THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Committee Item
INFORMATION

One Water and Adaptation Committee

8/17/2026 Committee Meeting

6a

Subject

Review of Adopted Bay-Delta Policies

Executive Summary

This item provides a review of the current Bay-Delta Policies which were adopted by Metropolitan's Board in October 2022. The Bay-Delta Policies reflect extensive input and comments from the Board and were adopted to serve as a guide to Metropolitan staff work and inform future board decisions. Due to current conditions in the Delta, recent deliberations at the Board, as well as changes to Board membership, Directors requested staff to review the Bay-Delta Policies. This letter and accompanying presentation provide the Board with the current Bay-Delta Policies. Following Board discussion and feedback, staff will assess the need to make modifications to the existing policies. Should updates be required, staff will develop additional steps for Board engagement to consider when implementing updates to the Bay-Delta Policies.

Fiscal Impact

None

Applicable Policy

By Minute Item 53012, dated October 11, 2022, the Board adopted the amended revision and restatement of Bay-Delta Policies, as set forth in Agenda Item 7-9.

Details and Background

Bay-Delta Policies Overview Timeline

Since the mid-1990s, Metropolitan's Board has taken a number of actions and adopted policy principles that support staff implementation of activities related to the Bay-Delta. These activities include day-to-day tasks, projects, policy and program development, program management, engagement with external parties, long-term planning, and key investments. Collectively, staff referred to this set of board policy actions as the "Bay-Delta Policies," which were later consolidated, revised and restated in October of 2022.

> ***Pre 2006 – Bay-Delta Board actions and related policies:*** Key Metropolitan board-approved policies were adopted following the passage of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act of 1992, which aimed to solve water conflicts by establishing a balance between requirements for fish and wildlife, agriculture, municipal, industrial, and power interests.
>
> ***April 2006 – Board adoption of policy principles regarding long-term actions for the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta****:* In recognition of then-recent events, including Hurricane Katrina, the Jones Tract levee failure, declining fish species in the Delta, and renewed state efforts to protect the Delta, the Board adopted 13 policy principles that reflected the importance of the Delta to Metropolitan. These policy principles included a Delta Mission Statement. Based on the four central themes, 13 specific policy principles were adopted to ensure long-term challenges in the Delta could be successfully met.

***June 2007 – Board support, in principle, of the proposed framework for Metropolitan's Delta Action Plan**:* Following board adoption of the 13 policy principles for the Delta, the development of Metropolitan's Delta Action Plan began. At its April 2007 Board of Directors Retreat, the Board discussed a proposed framework for directing Metropolitan's staff action on Delta-related issues.

September 2007 – Board adoption of criteria for conveyance options in implementation of the Long-Term Delta Action Plan: In September 2007, Metropolitan's Board adopted six key policy criteria for considering the water supply conveyance options being developed by the State of California: (1) provide water supply reliability; (2) improve export water quality; (3) allow flexible pumping operations in a dynamic fishery environment; (4) enhance the Delta ecosystem; (5) reduce seismic risks; and (6) reduce climate change risks.

August 2008 and January 2009 – Board approval of Delta Governance Principles and support of the Final Delta Vision Implementation Report: In August 2008, the Board adopted Delta Governance Principles in response to the governance strategy established by the Governor's Blue-Ribbon Task Force. The Governor's Blue-Ribbon Task Force adopted a Delta Vision Plan to describe an overarching vision for the future of the Delta, followed by a subsequent Delta Vision Strategic Plan.

October 2022 – Board approval of Revision and Restatement of Bay-Delta Policies: In October 2022, Metropolitan's Board adopted a Revision and Restatement of Bay-Delta Policies following more than a year of staff development and board feedback.

Overview of Process to Consolidate, Review, and Update the Bay-Delta Policies

At the April 2021 Bay-Delta Committee meeting, staff was directed to review and propose updates to Metropolitan's Bay-Delta Policies. In November 2021, staff followed up with a presentation to the Bay-Delta Committee that provided a high-level overview of the history of Metropolitan's Bay-Delta Policies and a proposed process to review and consider updates to those policies.

Internal Review and Development Process

During the fall of 2021 and into early 2022, staff went through a process to review and consolidate the existing Bay-Delta actions and policies described above. Staff subject matter experts throughout Metropolitan provided input on key policy areas to identify changed conditions and emerging trends. Staff solicited additional input on draft policy objectives and principles from the Office of the General Manager, External Affairs, Water Resource Management, Real Property, Finance, and Legal, leading up to the July 2022 information item.

