

Proposal Reviews

#57: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Initial Selection Panel Review

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Initial Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Initial Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 57

Applicant Organization: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

Please provide an overall evaluation rating.

Explanation of Recommendation Categories: Fund

- **As Is** (a proposal recommended for funding as proposed)
- **In Part** (a proposal for which partial funding is recommended for selected project phases or components)
- **With Conditions** (a proposal for which funds are recommended if the applicant contractually agrees to meet the specified conditions)

Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan (a proposal addressing a high priority action that requires some revision followed by additional review prior to being recommended for funding)

Not Recommended (a proposal not currently recommended for funding-after revision may be considered in the future)

Note on "Amount":

For proposals recommended as Fund As Is, Fund In Part or Fund With Conditions, the dollar amount is the amount recommended by the Selection Panel.

For proposals recommended as Consider as Directed Action in Annual Workplan, the dollar amount is the amount requested by the applicant(s).

Fund	
As Is	-
In Part	-
With Conditions	-
Consider as Directed Action	-
Not Recommended	X

Amount: **\$0**

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

None

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

The Selection Panel concurs with the Technical Panel review that the proposal failed to describe the strategic importance of the proposed agricultural easements in meeting ERP goals. The proposed easement acquisitions were not located in high priority areas such as along the Sacramento River or a key tributary. The proposal was vague in its deliverables other than the actual easements.

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review Form

Proposal Number: 57

Applicant Organization: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

Superior: outstanding in all respects;

Above Average: Quality proposal, medium or high regional value, and no significant administrative concerns;

Adequate: No serious deficiencies, no significant regional impediments, and no significant administrative concerns;

Not Recommended: Serious deficiencies, significant regional impediments or significant administrative concerns.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Superior	One of three outside reviewers and one of three regions ranked the proposal very low, and for a similar reason: lack of established strategic importance for the so-called pilot easements. For these to be truly pilot easements, their biological and hydrological importance should be established. Proposal is vague on deliverables other than the actual easements. This was noted even in the favorable reviews by outside scientists.
-Above average	
X Adequate	
-Not recommended	

1. **Goals and Justification.** Does the proposal present a clear statement of goals, objectives and hypotheses? Does the proposal present a clear justification and conceptual model for the project?

Strategic vision is lacking, and the literature review is barely adequate. The strategic importance of the proposed pilot easements needs to be established. What is special about the sites involved? This is nowhere articulated. This is a very expensive project given the above deficiencies. Suggest starting much smaller and developing a sound strategic vision first.

2. **Likelihood of Success (Approach, Feasibility, Capabilities and Performance Measures).** Is the project likely to succeed based on the approach, feasibility and project team capabilities? Are the proposed performance measures adequate for measuring the project's success?

Staff appear qualified. Apparently the infrastructure and support is there to enable the easement negotiations and purchase. Likelihood of success difficult to gauge, because the strategic importance of the proposed pilot easements has not been established, nor what the desired outcome of this pilot project would be, in any quantitative sense.

3. **Outcomes and Products.** Will the project advance the state of scientific knowledge in general and/or make an important contribution to the state of knowledge of the Bay-Delta Watershed? For restoration proposals, is the project likely to contribute to ecosystem restoration or species recoveries in a significant way? Will the project produce products useful to decision-makers and scientists?

No advance of scientific knowledge, or products beyond the model easements forms and the easements themselves. There is no strategic sense of whether the specific pilot easements will assist in species recovery. This is a serious lack in the proposal

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

The project would be very expensive in light of lack of strategic sense. What is the project building towards? This is unclear.

5. **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?

Delta: Medium ranking. Project aids the Delta Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan. Expansion of DU's GIS model could contribute to effective planning as well. It may, however, be premature to begin purchasing easements until the plan is further along. The contribution of this project will provide some new insight into the issue of wildlife friendly agriculture in the Delta. Much is already known about this issue, however.

San Joaquin: Medium ranking. This project gives an opportunity to do restoration as well as habitat development in low impact areas near waterways. However, the easement will be located in the Sacramento Valley, and will not directly benefit the San Joaquin Region.

Sacramento: Ranking low. Model is unclear, and no clear partnerships or outreach mentioned. It seems to really just be easement acquisition on 4 properties. No clear partnerships are mentioned.. Monitoring protocols are not addressed. The project feels vague, not broad-based; expensive without yielding much more than 4 properties held under easement.

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

Are the status, progress, and accomplishments of the applicant's current CALFED or CVPIA project(s) accurately stated? - Yes X No - N/A If no, please explain any inaccuracies:

Status, No! Progress, Yes. Accomplishments, N/A. Financial Status of the 99-B02 currently shows \$750,000 obligated towards the CALFED portion and \$250,000 obligated towards the CVPIA portion of the USBR Agreement 99-FC-20-0055. Amount stated by applicant as income (\$531,850.58) may reflect actual expenditures from the CALFED portion of the Agreement at the time of proposal submission.

