

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

Proposal Number: 166DA

Applicant Organization: The Nature Conservancy

Proposal Title: Battle Creek Protection and Stewardship

Recommendation: Fund As Is

Amount: \$2,206,625

Conditions, if any, of approval (if there are no conditions, please put "None"):
None.

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

The Selection Panel agrees with the new technical reviews, which determined that the revised proposal is responsive to the earlier comments from the Selection Panel. The conservation easements on the three properties identified in the proposal should be pursued, with the clear intent of maintaining wildlife friendly agriculture, taking action to protect the existing resource values (e.g., fencing streamside areas where appropriate), and monitoring the performance of this investment.

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Research and Restoration External Review Form
CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program 2002 Proposal Solicitation Package

Proposal Title: Battle Creek Protection and Stewardship

Review:

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

Goals and objectives are clearly stated. This is a conservation easement acquisition and proposed management program for three land parcels in the Battle Creek drainage basin. Conservation easement acquisition is strongly argued to be timely due to mining, residential growth, and development pressures of Redding, CA. The conservation easement acquisition as a separable right of the land rights bundle is a time tested approach to preserving certain land uses. The proposal successfully argues that the acquisition is important.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

The literature review is adequate for the CA coastal ecosystems. The conceptual model, that conservation easements and land management systems will meet the restoration needs of the upper Sacramento River system, is plausible.

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

The approach for conservation easement acquisition is The Nature Conservancy's tested and proven approach. Since the effort to find land parcels in a somewhat contiguous process is being done on a prioritization basis, the approach is logical. The arguments supporting the approach are derived from sound scientific principles and backed up by collegial efforts by public, private and non-profit organizations. The project is not likely to generate novel information, new methodologies or approaches; however, novel information, new methodologies and approaches have been used to support the approach. Ultimately, useful information will be derived from this program; however, the payoff may be many decades into the future.

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

The conservation easement approach by The Nature Conservancy is well documented. It is simply get funding, negotiate easements and over time purchase the separable right of development and establish a long term management plan to maintain or improve the existing habitat. Technically, the approach is feasible and is used to acquire easements on other local properties. The proposal statements indicate the likelihood of success to be relative high. The project scale to cost ratio is within reason.

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

The performance measures section is adequate for the project. It would be improved if the USDA NRCS National Rangeland Handbook guidelines were followed, rather than those described. One concern is the criteria that total standing biomass at grazing season end be 1000 lbs. This is

not appropriate. Each ecological site should be designated, grazing levels established to meet the biological needs of the site and the total standing biomass determined for that site. This reviewer presumes that the 1000 lbs is on a per acre basis and not for the entire unit. Descriptions about how measures will be quantified are adequate, as well as procedures for recording and reporting annual data.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

This proposal's product is admirable, that is maintaining anadromous fishery habitat. The terrestrial habitat restoration activities lack firm analysis. Management of controlled burns for medusa head and yellow star thistle control are not strongly substantiated. Cattle and wild ruminant grazing without high cost herbicide applications, heavy grazing prior to green up by cattle and sheep may or may not achieve the long term result. Using grazing animal processing of grass hay seeds may or may not work. In summary, there is no scientific basis to argue against the proposal.

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

The Nature Conservancy has an excellent track record. The team proposing to implement this project includes scientists and land managers, all employed by TNC. It is assumed that the team has access to national and local support, based on previous acquisitions and ongoing negotiations, to meet their objectives.

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

The proposal to acquire perpetual conservation easements from 6,844 acres of rangeland and woodland for \$2.2 million appears reasonable. The management practices implemented during the 3 year funding stage appear to be a good start, assuming the additional \$800,000 is also raised and used as indicated.

Miscellaneous comments:

The proposal has the documented scientific soundness to meet this reviewer's concerns

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating: Excellent: outstanding in all respects; Good: quality but some deficiencies; Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
- Excellent	The proposal is adequate to meet the goals and objectives described. This is a very long term program and as indicated, must maintain an adaptive management approach over the next several decades. The science supporting this proposal will serve as a good start toward meeting the objectives and improvement suggestions have been included.
X - Good	
- Poor	

Research and Restoration External Review Form
CALFED Ecosystem Restoration Program 2002 Proposal Solicitation Package

Proposal Title: Battle Creek Protection and Stewardship

Review:

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?
 - A.** The goals and objectives are excellent and presented in a clear manor and consistent throughout the proposal.
 - B.** The concept is very timely and important, this proposal pulls a lot of people and issues together to solve critical watershed and species problems.
2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?
 - A.** Yes. The proposal has made the connection to research literature and has done a good job with justification of conservation easements and watershed improvements.
 - B.** Yes, Yes. The conceptual model was easy to understand and it did show why this work is needed.
 - C.** Yes. The proposal makes an excellent case for conservation easements and watershed improvements. Monitoring methods are clearly stated.
3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?
 - A.** Yes. It is well thought out and will meet its objectives.
 - B.** Yes. The proposals commitment to long term monitoring will ensure an increase in knowledge.
 - C.** Yes. Due to working with people in the watershed the commitment to adaptive management.
 - D.** Yes. Agencies can validate watershed BMP's with this work.
4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?
 - A.** Yes. The proposal does a good job documenting its approach and it is feasible.
 - B.** Excellent. The NC has a good record of obtaining and managing conservation easements.
 - C.** Yes. Objectives and scale match up.
5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?
 - A.** Yes. Well done.
 - B.** Yes. This proposal has improved in quantifying performance measures.
 - C.** Yes. The monitoring plans show the science behind the methods and it is well developed.

