

CDFG – OSPR

SCIENTIFIC STUDY AND EVALUATION PROGRAM (SSEP)

Program Objectives and Guidelines

The Scientific Study and Evaluation Program (SSEP) provides a mechanism for investigating, evaluating, and improving applied Oil Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) programs, best achievable technologies, and our knowledge of the adverse effects of oil spills in the marine environment. The goals of SSEP are authorized in the Government Code § 8670.12. The program also supports scientific and technical research that will enhance the department's natural resource damage assessments, injury quantification, and restoration capabilities and knowledge base.

The following are the operating guidelines and objectives for the SSEP:

1. Well defined goals will be established for the program.
2. Dedicated staff within the OSPR Scientific Program will be committed to provide program management and administrative support.
3. A Technical Review Committee (TRC) will be maintained to review and rate project proposals that will then be submitted to the Steering Committee for prioritization. The TRC will consist of eight to ten members (primarily OSPR staff with some non-state cooperators) selected by the Chief of the Scientific Branch.
4. A Steering Committee, chaired by the Chief of the Scientific Branch, will provide program direction and evaluation and will rank projects for priority.
5. Final project selection will be approved by the OSPR Administrator.
6. Written project proposals will be solicited annually; solicitations will include the SSEP criteria that projects must meet and proposal formatting requirements. Every project must either be proposed or sponsored by an OSPR staff member.
7. All proposals will be rated and ranked for funding according to established criteria included as an attachment to this document (Attachment A).
8. It is intended that all projects will be selected and all contracts prepared by the beginning of each fiscal year.

9. The results and products of all projects will be evaluated by OSPR staff, and will be maintained in a central location at OSPR headquarters. These reports/results shall be made available upon request. Requests should be made to Bruce Joab, the SSEP Coordinator, at (916) 322-7561 or bjoab@ospr.dfg.ca.gov.
10. Recipients of any SSEP funding are strongly encouraged to publish their findings in appropriate peer reviewed journals. The SSEP Coordinator should be notified by recipients when their SSEP studies are published in peer reviewed journals, conference proceedings, or other technical publications.
11. As part of the overall SSEP budget, a contingency fund may be established to address unforeseen project needs throughout the fiscal year.
12. A list of proposal policies is provided as Attachment D to help guide applicants regarding specific types of proposals that are considered to be appropriate or inappropriate for SSEP support.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The objective of the Steering Committee is to provide overall program direction and evaluation. Additionally, the Steering Committee will be responsible for evaluating the TRC project recommendations and make project funding recommendations to the Chief of the Scientific Branch.

The Steering Committee will also oversee the development of an annual report detailing the progress and results of all the projects undertaken during the report period. This report will be made available on the OSPR website.

The Steering Committee will meet at least once a year, and will at minimum consist of the following members:

- Chief of the Scientific Branch, Chair
- SSEP Coordinator
- OSPR Managers from:
 - Resource Assessment Program
 - Laboratory Services
 - Field Operations/Veterinary Support Services
 - Response Support Program

TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE (TRC)

The objective of the TRC is to evaluate the technical merits of the project proposals and provide the initial review and scoring of the projects. The primary basis for TRC scoring are the SSEP Project Evaluation Criteria (Attachment B). Project scores are submitted to the Steering Committee for their use in prioritizing projects for final selection by the Chief of the Scientific Branch and approval by the Administrator.

Staff and representatives with technical expertise in the type of projects being evaluated will serve on the TRC. The SSEP Coordinator, from the Scientific Branch, will serve as the chair of the TRC. The committee will consist of eight to ten members, potentially including representatives from the following areas:

- Scientific Field Response Staff
- Marine Safety Branch Staff
- Laboratory Services Program Staff
- Veterinary Services Unit Staff
- Response Support Program Staff
- Non-State representatives (e.g., University, Non-profit Groups, Industry)

ANNUAL SSEP SYMPOSIUM

SSEP maintains the goal of hosting an annual SSEP Symposium to highlight and present the results and progress reports of all the work done within the program. The symposium is held in April or May of each year, and participants in the SSEP are highly encouraged to participate by giving oral presentations of their SSEP-funded work. The presentation may be an interim status report or a final report once the project work is concluded. It is recommended that all SSEP contracts be written to include a budget item for travel to Sacramento, especially if the work is to be presented by a non-local contractor, to facilitate active participation in the SSEP Symposium.

