

Final Selection Panel Review

0044

Rice–Cover Crop Rotation Pilot Program

California Waterfowl Association

Applicant amount requested: \$1,649,051

Fund This Amount: \$1,649,051

The positive aspects of the proposal include: generation of data and information on multi-species management approaches that would inform the agricultural community how they could provide benefits to waterfowl while at the same time improving conditions to benefit the giant garter snake; determining if the mosaic of land use provides better wildlife benefits than typical land use patterns; and developing strategies, monitoring methods, and tools for evaluating losses in habitat quality from rice fields being fallowed, as required by the Environmental Water Account (EWA) Biological Opinion.

The Program should reconsider this proposal for funding provided the following revisions are made: (1) clarify the project's conceptual model and discuss the potential for experimental testing of hypotheses, including consideration of landscape scale issues (habitat fragmentation, connectivity); (2) include a rigorous economic analysis (seek collaboration with an agricultural economist) and address impacts of uncertainty related to EWA, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), water transfers, and subsidies; (3) clarify the relationship between this project and CREP so that agencies can evaluate the policy implications. Are the subsidies proposed intended to replace or supplement CREP payments? If the intent is to replace CREP, the applicant needs to better articulate reasons why farmers would participate in this program rather than CREP since the incentive payments offered here (\$100) seems to be lower than the \$165 for rice provided through CREP; (4) deliverables must include publications that utilize data on giant garter snake and mallard nesting obtained from this project and synthesized with previously unpublished data (only found in the various annual reports); and, (5) include a more detailed budget broken out by task, that includes breakdown of how dollars for each task will be allocated. Each cost needs to be justified.

Additionally, the applicant should note that the incentive portion of the budget is not transferable across budget categories.