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?
- A.** Yes. Many products will be obtained.
B. Monitoring will produce improved documentation of the effectiveness of BMP's.
C. Yes.
7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?
- A.** Excellent track record
B. Yes. They can get the job done.
C. Yes. The NC infrastructure is behind this proposal.
8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?
- A.** Yes. The costs are in line with or lower than what other groups would charge.

Miscellaneous comments:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating: Excellent: outstanding in all respects; Good: quality but some deficiencies; Poor: serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
- Excellent X	This proposal has been improved and is now excellent/Superior. The weak areas in the first proposal have been fixed. The science behind the monitoring and data collection is good. I recommend funding this proposal.
- Good	
- Poor	

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

Proposal number: 166DA

Proposal title: *Battle Creek Protection and Stewardship*

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

Yes Note: This proposal identifies three properties as high priority for conservation easements, but identifies no estimate of cost per property. There are funds shown for acquisition in each of the 3 years in the proposal, but in fact all the work could occur in any given year depending on working with property owners. From the budget provided, it is not possible to determine a cost for each different property. The proposal in fact is for a lump sum of dollars with which to proceed with efforts for the easements. The budget is not detailed by project.

If no, please explain:

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

Yes Note: same comment as above, the task is simply “acquisition” and not broken out into any detail at all. One question would be, what if easements are significantly cheaper than the dollars requested? Do the funds not used come back to CALFED? It appears that a breakdown by property with an estimated cost of easement per property would provide a much better description. This is essentially a request for a pool of money to start negotiations from versus actual identified projects/tasks.

If no, please explain:

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

Yes

If no, please explain:

4. Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

Yes

If no, please explain:

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

No There is a simple \$1 adding error in the table, comes to \$2,206,624 by adding the yearly costs (both year 1 and year 2 in the table are incorrectly added, each off \$1) and the total was also mis-added by a final \$1 error.

If no, please explain (for example, are costs to be reimburse by cost share funds included in budget summary).

6. Does the budget justification adequately explain major expenses?

Yes

If no, please explain:

7. Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

No

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Ecosystem Restoration Program –Directed Action: Land Acquisition

166DA

The Nature Conservancy

Battle Creek Protection and Stewardship

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

Yes. “Battle Creek is unique among Sacramento River tributaries because of its capability to support all four runs of Chinook salmon. Specifically, there are only two remaining suitable spawning habitats for winter run salmon: Battle Creek and the upper Sacramento River. Battle Creek is the only habitat that can consistently provide the cold waters that winter run salmon need for spawning success. Because Battle Creek is recognized as having the best potential for restoring all four runs of Chinook salmon as well as Steelhead trout populations, a historic agreement known as the Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Project (“Battle Creek Restoration Project”) was signed by the California Department of Fish and Game, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, collectively, the “Resource Agencies” and PG&E to remove dams, restore in-stream flows and install fish ladders and screens. Significant financial support was provided by CALFED for that project.

In this proposal, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is requesting funds to use the following methods to help protect existing wildlife-friendly agriculture on Battle Creek: acquire conservation easements to help protect habitat lands; and where appropriate employ: riparian fencing to help preclude livestock access to streamside areas, invasive weed control, restoration (revegetation) of natural plant communities.

Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Plan, by Kier Associates for the Battle Creek Working Group, January 1999.

Kier 2001. *Draft Battle Creek Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Project Adaptive Management Plan*. U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

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

Yes

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

Not clearly, but the proposals states :” Peggy McNutt of The Nature Conservancy’s Red Bluff office discussed this proposal with the Tehama County Supervisors on October 2, 2001. No concerns were raised, and, in the past, the Supervisors have supported land protection that helped maintain the existing land use and payment of property taxes. Peggy McNutt also spoke to Patricia Clarke, the Shasta County Supervisor representing the Battle Creek region of Shasta County. Clarke stated that she supports this proposal to CALFED.”

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:

Yes.

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:

No

- Is the site under a Williamson Act contract? Yes, 2 of the 3 parcels.
- Will use of the site change from agriculture after its purchase? An undetermined acreage will be fenced to exclude livestock from riparian zones, control invasive weeds, or restore native habitats. This may be viewed as more careful management of an ongoing ranching use, rather than conversion from agriculture to another use.

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

“These acquisitions are time-sensitive opportunities. Although the owners of the targeted properties are currently willing sellers, they are considering other options including subdivision and/or development.”

Other Comments: 1 of the 3 ranches is already owned by TNC, which intends to sell the property only after a conservation easement is placed upon it. On this site, will this request result in new land protection, or will it enable TNC to sell the site without losing the value that might be ascribed to a conservation easement on the site?

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