Miscellaneous comments:

Land Acquisition:

Proposal Number: 57

Applicant Organization: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

1. Is the site's ecological importance documented in the proposal?

☒ Yes -No

If yes, please import relevant text and citations here:

This proposal proposes to purchase four agricultural conservation easements as pilot projects. All of the easement properties are located in Sutter County between the city of Yuba City and the Sutter Bypass.

Ducks Unlimited (DU) proposes to develop a Central Valley-wide program to identify and protect areas where wildlife friendly agriculture benefits CALFED Draft Stage 1 Implementation Plan goals and objectives. Once the areas are identified, DU's Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands Program (CEAL) will work with the community and willing landowners within the community to preserve and protect agricultural lands being managed for certain crops and following certain agricultural practices that create significant habitat and wetland-like benefits for aquatic and terrestrial species.

DU has designed an interactive GIS Model to expand the capabilities of predicting future development patterns and the impact they may have on existing natural resource values. With this tool, landowners are assisted taking appropriate actions to preserve, protect and enhance conservation values while maintaining the productivity of their agricultural operation. This system has been used to identify four properties in Sutter County and DU proposes to purchase agricultural conservation easements on these properties as part of a pilot project, which will be adaptively managed to produce information for an expanded Central Valley-wide agricultural easement program.

The proposed pilot projects present a unique opportunity to protect these important farms and habitat that meet CALFED and CVPIA goals. They possess a biological richness due to the current use for rice production. California Rice Industry Association identifies 116 species of birds, 28 species of mammals, and 27 species of amphibians and reptiles that are known to use rice fields.

2. Is the owner's willingness to sell the site documented in the proposal?

☒ Yes -No

If no, please explain:

3. Is evidence of local government support for the purchase included in the proposal?

☒ Yes -No

If yes, please explain:

DU has received a resolution from the Sutter County Board of Supervisors supporting the easement purchases.

4. Is the use proposed for the site after its purchase clearly consistent with the site's general plan designation and zoning?

-Yes ☒No

If no, please explain:

Because the project will retain use of these lands for agriculture, the application did not capture information about current general plan policies and zoning standards

5. Is the land mapped as prime farmland, farmland of statewide significance, unique farmland, or farmland of local importance?

☒Yes -No

If yes, please explain the classification:

The pilot projects are all located within an area classified as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance or Unique Farmland, according to the applicant.

Is the site under a Williamson Act contract?

-Yes ☒No

Will use of the site change from agriculture after its purchase?

-Yes ☒No -Not Currently in Agriculture

6. Is this a time-sensitive acquisition opportunity, according to the proposal?

☒Yes -No

If yes, please import relevant text here:

These acquisitions present a time sensitive opportunity in that they are close to a developing community and have potential to develop as rural subdivisions, the applicant says.

Other Comments:

The application includes no information about Williamson Act contracts, but I clicked no because the form requires an answer. The project would likely be consistent with any current contracts, but would also seem unnecessary in agricultural preserves where Williamson Act contracts preclude development.

Delta Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 57

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

Overall Ranking: -Low ☒Medium -High

Provide a brief summary explanation of the committee's ranking:

Panel felt this project had merit in the context of contributing to implementing the Delta Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan. Expansion of DU's GIS model could contribute to effective planning as well. It may, however, be premature to begin purchasing easements until the plan is further along.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

☒Yes -No

How?

There are no local constraints that would impede the project's ability to move forward in a timely and successful manner. Project proponents have already engaged in collaborative efforts with Delta landowners through its Valley Care Program to ensure that any local constraints are minimized.

2. Does the project pursue the restoration priorities applicable to the region as outlined in the PSP?

☒Yes -No

How?

Proposal should effectively address priority 3 for the Delta.

h Restore upland wildlife habitat and support wildlife-friendly agriculture.

3. Is the project adequately linked with other restoration activities in the region, such as ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts?

☒Yes -No

How?

The proposal builds on the knowledge gained in the Sacramento Valley and is related to ongoing outreach efforts through DU's Valley Care Program. The proposal is linked to the preparation and implementation of the Delta Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan.

4. Does the project adequately involve local people and institutions?

XYes -No

How?

The proposal outlines that DU's CEAL Program will work closely with the local community and willing landowners.

Other Comments:

Y The contribution of this project will provide some new insight into the issue of wildlife friendly agriculture in the Delta. Much is already known about this issue, however.

Y The expanded modeling proposed for the Delta could provide a usefull tool for ecosystem planning in the Delta.

Y We do have knowledge gaps in areas such quantifying the concentration of pesticides in drain water released from Delta islands using an aggressive wildlife-friendly approach. These gaps will likely not be addressed by this proposal.

