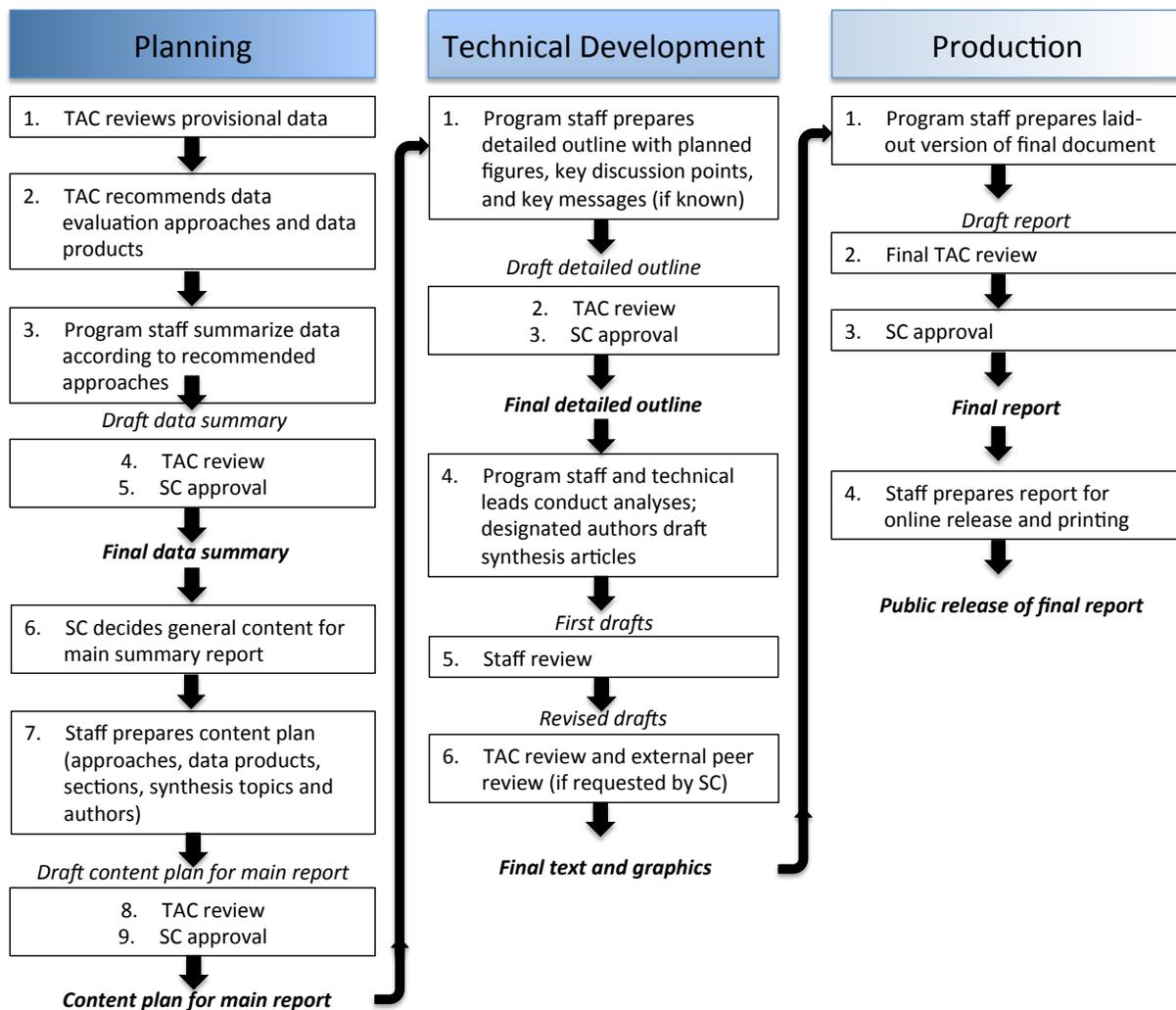


Figure 1. Process for planning, technical development, and production of the Pulse of the Delta

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