

Draft Individual Review Form

Proposal number: 2001-G204-1

Short Proposal Title: CEAL Project

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

Yes. The object is to provide high-quality foraging habitat for winter and migrating waterfowl and shorebirds by increasing the area of rice fields and other croplands flooded in winter. The hypotheses is that agricultural conservation easements will restrict urbanization, promote compatible farming, and benefit native waterfowl and wildlife species.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

No. The conceptual model in this proposal addresses processes and threats in very general terms. It lists anadromous fish, and sturgeon as species the proposal will benefit yet does not mention them in the conceptual model. Waterfowl and shorebirds are discussed in more detail.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

Yes. Purchasing 6,000 acres of agricultural conservation easements in the Sutter Basin will benefit waterfowl.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

Yes. Ducks Unlimited has a proven track record of acquiring and managing easements, working with farmers to benefit waterfowl, and cooperating with local governments to build community buy-in. The selection of a full-scale implementation project is well justified.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

No. Public lands and federal easements are already in place in the Sutter Basin. No new practices or programs are offered in this proposal.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

Yes. The applicant has developed a comprehensive monitoring plan for these easements. Attachment E will provide an excellent assessment of the subject properties.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

Yes. Attachment E along with annual reports will be more than adequate to meet the proposed objective.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

Yes.

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

Provide detailed comments in support of your conclusion

Yes. The proposed project team has a history of successfully completing difficult conservation projects in the Butte Creek watershed.

Miscellaneous comments

No mention is made in this proposal of the potential conflict over water needs. Rice growers, waterfowl, and fish all need water to survive. Rice cultivation may be wildlife-friendly to waterfowl but how does the flood-up of 6,000 acres of rice affect the salmon and steelhead populations in Butte Creek? Section H. Terms and Conditions is missing from this proposal.

**Overall Evaluation
Summary Rating**

Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating

The objective of this proposal is clear and straightforward – protect 6,000 acres of rice fields and other cropland for the benefit of waterfowl. What are much less clear are the locations, restrictions, and actual costs of these easements. It is impossible to evaluate the biological/ecological benefits of this proposal until individual tracks of land are presented for funding. Ten million dollars is a significant amount of money to commit without detailed purchase agreements. The Amaral Ranch is presented as an easement that is ready to fund although the final agreement still needs to be negotiated. Given the fact that the ranch is adjacent to the Sutter National Wildlife Refuge it seems like an excellent property to protect. CALFED could award \$930,000 to close the Amaral deal and decline any additional funding until a future PSP.

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