

Interagency Ecological Program Contaminants Project Work Team Charter

February 2022

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I. The Interagency Ecological Program

IEP is a consortium of nine state and federal agencies that conducts research and monitoring in the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (herein referred to as Bay-Delta). For the past 50 years, IEP scientists and partners (e.g., universities, NGOs) have worked to: 1) describe the status and trends of aquatic ecological factors of interest in the Bay-Delta; 2) develop an understanding of environmental factors that influence resources within the Bay-Delta, including upstream water bodies; and 3) provide information to support natural resource planning, management, and regulatory activities related to Bay-Delta species. One of the most effective tools for IEP activities has been the formation of Project Work Teams (PWTs) that focus on specific research and monitoring topics of interest. Examples of some of the current PWTs are available at [IEP's website](#). These teams are formed to organize new studies, to review study plans and proposals, to write scientific papers and reports, and to promote collaboration among different groups working on the topic of interest.

II. Relevance of Contaminants to Bay-Delta Science and Management and to the IEP

Contaminants

The term “contaminants” for this project work team is consistent with Fong et al. 2016 as “a large number of substances from distributed and diverse sources that include urban and agricultural runoff, treated industrial and municipal wastewater, atmospheric deposition, and chemicals applied directly to surface waters for invasive plant and pest control”. As a group, contaminants are vast and ecosystem effects of contaminants- whether individually or as mixtures- are not easily captured in directed studies. Many contaminants have demonstrable effects to fish and wildlife and the food web in the Bay-Delta (Brooks et al., 2012. Fong et al., 2016), and Bay-Delta waters are 303(d) listed for anthropogenic contaminants (SWRCB 2018). It is important for scientists and managers in the Delta to be aware of ongoing or emerging contaminants of concern to appropriately develop strategies to address potential threats to the ecosystem. In order to share the most emergent information on contaminant threats and presence in the Delta, stakeholders must have an opportunity to come together to share information and lessons learned.

III. Proposal to form the Contaminants PWT

The Contaminants PWT will provide a venue for scientists from diverse agencies and groups to coordinate and synthesize findings and to inform future research and monitoring needs. The

work team will focus on clarifying the role of contaminants as ecological stressors in the Bay-Delta, in the context of a system subject to multiple stressors. As a collaborative forum, the team will work to advance the acquisition, synthesis, interpretation, and communication of scientific information so that it is useful for decision makers and stakeholders.

General PWT Objectives

- Share up-to-date research findings and proposed studies: members are updated on new projects, from the conceptual study design to the final published results, with the hope that communication, cooperation, and data sharing will strengthen our contaminants-related science in the Bay-Delta
- Facilitate scientist-manager interactions: researchers benefit by getting to know management questions/needs, management benefits from up-to-date scientific findings, challenges, perspectives
- Identify the need for and collectively author manuscripts, reviews, white papers, science strategies, etc., that will bolster the field and inform management decisions
- Be a resource, such as to other IEP Work Teams
- Coordinate/support research funding, such as collectively authoring and/or supporting grant proposals
- Review the work of the Sub-Team(s)

Currently there is one Sub-Team for this PWT which has additional objectives.

Water Quality Resiliency Strategy for Contaminants Sub-Team Objectives

This Sub-Team plans to author a Resiliency Strategy over the next two years that will:

- Evaluate the relative ecological impacts of contaminants
- Identify data gaps and research needs
- Evaluate effectiveness of specific management actions to reduce impacts of contaminant stressors

The Contaminants PWT will not duplicate effort with existing groups such as the Bay and Delta Regional Monitoring Programs (RMPs) and their subgroups. Additionally, the Contaminants PWT will coordinate with other IEP PWTs, including the Water Quality and Phytoplankton PWT, to identify synergistic opportunities. Overlap in membership between existing groups and other PWTs will enhance communication and coordination of similar efforts across the Bay-Delta.

IV. Contaminant PWT Activities

Duration and Meeting Frequency

The PWT is expected to meet quarterly. Specialized subcommittees will be formed to work on PWT activities and will meet as necessary to achieve desired goals.

PWT Decision-Making

The Contaminants PWT strives to have diverse representation and work collectively and impartially as environmental stewards to address key contaminants issues. As a voluntary partnership of diverse organizations, this PWT is not “consensus-based”. The represented organizations do not necessarily have the authority to implement binding decisions. Therefore, the PWT is “consensus-seeking” wherein all participants take reasonable and appropriate steps to reach consensus and convey recommendations. While consensus should be sought, this PWT and its component teams may provide a range of recommendations to the IEP Science Management Team, agencies, or other institutes for final decision-making.

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