

Individual Review Form

Proposal number: 2001-H207-1

Sacramento Conservation Area Program

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

The hypothesis and objectives are clearly stated in the proposal. The project would provide funding to staff a new non-profit organization to foster implementation of riparian projects guided by the Sacramento River Conservation Area (SRCA) Handbook. The hypothesis is to test whether this newly created non-profit will be able to facilitate riparian restoration and management along the Sacramento River from Red Bluff to Colusa.

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

The conceptual model explains the connection of the proposed work to the goal of establishing and preserving a continuous riparian ecosystem along the Sacramento River. The SB 1086 Program is identified as the precursor to the proposed action, and the approach proposed is intended to build upon the foundation established over the past decade.

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

The approach is clearly appropriate for attempting to meet the project's objectives. The only question of approach is why the CSU Chico Research Foundation is acting as the fiscal agent? Non-profits are legal corporations and usually act directly to manage the program and financial activities of the corporation.

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

The proposal has correctly indicated that it is a Watershed Planning project. In that it is a new approach to resolving a long standing resource problem, the applicant would also have been justified to categorize the project as a Pilot/Demonstration Project.

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

If the project is successful at meeting its objectives of establishing a continuous riparian ecosystem along the Sacramento River, it will have surely provided a wealth of information that will be useful to inform future decision-making. Large river restoration programs throughout the West are struggling with many of the same issues. Few successful models exist for resolving the complex interactions between intensive land use and the needs of a functioning large river ecosystem. An example of successfully resolving even some of the long-standing land use conflicts would be very useful.

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

The monitoring and assessment incorporated in this proposal are stated as "incorporates the environmental monitoring, reporting, and research requirements of CALFED's Comprehensive Monitoring, Assessment and

Research Program”. The monitoring components are not well described, other than the collaboration with the existing Department of Water Resources (DWR) efforts to develop a comprehensive GIS coverage for the SRCA. In that the project is primarily for staffing the non-profit, the explanation of integration with existing monitoring programs is probably adequate.

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

The proposal again references the DWR’s maintenance of the Sacramento River GIS. This system is noted as having long-term back-up and on- and off-site archiving. Spatial data is shared “... among cooperating agencies and parties based on strict adherence to departmental policy and procedures.” Other than this reliance on DWR, the proposal does not address data collection, management, analysis, and reporting plans. In the task descriptions, developing an area use map, a presentation program, and newsletter are all areas where reporting of data should be addressed.

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

The hiring of staff for a non-profit organization is something that is certainly technically feasible. No environmental compliance issues are involved. Whether the project will succeed at its objective of establishing and preserving a continuous riparian ecosystem along the Sacramento River is impossible to gauge at this time.

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

The project team appears to be qualified to effectively implement the proposed project. The efficiency of using an outside entity (CSU Chico Research Foundation) as the fiscal agent is probably not the most cost effective means of implementing the project.

Miscellaneous comments

This proposal is primarily to fund an ongoing process. The tangible products or deliverables are minimal. There is a leap of faith being asked for in this proposal that funding of this process will at some point in the future produce ecosystem improvements that meet CALFED objectives. For this non-profit to succeed at the objectives stated in the proposal, it may be likely to succeed if it was a “stand alone” organization and not operated through CSU Chico.

Overall Evaluation	Summary Rating
<input type="checkbox"/> Very Good	

The proposal was fairly well written and only lacked in the amount of detail provided in a few areas. It is an innovative approach to watershed stewardship and probably deserves the opportunity to be tried in the Sacramento River. There is considerable risk that without strong support from policy decision makers it will not meet its goals.