Y The purchase of easements should ultimately be guided by the Delta Ecosystem Restoration Implementation Plan

San Joaquin Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 57

Applicant Organization: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

Overall Ranking: -Low **XMedium** -High

Provide a brief summary explanation of the committee's ranking:

This project gives an opportunity to do restoration as well as habitat development in low impact areas near water ways. However, the easement will be located in the Sacramento Valley, and will not directly benefit the San Joaquin Region.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

XYes -No

How?

Existing pasture land is involved and management needs addressing to allow these easements to conform to Cal Fed restoration principles.

2. Does the project pursue the restoration priorities applicable to the region as outlined in the PSP?

XYes -No

How?

Working on areas that have historically been most affected by each of flooding in areas near rivers due to water development.

3. Is the project adequately linked with other restoration activities in the region, such as ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts?

XYes -No

How?

This is a continuation of projects Ducks Unlimited has been active in, in the Sacramento Valley and complimentary in movement south.

4. Does the project adequately involve local people and institutions?

XYes -No

How?

It involves local people effected by change of practices as helping manage projects.

Other Comments:

Sacramento Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 57

Applicant Organization: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

Overall Ranking: ☒Low ☐Medium ☐High

Provide a brief summary explanation of the committee's ranking:

Model is unclear, no clear partnerships or outreach mentioned. Seems to really just be easement acquisition on 4 propoerties.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

☐Yes ☒No

How?

Although the Sutter Board of Supervisors is on board with a general MOU with D.U., it's not clear what the general local feeling is for acquisitions. No clear partnerships are mentioned.

2. Does the project pursue the restoration priorities applicable to the region as outlined in the PSP?

☒Yes ☐No

How?

The proposal addresses Multi-region Dev. Program for Wildlife Friendly Ag: Incentives program, including pilot projects on methods. Panel not convinced this is a real pilot, however.

3. Is the project adequately linked with other restoration activities in the region, such as ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts?

☐Yes ☒No

How?

Although proposal mentions links, they are not clearly specified.

4. Does the project adequately involve local people and institutions?

☐Yes ☒No

How?

Limited outreach for the project.

Other Comments:

Positives: Protects Wildlife Friendly ag. land in perpetuity; promotes Wildlife Friendly ag practices; has Sutter Co.'s blessing right now; expanded GIS Wildlife Friendly ag land mapping is useful, though could be politically volatile with landowners; D.U. has a good track record with projects.

Negatives: Not clear what the model is here. It seems it already exists elsewhere. Talks of a multi-region project, but concentrates on Sutter Co. Unclear how San Joaquin and Delta are to be brought in. Monitoring protocols are not addressed. The project feels vague, not broad-based, expensive without yielding much more than 4 properties held under easement.

External Scientific: #1

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **57**

Applicant Organization: **Ducks Unlimited, Inc.**

Proposal Title: **Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

Review:

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	See miscellaneous comments.
-Good	
X Poor	

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

No. No.

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?

No. No. Pilot: justified.

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?

No. Unclear. No. Unclear.

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?

No. Likelihood of success difficult to gauge, because the strategic importance of the proposed pilot easements has not been established, nor what the desired outcome of this pilot project would be, in any quantitative sense.

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?

No. No. No.

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?

Unclear. No. Unclear.

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?

Unclear. Appear qualified. Apparently the infrastructure and support is there to enable the easement negotiations and purchase.

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

Very expensive for a project lacking much strategic vision.

Miscellaneous comments:

Strategic vision is lacking, and the literature review is barely adequate. The strategic importance of the proposed pilot easements needs to be established. This is a very expensive project given the above deficiencies. Suggest starting much smaller and developing a sound strategic vision first.

External Scientific: #2

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **57**

Applicant Organization: **Ducks Unlimited, Inc.**

Proposal Title: **Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

None

Review:

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	If this project is viewed as purchasing easements and updating a GIS model, then a good evaluation criteria should simply be whether it is worth 4 million dollars. I can not provide that evaluation. If the goal is to produce new and worthy science, then this proposal is lacking critical features.
-Good	
XPoor	

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

This project has four goals: (1) Purchase of up to four easements which will be adaptively managed; (2) Develop a Central Valley wide Interactive GIS model to identify new potential easement sites; (3) Work with willing landowners and communities to protect new wildlife friendly agricultural sites using agricultural conservation easements; (4) Establish criteria for wildlife friendly conservation easements through monitoring and adaptive management of existing projects. These goals as are clearly stated. Using agriculture easements to protect wildlife habitat is a useful approach. Establishing criteria that can be used to improve future easement designs is important. It is worth noting that the project has components that while related could be separated: the easements will be in Sutter county, but the GIS model will be expanded to the San Joaquin and Delta regions. It is not evident that any of the easement purchases will inform the GIS modeling, although the model plus recommendations from

the Sutter easements monitoring could and should inform future easement purchases.