DELIVERABLES

Deliverables for SSEP-funded work are to be presented in a well edited and professional format that is suitable for presentation to the public. If the deliverable is a report, it must be in a scientific format, including a title page, abstract, introduction, material and methods, results, discussion, and literature cited sections. If the report is long, an executive summary is appropriate, and other features such as a table of contents, list of figures, list of tables, objectives, conclusions or recommendations, and acknowledgements may also be appropriate. Authors are instructed to include the contract number (if applicable) on the title page, as well as the date and the name(s) of collaborators involved including the DFG Contract Manager. If an alternative format is desired, please consult with the SSEP Coordinator for approval prior to the end of the contract or project. Also see examples 2006-03 and 2006-08 at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/ospr/report/ssep/ssep_summary.html).

All reports are to be reviewed through the DFG-OSPR Supervisors and Managers prior to delivery to the SSEP Coordinator. Participants and collaborators are encouraged, but not required, to submit photographs of their project work to the SSEP Coordinator for use in outreach activities. As indicated above, recipients of any SSEP funding are strongly encouraged to publish their findings in appropriate peer reviewed journals.

Attachment A

SSEP Project Selection Process

1. Soliciting Project Proposals:

Project concepts will be solicited from OSPR staff, and each project must have a sponsor/contract manager from within OSPR. Work on a project may be done by appropriate contractors with oversight from the OSPR sponsor who acts as the contract manager. All work shall be done in accordance with State contracting policy.

Proposals will be requested once each fiscal year. The proposals must be submitted on the Scientific Study and Evaluation Program (SSEP) Proposal Form (Attachment C-2).. Authors should ensure that their proposals address the SSEP Project Evaluation Criteria (Attachment B). Proposals that will be considered for funding shall be related to one of the following study categories:

- A. Investigation and evaluation of applied spill prevention and response programs and technologies;
- B. The effects of oil on fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality;
- C. The effects of spill response activities on fish, wildlife, habitat and water quality;
- D. Best achievable protection strategies;
- E. Marine oil spill wildlife collection and rehabilitation;
- F. Natural resource damage assessment technologies and methods;
- G. Techniques for habitat and species restoration and monitoring

If the topic of your proposal is outside of your occupational expertise (e.g. natural resource damage assessment), you are strongly encouraged to consult with OSPR staff in the subject area of interest identified in your proposal. The SSEP Coordinator can help facilitate this contact if needed. All proposals must be received on or before the advertised deadline, and late submissions will not be accepted. Exceptions may be granted on a case by case basis with the approval of the OSPR Scientific Branch Chief, and exceptions are primarily for circumstances where spill response duties lead to a requirement for an extension.

2. Selection Criteria:

The criteria that will be used for project selection are listed in Attachment B, SSEP Project Evaluation Criteria. The TRC and the Steering Committee will both use these criteria to evaluate and prioritize the proposals for funding. The ranking will be based on a potential score of five points for each of the criteria. As indicated above, project sponsors should address these criteria in their initial proposal in order to facilitate review and evaluation of the merits of the project proposal.

3. Selection Process:

The TRC will review the project concepts and generate a numeric score for each. Project sponsor(s) may be asked for additional information to clarify research methods or elements of the project that address one or more of the selection criteria. If additional information is requested, the TRC will review that information before final scores are assigned.

Based on the final assessment by the TRC, a list of projects will be presented to the Steering Committee, ranked by numeric scores.

A meeting of the Steering Committee will be convened and the list of ranked projects will be discussed and prioritized. Based on this final ranking, the Steering Committee will make its funding recommendations to the Chief of the Scientific Branch. In the event that a member of the Committee is a principal investigator, co-investigator, or collaborator on any submitted proposal, that member will be excused from the review process for that proposal.

The Chief of the Scientific Branch will review the prioritized list and submit final recommendations for project funding to the OSPR Administrator for approval. Applicants are usually notified of funding status for their proposals by mid-January.

4. Project Implementation:

Once projects are selected for funding, contracts will be developed in accordance with standard State contracting requirements. These contracts will be managed by the OSPR sponsor/contract manager in coordination with the agency or entity performing the investigation(s). No charges will be allowed to the SSEP fund (PCA and Index code) for OSPAF-funded OSPR employees for their SSEP-related work. Please discuss this with the SSEP Coordinator if you require clarification on this policy.

