

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

Proposal number: 2001-C211

**Short Proposal Title: Merced River Ranch
Restoration**

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

Summary of Reviewers comments: "Unlike most other proposals I reviewed this year, the applicants were highly explicit in stating their objectives. The hypotheses weren't quite as clear as I would have liked."

Panel Summary: The concepts, objectives and hypotheses were initially favorably reviewed by panelists, but they felt details were wanting.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments: "The conceptual model is adequate, but not especially clear. It is based primarily on Figure 6, which needs a bit of explanation."

Panel Summary: The conceptual model was not clear. The panel felt that if CALFED intends to use the quality of conceptual models as an evaluation criterion for all proposals from research to implementation, it would be necessary to educate practitioners.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments: The applicants are to be commended for their attention to detail in their approach and for including peer review in their strategy. The Phase II tasks look reasonable to tackle most of the technical issues. My major concern is that they have combined Phase II and III. It seems premature to fund Phase III until the restoration design is completed. I do not understand how the applicants developed an estimate of the amount that will be required for Phase III when the project design has: 1) not been completed; 2) has not yet been integrated into local and regional planning efforts; and 3) the necessary permits have not yet been obtained.

Panel Summary: The panel was concerned that the work required to undertake some elements of the proposal such as a long-term groundwater analysis involving water levels and water chemistry, and presence and abundance of all life stages of anadromous fish in all restored habitat may be enormous.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments: The property was previously purchased using CALFED funding, making it a logical restoration site.

Panel Summary: This is a combination of planning and pilot project.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments: Yes. Despite some concerns I have about hypothesis testing, this project is generally being approached in a scientifically sound manner.

Panel Summary: The panel concluded there would be a potential to generate information of use elsewhere if the planners who would be funded under this proposal develop an effective plan and the pilot project that would be carried out indicates the restoration proposed is successful, well-recorded and analyzed and the information widely disseminated.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments: "The applicants have suggested extensive monitoring, an excellent idea considering the magnitude and potential importance of this project. However, most of the monitoring would be conducted in Phase IV, not part of the present proposal. As such, I cannot determine whether the monitoring would be adequate to evaluate the long-term success of the project."

Panel Summary: The panelists considered the plans to be sketchy.

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: There are few details about these components of the study.

Panel Summary: This proposal had stronger science assessment and design elements than most others, but the plans were still not spelled out, which panelists considered a shortcoming.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments: Yes. The applicants have a good understanding of the major technical obstacles.

Panel Summary: The panel considered the proposal technically feasible.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments: Yes, the background of this team is exceptionally good. I was pleased to see several staff with multiple years of experience in this watershed.

Panel Summary: The panel was satisfied with the project team's qualifications.

5)Other comments

A substantial budget element in the proposal related to permitting compliance costs. If CALFED endorsement is forthcoming, it would be an opportunity for cost reduction if the CALFED member agencies with regulatory responsibility could streamline their regulatory procedures for projects that they have endorsed.

**Overall Evaluation
PANEL SUMMARY COMMENTS**

The panel ranked this proposal as Good, in part because major components are deferred to future phases and could not be evaluated

Summary Rating

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Excellent
Very Good
Good X
Fair
Poor

Your Rating: GOOD