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The Year Ahead at SFEWS

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EDITORIAL

This is the 20th issue of *San Francisco Estuary and Watershed Science*, and it seems an appropriate time to reflect on the last two years and update our readers on the journal's progress. Firstly, we would like to thank our Associate Editors for their tireless and rigorous work in running a challenging peer review process and maintaining the high standards characteristic of SFEWS. Most importantly, we thank our authors and readers for your continued support. It was notable that hits and downloads for journal articles declined during the California state contract freeze of 2008–2009, which closed down publication of SFEWS for 8 months. But hits and downloads increased again when we resumed publication, reflecting a strong return of our readership; and those indicators of readership are continuing to grow. We clearly remain a well-read journal, especially regionally. Our authors and our readers understand the challenges we face in managing water issues in California and that is reflected in the number of articles we are receiving relevant to those issues. The last two years have seen the appearance of policy-oriented books and reports seminal to the dialogue about California water. A number of articles presenting the science behind these important documents have appeared in SFEWS in the same period. An important goal in publishing these articles was to make transparent at least some of the science that

underpins the more generally stated aspects of papers aimed at decision makers. That said, papers were not accepted—no matter how relevant—where they did not meet our rigorous demands for scientific objectivity: specifically, robust analysis and documentation in support of conclusions; comprehensive consideration of the existing literature; balance; and avoidance of advocacy of specific policies. We recognize that SFEWS must be relevant to California water issues and open to a broad spectrum of authors. But our first priority remains publishing strong science—free of bias and independent from political influence—to remain a respected source of credible scientific information.

In the summer of 2008, after the state's contract freeze was lifted, we moved forward with a broader vision for the journal and began to implement some aspects of our "Aims and Scope" that we discussed with the Editorial Board. For example, in this issue, we are publishing two articles that represent a new kind of article category: a "Note." The first paper by Miller presents an alternative analysis of data on delta smelt to that published by Kimmerer (2008) in SFEWS. The second is a response to that analysis from Kimmerer. The goal was not to resolve the legitimate scientific uncertainties that surround delta smelt issues, but to clarify how different assumptions can affect analyses of these complex issues. Both authors worked hard to document the bases for their conclusions and to avoid judgmental statements that differentiate an advocacy debate from a dialogue.

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As stated above, our primary focus remains publication of robust new breakthroughs in science (basic or applied), but occasionally, we do consider publication of similar types of papers if they are done with the utmost care.

In 2009, we also discussed the journal's capability for publishing special issues. We are happy to say that two such issues are now in progress, one on wetland restoration (Matt Ferner, special editor) and another that will present some of the conceptual models developed in the DRERIP process (Denise Reed and James Anderson, special editors). We expect both to be published in the year ahead. The upcoming special issues mean an increased workload in managing the journal. In response we have added assistance with copy editing services, which ultimately should allow us to publish more papers per year.

One of the unique attributes of SFEWS, and perhaps a major aspect of our success, is that we are an open access journal that is available at no cost to readers and authors. That requires a sponsor. We are pleased that the Delta Stewardship Council agreed to extend our contract within the Bay-Delta Science Program budget until July 2012. Thanks to the efforts of the Science Program, the Council recognized the important role of SFEWS in Bay-Delta issues and presented a positive view of our future. They did remark that the journal's outlook would be strengthened if we looked toward a broader diversity of funding sources as we move ahead. We have also begun investigating ways to improve our recognition outside the region and to expand access to our articles by search engines. The best international search engine for finding SFEWS articles is Google Scholar, where we are well covered. We are recognized by the Web of Knowledge, but we are not yet formally recognized by the Web of Science. Every journal must apply for inclusion in the latter. The major requirement is regular and timely publication of articles. If a journal applies and is not accepted there is a long delay before a journal is re-considered. We have regularly published three issues per year since 2006, with the exception of the freeze year, 2009, when we published two issues. We have a solid base of articles awaiting publication in the next year. With the freeze

behind us and the goal of diversifying our funding, we now feel confident in pursuing the Web of Science application in the next year.

In summary, we see a bright future for SFEWS, thanks to the continued support of our readers, authors, and Associate Editors. We look forward to addressing the challenges we all face in the years ahead and believe we are well positioned to sustain our mission for many years ahead.