

BAY-DELTA SOCIAL SCIENCE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
BAY-DELTA SCIENCE CONFERENCE LAUNCH EVENT MEETING SUMMARY- DRAFT

April 7th, 2021

GOAL OF BAY-DELTA SOCIAL SCIENCE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The goal of building a social science community of practice (CoP) is to bring together social scientists and practitioners who are committed to advancing policy-relevant social science on the human dimensions of the San Francisco Bay and Sacramento- San Joaquin Delta (Bay-Delta). This community aims to facilitate collaborative research efforts, provide opportunities for the social sciences to inform management and policy in the Bay-Delta, and advance our understandings of the estuary as a complex social-ecological system.

BACKGROUND FOR EVENT

In 2018 the Delta Science Program (DSP) and Delta Stewardship Council (Council) began a focused effort to better integrate social sciences into the agency's activities in order to more effectively provide the best possible unbiased scientific information and inform water and environmental decision-making. This led to the development of the Social Science Task Force, who produced a final report '[A Social Science Strategy for the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta](#)' released in April 2020. Included in the Task Force's recommendations to the Council is a call to develop a more collaborative and integrated network of social scientists across the Bay-Delta system. The first event to launch a Bay-Delta Social Science Community of Practice was hosted virtually April 7th, 2021 during the [2021 Bay Delta Science Conference](#).

PARTICIPATION

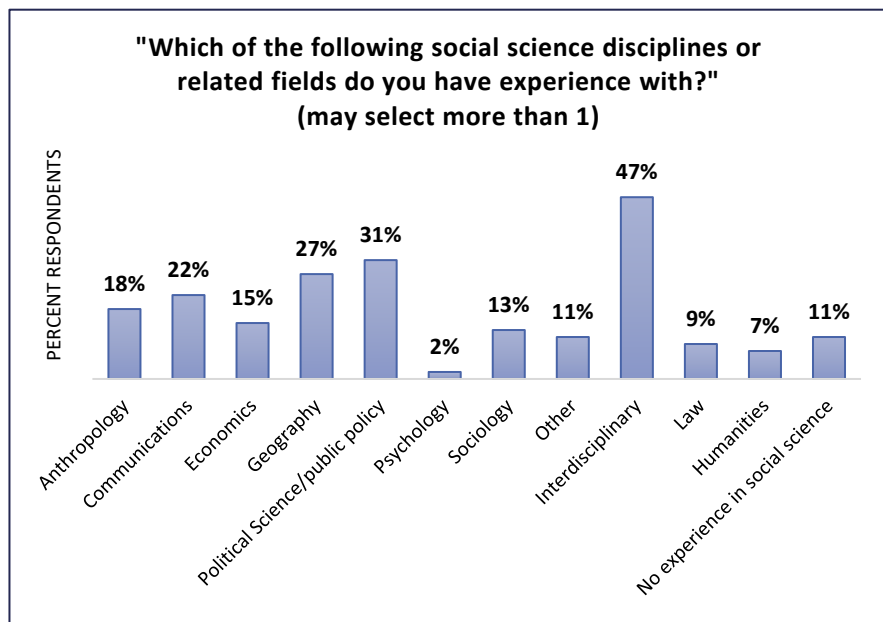
The event saw a total of 73 participants, including 16 Council Staff and 1 Council Member. Participants were asked a series of Mentimeter live polling questions about their organizational affiliations, roles and relevant interests and expertise in the social sciences, humanities, and other related fields. Responses showed participants were a diverse group coming from academia/ universities (27 participants), state government (14), federal government (7), local government (1), NGOs (3), community-based organizations (2) and the private sector (3). A large majority (82%) of participants identified as researchers, scientists or professors; there were smaller numbers of planners (8), engineers (2), resource managers (3) and staff managers (4), students (2), and science communicators (2) also present. Participants represented a large number of institutions and organizations, geographically dispersed across the country, as shown in the following map (for full list of attendees, see last page).



Interactive [map](#) shows location markers for attendees' organizations and are scaled to reflect multiple attendees coming from some organizations.

