

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

Proposal number: 2001-I213

Short Proposal Title: Education Farmers and Landowners in
Biological Resource Management

1a) Are the objectives and hypotheses clearly stated?

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes. Goals, objectives and hypotheses are included. Substantial list of goals and objectives. The hypotheses are listed more as goals and would include: direct improvements to water quality, changes of behavior, and changes in attitudes by using the model presented. The proponent demonstrates how the project goals address the CalFed ERP goals as well. The hypotheses presented are clearly stated and ask the question: If the project is implemented and the project goals are met, will the hypotheses be proven to be true, that is that: farmers educated through this program will implement new land stewardship practices, these practices will spread geographically over time through active collaboration and involvement with growers and landowners, and finally, the attitude of those growers and landowners can change if they are engaged as partners and understand the economic and ecologic benefits of adopting these practices.

Panel Summary:

Goals are clearly defined. See comments from peer reviewers

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes. Conceptual model includes the opportunity to learn new information as well as an approach that has been shown to be effective in changing behavior.

Panel Summary:

The conceptual model is very clear and very well defined. The “farmer to farmer” approach is very appropriate and this panel believes this approach will be very successful. We were impressed with the networking ability of the organization and see how this will be a tremendous asset to the success of this program.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Process is well designed and is multifaceted which is necessary if behavior is to change. This includes farmer-to-farmer communication, agency assistance, demonstration areas, lectures, informational handouts, personal communications, etc. Stakeholder groups in various parts of the State have been identified that correspond to local situations and issues. Extensive data collection

will occur at first, which provides greater assurance that the goals/objectives could be met. One reviewer questions the buy-in from farmers whose land is being worked on.

Panel Summary:

The approach is well designed and appropriate, for the most part. Would like to see more buy-in from the landowners that own the land where work will be performed.

What will their contributions are both in the short and long term?

What steps are taken to insure there is maintenance on these demonstration sites?

What support will be offered to farmers to insure the good work done in the demonstration will be continued?

What expectations are placed on landowners to insure the improvements, which are performed on their property are continued and maintained?

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

The proposal assumes that there are willing farmers who will participate in many of the aspects of this program that require a real commitment of time- such as the Management Teams, writing of farm plans and establishing demonstration plots. The proposal does not directly address these concerns and there are no matching funds demonstrated to show this good faith. The proposal budget is heavy to the side of consultants and the cost requirements of the demonstration projects are high.

Panel Summary:

No, the applicant has not identified the demonstration sites, yet this is appropriate at this time.

The panel questions the need for additional demonstration sites for this project. We feel this step could be eliminated.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Believe that the proposed education and outreach materials and forums are capable of influencing people to make better decisions about their land use practices. Also believe that seeing demonstration projects in one's own community can provide necessary influence to change the ways that people make decisions about their land use practices.

Panel Summary:

The strong point to this proposal is the networking and educational activities that will generate information and influence future decisions by farmers and landowners.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes, extensive monitoring and assessment plans are included. The use of pre and post surveys will look at both landowner perceptions/attitudes as well as land management practices. Evaluation of actual land management restoration projects will also occur.

Panel Summary:

Panel agrees with reviewers

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:

The data collection will be intensely focused during the first six months of the project, in order to assess research and planning needs and existing conditions within the regions. My concern and reservations are that much of the information that is proposed to be collected is perhaps already known, so the focus should be on collecting that data when appropriate and not recreating the research to get this information. The budget item for this task (Task 1) seems very high, but perhaps not having the appropriate information from the start, could be the number one cause for failure later in the project. All of the data collected will be managed throughout the life of the project and a final data collection and summary period will come at the close of the project.

Panel Summary:

This seems to be very strong. The applicant proposes to survey farmer's knowledge and attitudes as well as physical site impacts.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

Yes, the educational forums are very feasible. Reservations about the farmers/landowners commitments to the demonstration sites and to the farm plans. Would like to know how many landowners sit on the Merced TAC at the present, and what their commitment has been to that program. It may be technically feasible for the Conservation Corps to go in and do the work for the farmer, but if they aren't going to maintain it, it becomes unsustainable.

Panel Summary:

It would be rather shocking if they could not accomplish the task for the amount of money they are requesting.

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

Summary of Reviewers comments:

One reviewer suggests an assessment of CAFF on other projects they have completed before fully funding this effort to insure that they have the experience and expertise to complete such a comprehensive undertaking prior to providing funding. CAFF has a very solid reputation with growers and landowners and is perhaps able to reach a sector of that community that many other groups and agencies are not capable of reaching. They have a track record in CalFed projects already, strong administration abilities and a seemingly talented staff

Panel Summary:

This is a very well qualified team.

5)Other comments

Outside Reviewers

Impressed with the comprehensiveness of this project and that it tackles both the environmental and the human side of ecosystem restoration. It uses more advanced theories on behavior changes. It also includes extensive product generation, media contacts, personal contacts, scientific information, etc.....all in all a very complete package. **But it is very expensive.** If this project were funded and if it were successful, it could provide extensive information on how to agreeably accomplish watershed restoration in an economic and socially acceptable process. It could be very exciting.

The overall strengths of the proposal are that it comes from CAFF, an organization that is already working with landowners and growers, so that is an “in” that is needed and coveted in this field. The watershed approach is extremely beneficial for growers to acknowledge and embrace. Reservations about the actual commitment of farmers to the physical demands of the project (beyond attending workshops), which are the writing of farm plans and the demonstration sites

The panel

The proposal seems very heavily weighted to the cost of consultants.

The panel questions the cost/benefit ratio of this proposal. While we clearly see the benefits to this approach, we do question the cost and the use of the requested dollars.

The credibility and past success of CAFF weighed favorably for the proposal as a whole.

The approach taken, farmer-to-farmer and using the “field knowledge” of farmers as equal to that of the government scientists and chemical company scientist is admirable.

Applicant needs to review CEQA and DFG 1600 permitting process.

**Overall Evaluation
PANEL SUMMARY COMMENTS**

Would like to see more buy-in from individual farmers who are allowing their land to be used. The type of behavioral changes that are being sought are not one time events, but rather the work done on farmer's land is the first step. TARP has concerns that without greater commitment from the landowner, there will be limited overall buy-in and not ongoing maintenance and future improvements. The panel would like to see more support from the individual landowners that offer their land. This could include hosting the public workshops mentioned in task 4.

The Panel recommends elimination of Task 4. This could be incorporated as part of the 8-10 farms included in the program. We feel this is unnecessary based on the existence of other demonstration areas and that the property of the 8-10 farmers will be sufficient. Additionally, the sites from previous years could be used as demonstrations. This has the advantage of showing how the "improvements" are not a one-time fix, but rather something that grows over the years with proper maintenance.

Also there is a geographic component to this proposal. One of the project areas is located in Solano and Yolo Counties, the other in Merced County. Thus further review at a geographic scale could decided to fund only one geographic area, thus cutting the proposed costs in half.

Summary Rating

The panel feels with the comments above, this is an excellent proposal

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

Your Rating: EXCELLENT