

**California Bay-Delta Authority  
Ecosystem Restoration Program Selection Panel**

**2002 Proposal Solicitation Package – Directed Action  
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation - Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration  
Project**

**Initial Recommendation – Monday, June 20, 2005**

The Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) Selection Panel acknowledges the complexity and scope of the Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Project, and the tremendous effort by the project agencies (USBR, CDFG, USFWS, and NOAA Fisheries), PG&E, and stakeholders in developing the project proposal to address the many issues raised during the last several years. We also recognize the efforts of the California Bay-Delta Authority (CBDA) ERP and Science Program staff in making sure that the project proposal received the level of independent review necessary to ensure a significant investment of ERP funds in Battle Creek results in a comparable level of improvement for these priority fish species, and to address technical issues raised by stakeholders during development of the project proposal. We especially appreciate the efforts of the Joint Battle Creek Review Panel (JBCRP) in developing a single, concise and insightful review of the project for our consideration.

We agree with the JBCRP that the Battle Creek Restoration Plan “is a bold, innovative and desirable approach to the restoration of unique aquatic habitat in the upper Sacramento Basin.” We further agree that applicants have adequately addressed previous comments and that the proposed removal of dams should proceed as scheduled.

We also recognize the JBCRP’s reservations concerning monitoring of the response of the physical habitat and fish community to project implementation, and encourage the project agencies to address these concerns. Specifically, we recommend the project agencies:

- (1) Develop a supplemental document on fish management and potential reintroduction strategies no later than June 2007, and to subject this document to independent peer review in a manner similar to the review of the steelhead management strategy for Battle Creek conducted last year by the CBDA Science Program.
- (2) Commit to making adequate expertise in population dynamics modeling and genetics available to the Battle Creek Adaptive Management Technical Team, or other project teams or forums where such expertise is needed.
- (3) Develop quantitative life-cycle models for salmon and steelhead and use these models to inform adaptive management of the Battle Creek project, consistent with the recommendations of the JBCRP.
- (4) Conduct two workshops, consistent with the JBCRP recommendations, the first to be focused on improving plans for monitoring and the second to present restoration findings to date and to evaluate performance of methods used to monitor restoration. These workshops could be structured similar to the Adaptive Management Forum for large-scale, riverine habitat restoration projects conducted jointly by the ERP and the Central Valley Project Improvement Act’s Anadromous Fish Restoration Program.

- (5) Commit to long-term monitoring and adaptive management for the Battle Creek project. This would include better integrating the Adaptive Management Plans for the Battle Creek project and the operation of Coleman National Fish Hatchery.

During the 30-day public comment period, we encourage the Battle Creek project agencies to affirmatively state their intent to accomplish the items identified above.

The JBCRP also stressed that monitoring and adaptive management of the project needs to continue after the funds for project construction and initial monitoring are expended. We feel that the CBDA and ERP implementing agencies should anticipate the necessity for further funding after this project is constructed. The proposal recommended for funding here is for construction and other related activities to be completed prior to any potential need to actively manage targeted fish, including the potential need to reintroduce winter-run Chinook salmon to the creek. The present proposal does not include any funds for the potential need for active fish management or for monitoring and analyzing the winter-run population following introduction. Thus, in order to meet the goal of restoring winter run to Battle Creek, we recommend the CBDA, ERP implementing agencies, and Battle Creek project agencies anticipate having to fund the fish recovery efforts, including reintroduction and monitoring, after construction is complete.

The JBCRP also recommended that the project agencies produce a summary document, no longer than 100 pages in length, that identifies the objectives and issues raised by the project and that provides a clear and detailed guide to the topics considered in the documents that together constitute the "Battle Creek Restoration Plan". We agree that such a document would have aided the JBCRP's review, and that such a document may be desirable in the future, but we do not believe that such a document is necessary before funding is approved. The existing summaries, staff reports, reviews and documents are sufficient to approve funding and develop contracts.

Given the significant investment of ERP funds, the Selection Panel recommends the CBDA and project agencies consider increasing their efforts on reporting progress during implementation to the senior leadership within the State and federal agencies, the Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee, and the local Greater Battle Creek Watershed Working Group. These efforts should include distribution of quarterly reporting documents, regular briefings for the groups mentioned above, and/or a revised management structure to ensure transparency and accountability of this significant and critical investment.

Finally, the JBCRP describes the Battle Creek project as "one of the biggest secrets in restoration ecology and fisheries management." We agree with this assessment. The Battle Creek project is one of the major plans for removing dams and restoring coldwater habitats in North America, and will be the single largest investments of funding for any CALFED project since the ROD was signed in August 2000. Given this importance, we recommend broad public outreach. Besides the two workshops suggested above, we also recommend that CBDA and the project agencies quickly and actively devote efforts to have scientists present the plans for Battle Creek Projects at national meetings for major professional societies, and that other forms of public outreach take place at key points before, during, and after project implementation.