RELEVANT EXPERTISE IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, HUMANITIES AND RELATED FIELDS

Participants had background across many social science disciplines, the humanities and law and the majority indicated that they did interdisciplinary work. Some fields were more heavily represented than others; for example, 17 people noted experience in political science and public policy, whereas only 1 person noted experience in psychology. We also believe that scholars from the humanities can play an important role in the CoP, especially in describing and interpreting individual and cultural human experiences. We recognize



and respect that there are substantive (epistemological, methodological, and topical) differences between and within humanities and social scientific disciplines, and this CoP is intended to be inclusive of all types and areas of work that contribute to a robust understanding of the human dimensions of the Bay-Delta.

INPUT ON COMMUNITY DESIGN

Much of the event was spent generating ideas on possible structures for the CoP and types of activities that could serve as the main engagement opportunities for community members. We asked an additional set of Mentimeter questions and breakout room discussions focused on the CoP structure and governance and gauging interest in the proposed activities.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE STRUCTURE:

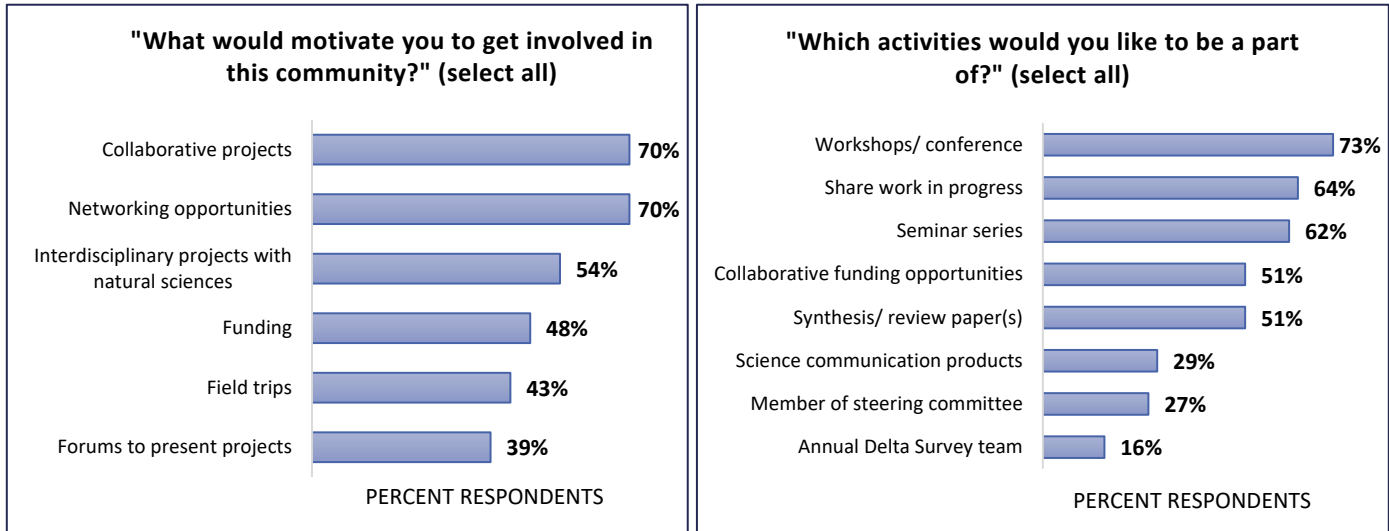
The Council proposed a potential structure for the CoP, involving: a leadership and coordination team housed at the Council; a steering committee comprised of CoP members to provide input on strategic direction and engage on specific initiatives; project work teams organized around specific projects/ goals; student and fellowship opportunities for trainees; and general membership.

Discussions provided the following perspectives on structure:

- 12 people indicated interest in being of a steering committee
- Ensure balance between activities being driven by DSP needs versus allowing for collaborations to form organically, driven by members' interests; ideas for achieving this balance included placing CoP interns/ fellows in other relevant partner organizations and ensuring steering committee has a strong voice in determining focal topics and themes, while Council resources are used to support network coordination and logistics
- Aim to build 'bridges' to other estuarine systems, to facilitate cross-system information sharing, learning and comparative research
- Project work groups must be funded and task specific, or alternatively could be organized around DSP-funded competitive research grants, ensuring their projects develop useful end-products
- Focus early efforts on expanding and diversifying CoP membership to include more agency scientists and staff, consultants, federal agencies' social science working groups, community-based groups, and tribal representatives

HIGH PRIORITY ACTIVITIES:

The Council also presented a suite of potential activities and opportunities as efforts the CoP may take on, seeking input from participants on which types of activities would motivate their involvement and which, if any, they would like to take part in.