Board Review of Policy Principles

April 2022 – Water Planning and Stewardship Committee: Staff developed and transmitted background information to the Committee prior to the April 2022 meeting to serve as background and a reference and to promote continued discussion.

May 2022 – Water Planning and Stewardship Committee: Staff provided background on existing board-adopted Bay-Delta Policies and described the key policy areas that were identified in the internal review process. In addition, staff outlined how those key policy areas were used to develop a draft Framework and policy principles and provided examples of how the Framework could be used to support different policy applications.

June 2022 – Water Planning and Stewardship Committee: The Board provided staff with additional feedback on the draft policy framework and policy principles. Staff also received feedback from member agencies through discussions with staff, member agency meetings, and requests for staff to provide updates at member agency board meetings.

August 2022 – Water Planning and Stewardship Committee: In response to board and member agency feedback, staff further refined and consolidated the draft policy framework and policy principles and brought forward a Revised Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework to the Committee as an Information Item.

September 2022 – Imported Water Committee: An action letter was presented to the Imported Water Committee, with a staff-recommended action to "Adopt the revision and restatement of Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework" commensurate with the August 2022 Information Item. During Committee, staff suggested deferment of the item for one month to further refine in response to feedback received from the Board, member agencies, and the public. The Committee acted to defer the item.

October 2022 – Imported Water Committee: An action letter was presented to the Imported Water Committee, with a staff-recommended action to "Adopt the revision and restatement of Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework." The item received minor floor amendments and was later adopted by the full Board.

Revised Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework

The revised Bay-Delta Policies consist of three policy objectives and a framework of nine policy principles, shown in the table below, that restate existing policy and include key updates based on emerging trends. The table below summarizes this information. The Revised Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework document **(Attachment 1)** provides an overview of how to navigate the policy framework, key descriptors of each element of the framework, and examples that illustrate how the policy principles might be applied.

Revised Bay-Delta Policy Objectives		
• **Promote a Sustainable Bay-Delta Within Metropolitan's One Water Approach** • **Support Statewide and Regional Actions that Further the Coequal Goals Established in the Delta Reform Act** • **Address the Risks Associated with Climate Change**		
***Revised* Bay-Delta Policy Framework**		
Science and Watershed Management	**Water Supply Reliability and Resilience**	**Partnerships and Cost-Effective Investments**
Protect and restore aquatic species and habitats based on best available science	Protect water supply reliability and quality while reducing reliance consistent with the Delta Reform Act	Maintain and pursue cost-effective financial investments
Partner in watershed-wide approaches to develop comprehensive solutions	Invest in actions that provide seismic and climate resiliency	Foster broad and inclusive engagement of Delta interests and beneficiaries
Advance responsible stewardship of Metropolitan's Delta islands	Seek flexible operations, water management actions, and infrastructure solutions	Promote innovative and multi-benefit initiatives

8/6/2026
Nina Hawk *Date*
Group Manager, Bay-Delta Initiatives

8/6/2026
Shivaji Deshmukh *Date*
General Manager

Attachment 1 – Revised Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework (October 2022)

Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework adopted by The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California Board of Directors October 2022

Overview

The board-adopted Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework describes each of the three revised Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Bay-Delta Framework with relevant examples listed under each of the nine policy principles. The examples found within this document are not exhaustive and do not constitute a formal board action on a given project. The Bay-Delta Policy Objectives define Metropolitan's overarching goals to protect reliable, high-quality water supplies in an environmentally sensitive manner, consistent with Metropolitan's Mission Statement. The Bay-Delta Framework includes nine policy principles intended to advance the Bay-Delta policy objectives.

The Bay-Delta Policy Objectives and Framework collectively will guide Metropolitan staff and will inform future Board actions.

Bay-Delta Policy Objectives

- **Promote a Sustainable Bay-Delta Within Metropolitan's One Water Approach**
- **Support Statewide and Regional Actions that Further the Coequal Goals Established in the Delta Reform Act**
- **Address the Risks Associated with Climate Change**

Bay-Delta Policy Framework

Science and Watershed Management	Water Supply Reliability and Resilience	Partnerships and Cost-Effective Investments
Protect and restore aquatic species and habitats based on best available science	Protect water supply reliability and quality while reducing reliance consistent with the Delta Reform Act	Maintain and pursue cost-effective financial investments
Partner in watershed-wide approaches to develop comprehensive solutions	Invest in actions that provide seismic and climate resiliency	Foster broad and inclusive engagement of Delta interests and beneficiaries
Advance responsible stewardship of Metropolitan's Delta islands	Seek flexible operations, water management actions, and infrastructure solutions	Promote innovative and multi-benefit initiatives

