

## **CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP Directed Actions -- Selection Panel Review**

**Proposal Number: 96**

**Applicant Organization: Natomas Mutual Water Company**

**Proposal Title: American Basin Fish Screen**

**Recommendation: Fund With Conditions**

**Amount: \$12,600,000**

### **Conditions of approval:**

1. Funds for land acquisition shall not be disbursed until the land acquisition is shown to be consistent with CALFED guidelines.
2. Giant garter snake issues need to be resolved during the planning and permitting phase, and prior to the disbursement of funds for construction.

### **Provide a brief explanation of your rating:**

In this revised proposal, the applicants have done an excellent job responding to concerns of earlier reviews. The technical team review recently recommended that the project should receive full funding for the first year request, and funding for up to the total amount of \$12,600,000 over the three year period. Because of the relatively high costs of this project, they recommended that subsequent year contracts/agreements should be negotiated and evaluated against independent Bureau of Reclamation and AFSP Technical Team construction cost estimates, thereby ensuring reasonable costs for the project overall.

This proposal includes about \$1.5 million for land acquisition. The proposal also states that canal construction (and presumably maintenance) will be conducted in a manner which benefits giant garter snakes. Although the applicants express a willingness to resolve any potential giant garter snake issues related to project implementation, details of this part of the proposal are apparently not fully resolved. Any giant garter snake issues need to be resolved during the planning and permitting phase, and prior to construction.

Some land will need to be acquired for this project. Some of the affected property owners have not yet indicated that they are willing to sell land for the project. Some of these lands include prime farm soils. Details of land acquisition should follow CALFED principles and guidelines.

The Selection Panel, therefore, concurs with the technical team recommendation to fund the project, provided that 1) the land acquisition is shown to be consistent with CALFED guidelines, and 2) any potential giant garter snake concerns are fully addressed during the design and permitting processes.

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## **Fish Screen and Passage Technical Review**

### **CALFED Bay-Delta ERP**

**Proposal Number: 96DA**

**Applicant Organization: Natomas Mutual Water Company**

**Proposal Title: *American Basin Fish screen and Habitat Improvement Project***

#### **Review**

**Overall Evaluation Summary Rating: Superior**

**Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating**

**The project is considered very important, but costs are high. As a means of providing better cost control on this and other fish screen projects, the Technical Review Panel recommends full funding for the first year request with a recommendation of up to the total amount of \$12,600,000 over the entire 3 year period. With first year funding granted, subsequent year contracts/agreements could be negotiated and evaluated against independent Reclamation and AFSP Technical Team construction cost estimates, thereby ensuring reasonable costs for the project overall.**

**1. Location in terms of potential impact on fishery.** Is the project located where it will significantly benefit the fishery? Do current fish passage barriers or water diversions there harm large numbers of fish? What species of anadromous fish are present? Is the project located where these species are in their most vulnerable life stages? Will it benefit other species of fish or the waterway's community and ecosystem? Does it restore and protect natural habitats or habitat values? Will its benefits be long-term, or short-lived? Is its biological effectiveness clearly demonstrable?

Project is located in lower Sacramento River, just north of the City of Sacramento. All runs of Chinook and steelhead migrate past this site. Due to the magnitude of the diversion consolidation, this project constitutes a major benefit to fishery. It is supposed that these diversions, taken together, cause substantial harm to the fishery via entrainment into water diversions.

**2. Diversions taking a greater proportion of flow.** If the project is a fish screen, is the size of the diversion to be screened a significant proportion of the waterway's discharge?

At a total consolidation diversion of 630 cfs, this amount of water constitutes a relatively high proportion of flow that must be effectively screened.

**3. Implementability** (minimal legal, regulatory or technical obstacles): Does the project use proven and existing technology, or unproven and experimental technology? Can it be implemented in a timely fashion, or are protracted delays anticipated? Are project partners, including consultants and subcontractors, qualified? Will legal, regulatory, or

technical obstacles impede it? Can any adverse effects be reversed or adequately mitigated? Does it enjoy public support? Is it compatible with other programs and projects, which are part of an integrated restoration program for the waterway? Does it have synergistic effects with ongoing programs?