Breakout room discussions allowed for elaboration and additional ideas to emerge. Ideas under each heading are organized from lowest hanging fruit to most challenging to implement.

Networking opportunities:

- Establish database to help researchers find collaborators—including both other social science collaborators and natural scientists as collaborators for interdisciplinary work
- Coordinate field trips to meet Bay-Delta communities and better understand environment
- Facilitate co-production and engaged research models by connecting social science researchers to community members, community-based organizations, agency staff and elected officials to co-design research questions and research approaches
- Facilitate connections to other estuarine systems (e.g. Puget Sound Partnership; Chesapeake Bay social science roadmap effort; Mississippi Delta); host comparative estuaries symposium

Create central repository of research and resources on human dimensions work:

- Share information about relevant conferences, workshops, events, and funding opportunities
- Provide a compiled list of available datasets, literature reviews, meta-analyses, and review papers, that can integrate with other Delta science tracking efforts (e.g. Delta science tracker) and improve coordination to avoid duplication or “recreating the wheel”

- Establish a living list of social science research and synthesis/review priorities that can be referenced for Delta Independent Science Board reviews, Science Action Agenda updates, future funding calls/ RFPs
- Inventory humanities and arts on the Delta (e.g. inventory historical photographs)
- Establish regional practices, shared methodologies, and baseline data to facilitate data integration and comparison and build consistent terminology and concepts
- Facilitate integration and information sharing between disparate research efforts in Bay and Delta

Educational and training courses:

- Develop course on “Bay-Delta as a social-ecological system” for graduate students and high-level undergrads across multiple universities to engage multiple interested professors, pull in speakers on different social science topics applied to the Bay-Delta, and coordinate student projects that contribute to Bay-Delta social science synthesis
- Develop social science communication tools with public science museums, particularly on ‘hard decisions’ in complex policy settings, conflict mitigation and weighing benefits and trade-offs
- Develop social sciences 101 training for agencies and biophysical collaborative science venues in Delta to build understandings of the language, methods, theory, and general knowledge applied in social sciences work, and demonstrate value of the social sciences
- Develop student opportunities, like science-policy internships or research fellowships in agencies, engaging students in research projects that have time-intensive data collection (e.g. interviews, oral histories, participant observations), youth-led science communication

Funding and support resources:

