

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

Proposal Number: 261DA

Applicant Organization: California State Reclamation Board

Proposal Title: Hamilton City Ecosystem Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction

Recommendation: The Selection Panel supports funding of this project contingent upon the several conditions presented below.

Conditions: The State Reclamation Board should work with the ERP and Science Program to identify its independent science review committee. The Reclamation Board should also work with the CALFED Sacramento River Standing Committee (when formed) to provide the planning and evaluation processes for selection of the restoration alternatives to ensure that the final alternative meets ERP goals and approaches.

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

This rewritten proposal is vastly improved over the initial submittal. The authors have addressed most of the concerns identified in the Selection Panel review and recommendation. The basic concept of planning and selecting from alternative restoration scenarios is relatively well developed but detail of procedure was limited and when evaluating benefits a balance should be achieved between ecological and economic benefits. The initial proposal indicated that the process of identifying different restoration scenarios was complete, but this proposal explains that alternative development is still in progress, which assumes that the selection process can be improved based on advice from external science review (e.g., a Sacramento River Standing Committee).

In an attempt to address the need to fully use adaptive management in the process of alternative development and selection as recommended by the Selection Panel, the applicants have developed a conceptual model that shows how connecting the floodplain to the river will enhance wildlife and fish habitat and increase in terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity. Such a conceptual model was absent from the original proposal. The proposal also developed hypotheses that will be tested once the project is completed. Although these hypotheses are rudimentary, they recognize the potential benefits of the project, and address the need to test the outcome of a fully completed project.

One concern of the Selection Panel was how the alternative restoration scenarios would be evaluated. Evaluation criteria are presented, but the process could be better developed. Appointment of an Independent Review Panel to monitor the progress and quality of the project and the process used for alternative selection is commendable; however, other than disciplines identified, this panel remains one more item that needs fulfillment and could have been better developed.

Reviewers were concerned about the incompleteness of many ideas presented in the proposal. For example, the proposal states that tasks are a certain percent complete. What has been completed and what is needed for completion is not clearly explained.

The proposal assesses habitat restoration alternatives, but is not clear on what is meant by habitat restoration. What were the end points? How will alternatives be compared? How will the environmental effects of the alternatives be determined? These are all steps required in a NEPA document and it is too bad that they were not more fully developed here.

Instead, the proposal still spends too much text explaining how it fits into ERP while omitting details on possible alternatives, the development process relative to engineering designs, potential ways of evaluating successful endpoints, etc.