

Panel Scientific and Technical Review Form
(Note: Review comments will be anonymous, but public)

Proposal number: 2001-C200_ Short Proposal Title: Merced River Salmon Enhancement

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

"This seems more of an implementation project than a real research project, and developing hypotheses that need to be tested seems a bit unnecessary." "Yes"

Panel Summary:

The hypotheses are not presented with a sense there was a need to test them, and indeed this may not be relevant if restoration is well conceived and routine.

1b1) Does the conceptual model clearly explain the underlying basis for the proposed work?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

A great deal of knowledge has been gained from early projects, following review, discussion and analysis. The Ratzlaff Site demonstration project has passed through one winter with initial feedback from several concerned sources indicating that at least the floodplain elements seem to be performing well. The proposed Robinson project design has incorporated the additional knowledge gained from constructing the Ratzlaff Project.

Proponents are trying to simulate an environment scaled downward to contain the permanently diminished flow. In fact this should be the research element of the project, yet the proposal does not really put the project in this context.

"...I have some reservations about the approach and the ecological context of the project."

Panel Summary:

This is couched as a geomorphic project, but it really isn't.

1b2) Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

"There seems to be little consideration regarding establishment of riparian vegetation and how a more diverse riparian ecosystem might be established. It is unfortunate that single-species management seems to take precedence over ecosystem restoration in this project."

Panel Summary:

It is difficult to conclude the approach is well designed and appropriate because it is presented as a geomorphic approach. If it is a geomorphic approach, it is not stated properly.

1c1) Has the applicant justified the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Reviewers agree this is full-scale implementation.

Panel Summary :

We conclude this is a full-scale implementation but did not find a spot in the proposal that clearly said so.

1c2) Is the project likely to generate information that can be used to inform future decision making?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes, to some degree. The proposal doesn't address how the project might affect future actions on other streams or elsewhere.

Panel Summary:

The panel did not agree the results would be useful for other decisionmaking unless other watercourses will be treated similarly. We thought the features of the project most at odds with true geomorphic design, (such as close-fitting berms or confined channels) would be going contrary to more of a watershed and geomorphological restoration approach.

2a) Are the monitoring and information assessment plans adequate to assess the outcome of the project?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

"Results of the monitoring program so far would be nice to examine before allocating additional funds to the project."

Panel Summary:

It is hard to comment on the adequacy of the monitoring and information assessment plans because there have been no published results of the monitoring so far. Assessment information is unavailable, although previous work has been done.

2b) Are data collection, data management, data analysis, and reporting plans well described, scientifically sound and adequate to meet the proposed objectives?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

"...it would also be helpful to consider the initial results of monitoring and modeling hydrologic function and sediment routing before proceeding."

Panel Summary:

Quarterly reports are not much more than the bare minimum reporting, and rather a weak commitment to report results for a project alleged to be so important.

3) Is the proposed work likely to be technically feasible?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

It seems interesting and technically feasible in the short term, although long-term prospects and the need for intervention are unclear.

Panel Summary:

This is a technically feasible project, but one not well designed to be scientifically valuable.

4) Is the proposed project team qualified efficiently and effectively to implement the proposed project?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

The team could benefit from members with a stronger theoretical and research background..."

Panel Summary:

The panelists were not convinced the proponents had the right team, and we suggest the proponent seek more diverse adherents and contributors.

5)Other comments:

Despite this project being a follow-up of previously funded work, the panel was discouraged from supporting it by the lack of completed assessment and monitoring of work already completed.

Overall Evaluation
PANEL SUMMARY COMMENTS

This project suffers from an over-emphasis on short-term engineering fixes (requiring major maintenance) compared to a more complex need for sustainable ecosystem restoration. There is inadequate ecological justification for expanding the current project.

Summary Rating:

Excellent
Very Good
Good
Fair
Poor X

Your Rating: POOR