Bay-Delta Policy Objectives

Objective 1: Promote a Sustainable Bay-Delta Within Metropolitan's One Water Approach

Supplies from the Bay-Delta watershed are integral to implementing Metropolitan's One Water Approach, an integrated planning and implementation approach to managing finite water resources for long-term resilience and reliability, meeting both community and ecosystem needs. Bay-Delta supplies are foundational to the One Water approach as they meet demands in Metropolitan's service area and acts as source water for local supply projects such as water recycling and groundwater basin replenishment.

Objective 2: Support Statewide and Regional Actions that Further the Coequal Goals Established in the Delta Reform Act[1]

Metropolitan supports the coequal goals established in the Delta Reform Act of (1) providing a more reliable water supply for California and (2) protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem. Ongoing statewide and regional investments in ecosystem restoration, flood control, water supplies. multi-benefit projects in the Bay-Delta, and upstream watersheds are essential to building and maintaining resilient water supplies from the Bay-Delta. Effective implementation of state policies related to reduced reliance, water use efficiency, the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, and initiatives such as the governor's Water Resilience Portfolio will be essential. Likewise, additional funding and permitting efficiencies can help expedite regional and local supply development, and projects that supply ecologically beneficial flows in the Bay-Delta or Bay-Delta watershed.

Objective 3: Address the Risks Associated with Climate Change

Climate change is impacting California's water resources: sea levels are rising, snowpack is decreasing, and water temperatures are increasing. Droughts are expected to become more frequent and more severe, and storm intensities are expected to increase. These climate change trends are anticipated to continue, posing a prolonged threat to the Bay-Delta and Metropolitan's water supplies. An integrated federal, state, regional, and local approach to developing and managing water supply programs and projects is critical to managing for the future with climate change impacts that are occurring. As climate conditions and science continue to evolve, Metropolitan supports the use and development of additional analyses, tools, and actions, including actions to reduce emissions consistent with Metropolitan's Climate Action Plan.

[1] As described in Public Resources Code § 29702

Bay-Delta Policy Framework

Policy Area 1: Science and Watershed Management

1A Protect and restore aquatic species and habitats based on best available science

Sustainable and resilient water supplies rely, in part, on the health of the Delta ecosystem. As populations of native aquatic wildlife continue to trend downward, rigorous and peer reviewed science protects the environment and Metropolitan's water supply by supporting informed decision-making.

> *Examples include[2]: Metropolitan staff authored papers on topics including Delta Smelt Habitat, Salmon Growth, and Delta Stressors, the Lower Yolo Tidal Marsh Restoration Project, and participation in the Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program and inter-agency consultations on coordinated long term operations of the State Water and Central Valley Projects.*

1B Partner in watershed-wide approaches to develop comprehensive solutions

With much of the state's water supply originating in the mountains, the health and management of the upper watersheds are critically important to California's water quality and water supply.

> *Examples include[2]: potential partnerships and opportunities in the upper watershed focused on the long-term potential for climate change adaptation (including adjustments for loss of snowpack), reduction in the impacts of variable precipitation patterns on runoff, and improvements in water quality and water temperature.*

1C Advance responsible stewardship of Metropolitan's Delta islands

The Delta Islands provide a unique opportunity for research, innovation, and collaboration with other stakeholders to develop sustainable strategies for Delta land use and environmental stewardship. Staff is engaged in specific processes and opportunities for responsible long-term stewardship of Metropolitan's Delta islands properties. Further advancements on Metropolitan's Delta Islands would comport with both the Bay-Delta Policy Framework and the Board's adopted Climate Action Plan. Examples related to Metropolitan Bay-Delta Islands do not imply or authorize a particular use of the islands and future actions related to the islands will be consistent with Board direction as informed by deliberation of the Real Property and Asset Management Committee.

> *Examples include[2]: levee enhancements that protect the freshwater pathways to the State Water Project south-Delta pumps, pilot projects and scientific investigations to evaluate strategies for carbon sequestration, floating organic marshes that can support sensitive fish species, sustainable agriculture that halts or reverses subsidence, experiments to improve measurement of water diversions and water use, compensatory mitigation, habitat restoration for native aquatic species, native fish species preservation, and reduction in stressors affecting state and federal listed fish species.*

[2] The examples found within this document are not an exhaustive list and do not reflect nor constitute a formal board action on a given project.

