

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

Proposal number: 2001-C205

Short Proposal Title: San Joaquin River NWR

For each question, provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Review was carried out by our panel members, as this proposal, like D201, was initially thought to be more appropriately reviewed by another panel. As a result, there was no prior review of this proposal, and relevant comments from the review of D201 are incorporated because of the Riparian Brush Rabbit focus of both proposals.

Panel Summary:

The objectives are clear, but the acquisition phase of this is not an experiment, and the testing of hypotheses is not clearly relevant.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

The Concept Model presented on Page 5 was sufficient to show the priorities of the project sponsors, but was not the sort of conceptual model that would generate hypotheses for testing.

Panel Summary:

There is not a clear model or design incorporated in this proposal. The basis for the proposal is the fundamental need of the species for habitat and refugia during floods.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Panel Summary:

The important part of this proposal is that the acquisition and restoration proposals are at the right place for attempting a reintroduction. The panel considered the pre-restoration plan to be well done and provided great detail. This approach is adequate for acquisition. The monitoring plan described in the pre-restoration plan did not provide sufficient guidance for evaluation of the success of the restoration plan.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes.

Panel Summary:

Yes. The focus is on acquisition, but thought has clearly been given to subsequent restoration implementation and management.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes.

Panel Summary:

There is not as much information as panel members would like to see. Restoration is subject to future negotiation and coordination, so it is difficult at this point to demand more.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

No. But that is not necessarily relevant for the acquisition in an area that is so central to a reasonable recovery effort.

Panel Summary:

The problem the panel found in the monitoring and assessment plans are the lack of reference communities to use as controls.

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:

Not commented on.

Panel Summary:

The basis exists in a significant restoration plan such as the one presented here to carry out stratified random block planting tests, and the panel would like to see an effort to learn more about the science of habitat restoration. The use of replicates would increase the value of this proposal to other CALFED projects attempting restoration.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes.

Panel Summary:

Apparently so. Planting and growing trees in a natural riparian zone is straightforward, and levee setbacks and expanded floodplain area can be approved with proper hydraulic justification.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes.

Panel Summary:

The panel was comfortable with the qualifications of the proponents for the first phase of acquisition, because the participation of leading experts in the species' requirements makes it likely this is the appropriate site to acquire. Hydraulic and hydrologic modelers will be needed for the subsequent phases affecting the travel and detention of floods. If the Corps of Engineers, or local flood management agencies have committed to participate it would be helpful to know the qualifications of these partners too.

5) Other comments

The restoration aspects of this proposal are not possible without successful accomplishment of Phase One, Acquisition. The Panel would prefer to see the restoration phases amended to incorporate an experimental design component that would generate and disseminate information of value to other floodplain restoration projects. We recommend making funding for restoration contingent on successful completion of the acquisition of the rights to carry out restoration, satisfactory flood management evaluation and the incorporation of a scientific evaluation component in the restoration.

Overall Evaluation
PANEL SUMMARY COMMENTS

This is a major proposal for acquisition and restoration. The project will be supported by well-qualified investigators and practitioners, but the panelists thought the proposal was not well matched to the format called for in the Proposal Solicitation Package, and that dictated a lower evaluation.

Summary Rating

Excellent
Very Good
Good X
Fair
Poor

Your Rating: GOOD

