

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

Proposal number: 2001-G204

**Short Proposal Title: _Conservation for
Agricultural Lands/CEAL**

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes. All reviewers found the objectives and hypotheses to be clearly stated.

Panel Summary:

Yes. We concur with the reviewers.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Disagreement among reviewers. Two found the model to be adequate to well written, while the third reviewer found the model to be lacking in that the model addressed some species to be benefited by the project, but not others.

Panel Summary:

The model claims a benefit to anadromous fish, but the panel disagreed that those fish would be benefited by the project. The panel also questioned the premise that the Amaral property to be protected is truly threatened by urban expansion, given its distance from Yuba City and its unlikely potential for passing a percolation test.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Disagreement. Though the idea of purchasing the development rights on 6,000 acres will meet the objectives of the project, one reviewer felt that there doesn't seem to be a plan as to how adaptive management will be carried out (given that the term was used multiple times in the proposal but yet was not well defined).

Panel Summary:

The concept of CEAL is well designed and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project. However, the panel questioned the validity of selecting the Amaral property being that it is so far removed from the immediate threat of urban expansion, and there are likely to be a number of alternative properties that could be selected that are more vulnerable to urban expansion.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Disagreement. One reviewer felt that a demonstration project was more applicable. If the project is truly full-scale implementation, there should not be questions as to whether or not the food web would sustain fish population.

Panel Summary:

** The panel disagreed with the selection of "full scale implementation". If the intent of the project proponent is to institute a program of purchasing the development rights on rice ground to prevent urban expansion and farmland loss, then 6,000 acres should be the starting point to a larger acquisition campaign. Full-scale implementation would be larger.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Disagreement. While some reviewers felt no new information would be learned (methods of purchasing and setting property aside is already well known), one felt that information to be learned can be used in future decision making activities of this kind.

Panel Summary:

** Yes. Though much is known about purchasing development rights on land, the project is a relatively new approach to protecting important wildlife/ag lands. Some new important information will be learned about that approach from the project.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes. Attachment E will provide an excellent assessment of the subject properties

Panel Summary:

Need justification of threat to wildlife species from development pressure (re: Amaral property)

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:

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

Panel Summary:

This proposal is exceptional in that it describes in detail how the easements will be monitored through time.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes.

Panel Summary:

Yes.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes. The project team has a track record of successfully completing difficult conservation projects in this area.

Panel Summary:

We concur with the reviewers.

5)Other comments

Overall Evaluation
PANEL SUMMARY COMMENTS

The panel agrees with the larger concept of protecting certain agricultural practices (rice) adjacent to Sutter NWR, however, the issue of water use and water quality, as they affect the players (ag, waterfowl, fish) needs more clarification. The major strength of this proposal is its description of a well thought out easement program. Its description of easement monitoring (Attachment H) into the future is exceptional. However, the Panel is not convinced that the need for funding the Amaral project has been justified with regard to threatened species or pressure from development.

Summary Rating

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Your Rating: GOOD