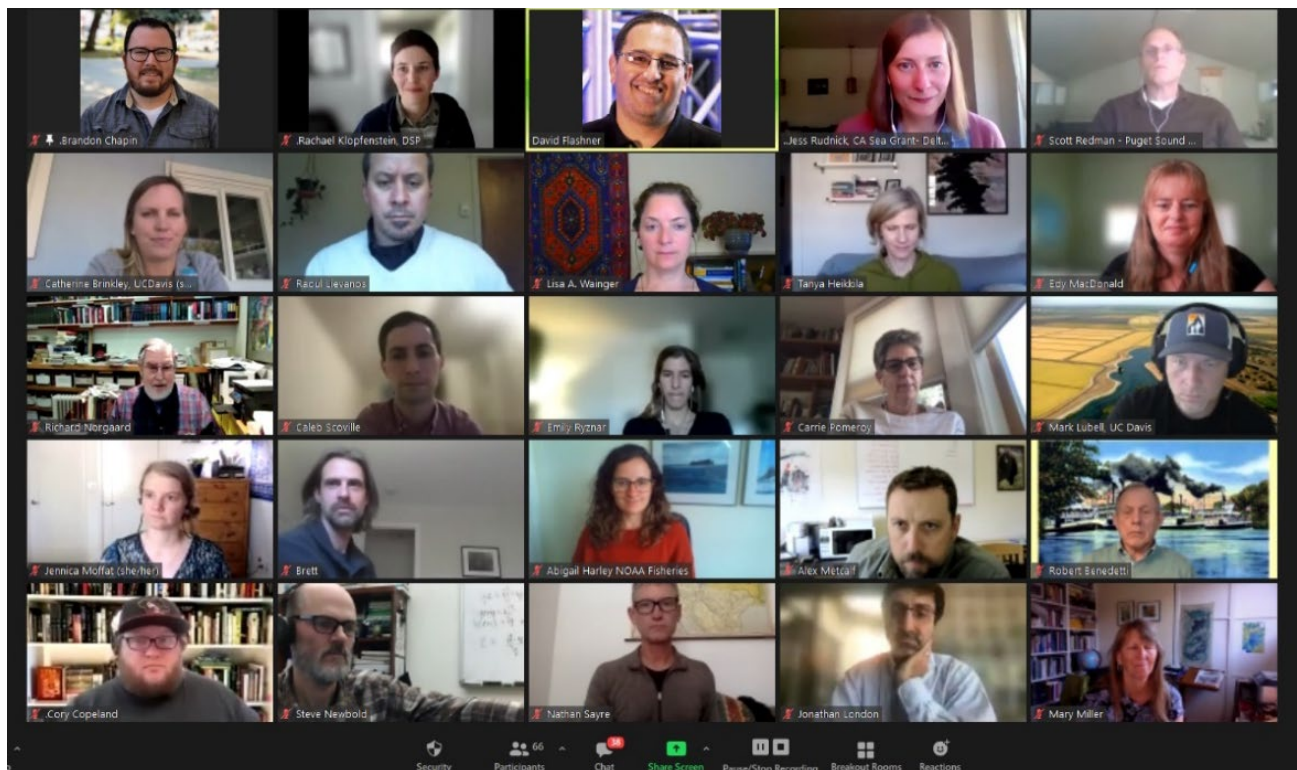
- Provide social science researchers better understanding of priority management questions and needs, in order to develop more competitive DSP funding proposals
- Build social science “incubator” that funds low-cost projects, lowers the barrier to grant applications for smaller projects, expand to descriptive approaches (e.g. not hypothesis-based)
- Explore opportunity for designation as Federal Regional Commission, which might open opportunities for coordinated federal funding

INPUT ON PRIORITY TOPICS AND THEMES:

Finally, the Council shared a list of high-priority topics for future social sciences research and humanities work pulled from past efforts like the Social Science Task Force and the [2019 CMSI Human Dimensions Workshop](#). Participants reviewed the list and contributed additional ideas for high priority research areas in need of systematic reviews/ meta-analyses, or original data collection (listed in alphabetical order):

- Adaptation: Individual and community strategies for coping with landscape change; learning in response to new environmental challenges; types of knowledge used in analyzing adaptation pathways and tradeoffs
- Community engagement: best practices and approaches for meaningful engagement; proportionate and representative policy engagement
- Environmental justice: inequitable distribution of climate risks and costs of adaptation
- Fishing: fish consumption, subsistence, and commercial fishing communities
- Integration of land and water issues
- Invasive species: impacts on communities and livelihoods
- Learning and knowledge-sharing with other estuarine systems: integrating social science, developing frameworks for social-ecological system monitoring, management, and evaluation
- Levees and flood protection: which communities are (not) protected; cost benefit analysis
- National Heritage Area: Whose heritage and what history is promoted and protected? Oral histories of Delta communities
- Perceptions and use of Delta by surrounding communities and general California public
- Resilience: Integrated metrics for human-natural system resilience; people's perceptions of environmental change and resilience; factors or functions necessary for long-term sustainability
- Restoration: co-production practices for designing restoration with communities and conflicting interest group; defining "restoration" when returning to pristine or natural state is not possible
- Social spatial analysis methods and approaches
- Tribal perspectives and knowledge: Delta land reclamation, cultural resources, salmon recovery, ethnoecology
- Understanding "Delta as Place" from the landowner and farm-worker perspective
- Use of social science by agencies and decision-makers

THANK YOU to all participants and future CoP members who attended the launch event, as well as Council and BDSC logistics support staff! We're looking forward to continuing to build this community together. For any questions, please contact Jessica Rudnick (Jessica.rudnick@deltacouncil.ca.gov) or Rachael Klopfenstein (rachael.klopfenstein@deltacouncil.ca.gov).



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