

## Draft Individual Review Form

**Proposal number: 2001-C210-1**

**Short Proposal Title: San Joaquin River  
research...**

**1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?**

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

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

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

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

This proposal is submitted by a regional planning agency to take advantage of a 32-acre ox bow-type riparian island which is part of their Open Space district, to figure out what restoration strategies are appropriate for this property. It is adjacent to a somewhat larger CDF&G property which will be jointly managed, and is intended to provide wildlife habitat values related to the 50-year regional habitat conservation plan. The 'Hypotheses' are very general, basically related to whether riparian restoration efforts are successful – a broad mandate that is subject to numerous ecological and land-use influences that are likely beyond the control of the project managers.

While the requested \$59,000 is quite small relative to many restoration projects proposed in the region, this first phase of the project is only intended to test a few re-vegetation methods to determine how to undertake full implementation. It is not entirely clear to me that the work will involve actual revegetation work on-site, or will simply be a site inventory and a review of related work to determine best approaches for proceeding with restoration. This phase of the project will be put out for bid, but the 'research team' is not in place. More problematically, the methods are entirely unexplained, and the proposal simply lists some of the relevant restoration manuals that will be consulted. These methods really are quite well-known and most competent ecologists could readily determine how to approach the intended work. In this project there doesn't really seem to be a major role for 'research' concerning best methods for conducting restoration - it is basically asking 'how do we conduct appropriate re-vegetation in our site?'. Frankly, it would have been preferable if the proposers could have assembled a team in advance, and requested that they assist in developing the proposal to be submitted. If it is standard CalFed practice to fund initial development of a proposed project then this may be reasonable – I cannot judge this as an ecologist. As is, I have very little on which to judge the quality and appropriateness of the intended work.

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

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

No, the monitoring plans and data management are only very generally described, and are intended to be developed by the bidder who is accepted to undertake the contract work for designing and conducting the project.

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

Well, putting together a restoration and monitoring plan, and undertaking the field work, are certainly feasible, although it is not possible to tell based on information provided. This may be a moot point at this stage of project development, since the proposed work is essentially for developing a feasibility plan.

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

Project team is not assembled. The Program Coordinator seems to be reasonably proficient with wildlife issues, as well as with floral surveys, but background is not focused on research nor habitat restoration.

#### **Miscellaneous comments**

How will small-scale re-vegetation trials, whether on-site or elsewhere, scale upward to the larger ecosystem? There are many components of ecosystem recovery that function very differently at different scales, such that 'successful' recovery or establishment of plants in a small field plot will not translate into predictable success within a larger context where vegetation must provide the habitat and ecosystem features required for maintaining healthy, diverse assemblages.

How will herbivory be included in the pilot restoration studies in order to determine if consumption may interfere with establishment or recovery?

I was surprised that *Arundo* was not included in the list of plants found in vegetation types. Is it not present here? I was glad to see that other exotics were included in the lists, and their role is to be considered in the restoration to take place, however their management approach was not discussed.

## Overall Evaluation Summary Rating

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- Excellent
- Very Good
- X  **Good**
- X  **Fair**
- Poor

### Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating

**Fair to Good** The work proposed seems to be too limited to provide substantial research information that can be applied widely, although it was not possible to get a clear idea of exactly what work is intended other than to figure out how to promote native vegetation in this smallish site. Still, the goals are reasonable and will contribute incrementally to improving the larger riparian system in this part of the River. One reason I consider the project intermediate between 'fair' and 'good' was because CalFed might consider this a worthy program to promote by supporting development of the project, at least by assisting in putting together a team that will be able to develop plans on how to proceed with restoration.