**The project is implementable using proven technology. It has been well coordinated and is compatible with other programs. Although the project is complicated by local and resource agency conjunctive use proposals in the basin, and the COE Sacramento River East Side Levee Raising Project which is in the planning stage, which could effect NMWC operations and the scope of the project, the NMWC is closely coordinating this project with those entities and intends to move forward with the final design and construction of the project.**

**4. Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

**Although the project has major fisheries benefits and the budget may be reasonable for the work proposed, as a means of providing better cost control on this and other fish screen projects, the Technical Review Panel recommends full funding for the first year request with a recommendation of up to the total amount of \$12,600,000 over the entire 3 year period. With first year funding granted, subsequent year contracts/agreements could be negotiated and evaluated against independent Reclamation and AFSP Technical Team construction cost estimates, thereby ensuring reasonable costs for the project overall. Through this procedure, reasonable cost/benefits should be attained. A Value Engineering type study has also been agreed to by the applicant, further assuring a more cost effective project solution.**

**5. Partnerships/Opportunities.** Does the project fully involve appropriate partners? Are the applicants willing participants? Are other cost-sharing funds available, and fully exploited?

**The applicant is a willing participant. The project involves appropriate partners and appropriate cost share funds. The project to date has been cost shared predominantly by CVPIA and CALFED funds, with applicant also sharing some costs.**

**6. Regional Review.** How did the regional panel(s) rank the proposal (High, Medium, Low)? Did the regional panel(s) identify significant benefits (regional priorities, linkages with other activities, local involvement) or impediments (local constraints, conflicts with other activities, lack of local involvement) to this proposal? What were they?

The regional panel ranked this HIGH because of its value to salmonids and the significant prior investment in the project.

**7. Administrative Review.** Were there significant concerns about the proposal with regard to the prior performance, environmental compliance and budget administrative reviews? What were they?

**None**

**Miscellaneous comments:**

**The project is considered a very high priority in the Sacramento River watershed for the protection of ESA listed anadromous and estuarine fishes. It should go forward with the understanding that after first year funding is granted, subsequent year contracts/agreements would be negotiated and evaluated against independent Reclamation and AFSP Technical Team construction cost estimates, thereby ensuring reasonable costs for the project overall.**

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***CALFED Bay-Delta Directed Action  
Administrative Review  
Budget Evaluation***

Proposal number: Directed Action 96

Proposal title: American Basin Fish Screen and Habitat Improvement Project

Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each year of requested support?

**Yes**

If no, please explain:

Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each task identified?

**Yes**

If no, please explain:

Does the proposal clearly state the type of expenses encompassed in indirect rates or overhead costs?

**Yes**

If no, please explain: Note – No overhead or indirect costs billed to this project by proponent!

Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

**Yes**

If no, please explain:

Do the total funds requested (Form I, Question 17A) equal the combined total annual costs in the budget summary?

**Yes**

If no, please explain (for example, are costs to be reimburse by cost share funds included in budget summary). Note – There is a considerable amount of cost share federal funds that are identified, but the budget only shows the expenses involved with the CALFED portion of the Costs, not the total project costs.

Does the budget justification adequately explain major expenses?

**Yes No**

If no, please explain:

Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

**Yes No**

If yes, please explain: This is an increase of @2MM from the original proposal based on updated costs. The budget only shows the expenditures related to the CALFED funds not how the CVPIA funds will be used. It would be helpful to understand how the full costs of the entire project are being allocated.