Policy Area 2: Water Supply Reliability and Resilience

2A Protect water supply reliability and quality while reducing reliance consistent with the Delta Reform Act[3]

Two of the core tenets of Metropolitan's mission statement are to provide reliable and high-quality water supplies to its service area. The Delta is a major pathway for the source of water for most of the state and the sustainability of Delta water supplies is a critical element of Southern California's water reliability. This reliability is protected through science-based regulatory frameworks, long term water supply planning, collaborative partnerships, pursuing water supply infrastructure solutions while reducing reliance on the Delta consistent with the Delta Reform Act.

Delta water quality should be protected for public health and managing salinity. Measures that reduce the salinity of Delta supplies will help meet regional salinity objectives of urban and agricultural agencies throughout California. This includes benefits to Metropolitan's service area to enhance management of Southern California groundwater basins and to develop additional recycled water.

> *Examples include[2]: Water supply and quality initiatives including new Delta conveyance, Voluntary Agreements to implement State Water Resources Control Board Water Quality regulations, Delta Regional Monitoring Program, CV-SALTS, and Delta Nutrient Research Plan*

2B Invest in actions that provide seismic and climate resiliency

Earthquakes in the Delta region, sea level rise and subsidence can result in levee failure and saltwater intrusion into the Delta from the San Francisco Bay and the ocean. Changing weather patterns will result in longer periods of drought and more intense storms and storm periods. Resiliency requires continued participation and investment in actions including flood emergency planning, levee improvements, water storage, and water supply management.

> *Examples include[2]: the DWR/USACE Delta Flood Emergency Integration Plan, the Governor's Water Resilience Portfolio, and new storage and conveyance projects.*

2C Seek flexible operations, water management actions, and infrastructure solutions

Current operations of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project facilities are subject to prescriptive flow and other regulatory standards. Metropolitan staff is working with partners to advance technology and monitoring that could be used to develop more effective water project operations that are protective of aquatic wildlife, with the support of new technological capabilities and better real-time information systems.

> *Examples include[2]: Improved atmospheric river and runoff forecasting, forecast-informed reservoir operations, improved fish monitoring, including steelhead, artificial intelligence, modeling of aquatic wildlife behavior, improved rapid genetic testing of salvaged salmonids, and the use of true adaptive management and structured decision-making processes.*

[3] As described in California Water Code § 85021

Policy Area 3: Partnerships and Cost-Effective Investments

3A Maintain and pursue cost-effective financial investments

Completion and maintenance of large multi-benefit water supply projects require partnership and multiple funding sources to be cost-effective. Advancing partnerships and seeking multiple funding sources can offset or reduce expenditures associated with climate change adaptation for water supply and other public benefits, which are instrumental to future Metropolitan water supply reliability.

> *Examples include[2]: repair of California Aqueduct subsidence, new Delta conveyance, Sites Reservoir, Pure Water and other local and regional projects.*

3B Foster broad and inclusive engagement of Delta interests and beneficiaries

The Bay-Delta is a lifeline to multiple entities with diverse interests including tribes, public water agencies, local, state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, underserved communities, environmental justice groups and agricultural interests. Metropolitan embraces a proactive approach to seeking and sustaining engagement with all communities to foster new perspectives on Bay-Delta related issues and identify additional opportunities for collaboration.

> *Examples include[2]: Engaging in the development of a Community Benefits Program for the Delta Conveyance Project, participating in the multi-interest Collaborative Science and Adaptive Management Program, opportunities for projects on Metropolitan's Delta Islands, participating in State Water Project Contractors, serving on the Delta Protection Commission Advisory Committee, participating in the Plumas Watershed Forum, and Sites Reservoir Committee and subcommittee engagement.*

3C Promote innovative and multi-benefit initiatives

The Delta region is at the intersection of many social, political, environmental and climate related factors. As a result, Delta issues are significantly complex, with a significant degree of uncertainty given the range of physical and biological factors that are involved. Metropolitan recognizes that new technologies and approaches are needed to address current and future challenges in the Bay-Delta.

> *Examples include[2]: Collaborative and innovative solutions including the use of structured decision making, environmental DNA to detect aquatic species, the Reorienting to Salmon Recovery effort, the Bouldin Island Levee Setback Project, and the Delta Smelt and Native Species Preservation Project.*