Attachment B

SSEP Project Evaluation Criteria

1ST Level Review - Threshold Criteria: If any project does not meet these Threshold Criteria, then it will not be given further consideration for funding. (All criteria will be specified in proposal solicitations).

- 1. Consistent with program intent** - Projects must address one of the study categories listed In Attachment A.
- 2. Technically Feasible** - The project must be technically and procedurally sound. Consideration will be given to the level of uncertainty and the degree of success of similar projects that have been conducted in the past.

2ND Level Review – Screening Criteria: Projects that meet the Threshold Criteria shall be further evaluated using the criteria below. These screening criteria shall be used to distinguish between preferred and non-preferred projects. When scoring the projects, a maximum of 5 points will be assigned to each criterion.

- 1. Likelihood of Success** - Consider the potential for successful completion and successful outcomes of the proposed research project. This includes the capability and experience of individuals or organizations expected to conduct the research or implement the project.
- 2. Quality of Proposed Research** - Consider the level of sophistication and creativity of the study plan.
- 3. Scientific Merit** – Evaluate the extent to which this project will advance the science of the subject discipline.
- 4. Programmatic Merit** – Determine how well the proposal will meet the intent of the SSEP, and/or its general applicability to oil spill prevention and response activities.
- 5. Cost-Effectiveness** - Consider the relationship of expected project costs to expected results and the relevance of those results to program goals. Seek the least costly approach to deliver an equivalent or greater benefit. Consider availability of matching or supplemental funding.
- 6. Total Cost and Accuracy of Cost Estimate** - The total cost estimate should include money to design, implement, monitor, and manage the project. Validity of the estimate is determined by the completeness, accuracy, and reliability of methods used to estimate costs.
- 7. Originality/Non-Duplication** - Projects should not duplicate other similar investigations that have been conducted or are ongoing. Assess the level of originality of subject matter and the study design.

Attachment C-1

Proposal Submission Instructions

All proposals **must** be submitted on the Scientific Study and Evaluation Program (SSEP) Proposal Submission Form (Attachment C-2). Estimated budget and literature cited sections shall be provided as attachments to each proposal, and may be done in a word processing or spreadsheet program format. A detailed project budget should be outlined according to the following categories: personnel services (with benefits as a separate line item); equipment; supplies; travel; other expenses; and overhead. For multi-year project proposals, a detailed budget estimate for subsequent years must also be provided. Justifications for necessary items such as equipment and materials should be provided.. Avoid non-standard abbreviations whenever possible. An example budget is provided below..

Example Estimated Line Item Budget

ITEM	AMOUNT
Personnel Services	
Lab Tech II (\$25.76/hr x 528 hrs)	\$13,601.00
Benefits: Lab Tech II @ 17.64%	\$ 2,399.00
Equipment	
Digital Cameras (2)	\$545.00
Supplies	
Microscope slides and covers	\$185.00
Travel	
2 trips to Sacramento (lodging, per diem, and mileage)	\$430.00
Other Expenses	
Subscription to radar tracking service, 1 year	\$850.00
Subtotal	\$18,010.00
Overhead Costs @ 15% (except on equipment)	\$ 2,620.00
Grand Total	\$20,630.00

Attachment D

Proposal Policies

1. Stream restoration techniques and method development projects in coastal environments are appropriate to compete for SSEP funding if the habitat in which the restoration will be conducted is directly connected or immediately adjacent to a marine habitat. These proposals would be appropriate under study category G, Techniques for habitat and species restoration and monitoring or I. Monitoring and/or evaluation of restoration success.
2. Workshops, by themselves and with no other deliverable, are not considered appropriate to compete for SSEP funding. A deliverable product, such as a final report, database, etc. is considered to be an important element of all SSEP-funded projects.
3. Monitoring projects that enumerate species with little or no connection to compensatory restoration success investigations are not considered appropriate for receiving SSEP funding. Other funding sources are considered more appropriate than SSEP for monitoring populations of special status species or sensitive habitats outside the context of marine oil spill recovery, even when described as helping to establish a baseline condition for a habitat or species.