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## Ecosystem Restoration Program –Directed Action: Land Acquisition

Proposal number: 96DA

Proposal title: *American Basin Fish Screen and Habitat Improvement Project*

1. Is the site's ecological importance documented in the proposal? If yes, please import relevant text and citations here

**Land acquisition elements of the project purchase rights of way for a fish screen and the consolidation of diversions from the Sacramento River.** Land will be acquired for the construction of canals, a fish screen intake, and other mitigation purposes. The land will also be needed to allow for the restoration of the Natomas Cross Canal, as an important wildlife corridor.

**According to the applicant, the proposed project will** The specific goal of the project is to remove a “fish negative barrier”, improve habitat, and prevent entrainment of winter-run Chinook salmon, spring-run Chinook salmon, fall-run Chinook salmon, late fall-run Chinook salmon, splittail, steelhead trout, green sturgeon, and other high risk species. Improvements proposed will eliminate entrainment mortality, remove blockages to suitable habitats, improve quality of accessible stream channel and riparian habitat, reduce predation losses, and improve water quality, the applicant says

Removal of diversions from the Natomas Cross Canal and consolidation of diversions will allow for restoration efforts which will improve aquatic, riverine and riparian habitats. Removal of the diversion dam and unscreened pumps from the Natomas Cross Canal will restore a natural flow regime, and enhance access of sensitive fish species to historical spawning habitats and critical rearing habitat. This restoration effort will also assist in preventing straying of migratory fish into the Natomas Cross Canal, and associated predation, by restoring natural outflow from the Natomas Cross Canal. This change will also improve water quality, since all diversions will be from the Sacramento River, where the rate of diversion will be a much smaller percentage of the stream flow. The area on the Sacramento River where the consolidated diversions will be located is heavily channelized due to its proximity to urban areas. Hardpoints have already been established, with levee systems immediately adjacent to the river channel. Consolidation of diversions will assist in restoration of riverine and riparian habitat in the area of abandoned diversions.

The implemented project will provide for a reliable water supply for agriculture and to sustain critical habitat. NMWC provides the vast majority of surface water supply to the Natomas Basin. The rice farming and winter re-flooding of fields practiced in the basin provide critical habitat for waterfowl and at-risk species such as the giant garter snake and Swainson’s hawk.

2. Is the owner's willingness to sell the site documented in the proposal? If no, please explain:

Yes, except for two parties have expressed any reservations. These reservations are primarily related to project details, and NMWC believes that these reservations can be overcome. Outstanding landowner issues are as follows:

- A future restoration site for the Natomas Basin Conservancy will be impacted by canal construction. This conflict is being handled by designing habitat into the canal section which is compatible with the Conservancy's restoration efforts. This cooperative effort should resolve the issue and the landowner would become a willing seller.
- Another landowner has recently questioned the extent of right-of-way take and desires further detail.

NMWC does not have the ability to condemn land due to its organizational structure as a private company. If conditions change, and acquisitions cannot be completed in compliance with the provisions of the funding source, the NMWC will not proceed with acquisition until the concerns are resolved, or will acquire land using other funds.

3. Is evidence of local government support for the purchase included in the proposal? If yes, please explain:

No explicit evidence was submitted, but the project has been coordinated through the Sacramento Water Forum, in which Sacramento participates, and with Sutter County.

4. Is the use proposed for the site after its purchase clearly consistent with the site's general plan designation and zoning? If no, please explain:

The entire site is planned for general agriculture or agricultural open space, and zoned Agriculture or Flood Plain. The applicant says its use for agricultural water facilities is consistent with the plan and zoning purposes, which seems reasonable.

5. Is the land mapped as prime farmland, farmland of statewide significance, unique farmland, or farmland of local importance? If yes, please explain the classification:

Yes, the project affects 80 acres of land mapped as Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance

- Is the site under a Williamson Act contract? No
- Will use of the site change from agriculture after its purchase? Yes, some of these lands will be converted from farming to use for irrigation facilities, while some abandoned facilities will be managed as open space for wildlife habitat.

6 Is this a time-sensitive acquisition opportunity, according to the proposal? If yes, please import relevant text here:

The project cannot proceed until these lands are acquired.

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