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?

There are some weaknesses in the problem statement and justification. For instance, the proposal states that the human population of the Central Valley will increase by 12 million by 2020 this is a fanciful estimate (I have heard estimates of will increase to 12 million by 2040).

The project poses the following hypothesis, does the restriction of development through the use of agricultural easements on wildlife friendly agricultural property protect habitat necessary for waterfowl and other at-risk species within the Central Valley? It discusses a variety of biological and physical processes which should be maintained in order to preserve functioning habitat, and that agricultural lands and agricultural practices play an important role in the success of efforts to preserve functioning habitats in the Central Valley. This seems very reasonable. The proposal provides good justification for protecting wildlife habitat on agricultural lands, and that easements are an important tool. The proposal also provides good support that adaptive management is an important element in managing these easements.

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 does not seem well designed to meet the objectives of the project. I see the following issues: first should the proposal focus on maintaining wildlife friendly agricultural land, or on making some unfriendly land friendly. Next, I am concerned that the scope for adaptive management is both conceptually and contractually limited. Finally, it seems that the issues of concern in the proposal are not likely to be addressed in a three year time frame. I will briefly discuss each in turn.

The proposal states that improving habitats on and adjacent to agricultural lands in the Feather River/Sutter Basin Ecological Management Zone will benefit native waterfowl and wildlife species, but the focus on wildlife friendly agricultural property does not suggest much in the way of improving, but more in terms of maintaining. I do not disagree that protecting valuable habitat is a good idea, but I am not sure that it adds much in the way of new scientific understanding, nor does the proposal make the case that it will.

It is not clear what type of adaptive management will be done, and the extent that the easement contracts will allow for significant adaptation if required. The examples in Appendix B, under Post Purchase Intent state that projects such as winter flooding of rice and wildlife friendly crop rotations will be encouraged. It is not clear that these practices will or can be required, only encouraged. Perhaps an interesting question is how to design mutually acceptable easements so that these actions can be required when necessary? It appears that the easements are essentially the purchase of development rights, so that the land can not be converted from agricultural use, perhaps even from its historical crops, but I don't see how the adaptive management really fits in. There is a vague statement that funding from wildlife enhancement programs will be provided whenever possible, but it does not seem to be funded within this proposal.

While it may not be desirable to write the proposal for a very long period, I don't see how a three year project (less than that given the time needed to make purchases) really allows for a meaningful evaluation of long-term success in improving habitat, and certainly little time to propose, much less to evaluate, adaptive management.

The GIS model will be useful to decision makers, and this is an important component of the project (but a relatively small financial component). Aside from the GIS model, it does not appear that the project is likely to produce new or novel methodology or approaches.

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?

Aside from the issues I raise in the Approach section, the project appears feasible. That is, I have no doubts that contractually sound easements will be purchased for the protection of wildlife friendly agricultural land, and that these easements will be effectively monitored. The scale of the purchases seems reasonable. Ducks Unlimited has a long history in this area, and I am sure will carry out the project commendably. The GIS modeling appears to be an extension of an existing model and its completion should not pose a problem.

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?

There are no specifics regarding how the need for adaptive management will be determined, or implemented. Aside from this, good project specific performance measures are clearly described and enumerated. Monitoring (aside from adaptively managing) is well addressed.

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?

The products seem valuable, but valuable interpretative outcomes do not seem that likely.

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 applicants are experienced and very capable of managing and completing this project, with the caveat that the scientific background in terms of developing new or novel approaches, or in providing interpretive outcomes does not appear strong. The infrastructure provided by Ducks Unlimited to support the purchase and monitoring of the easements, and in completing the GIS model, seems very strong.

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

The cost of purchasing easements depends upon the prevailing land values, and as such it is not easy to determine if they are correct or not, but they appear reasonable. They are also the vast majority of the requested funds at about 3 million dollars. On an item by item basis the rest of the costs appear reasonable, but when taken as a whole they comprise 1 million dollars, which is by no means small number.

Miscellaneous comments:

If this project is implemented, the scientific contribution would benefit from some collaboration with relevant academics involved in natural resource management, preferably from the region.

External Scientific: #3

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **57**

Applicant Organization: **Ducks Unlimited, Inc.**

Proposal Title: **Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

I am acquainted with Olen Zirkle, who would coordinate the proposed projects. Mr. Zirkle has attended one meeting of a working group that I initiated concerning private land stewardship. Neither this proposal, nor anything about the CEAL Project was discussed at that meeting. In fact, I'd never heard of it before receiving CALFED's request to review it.

California Wilderness Coalition has no financial connection to Duck's Unlimited, the CEAL Project, or any of the landowners/ properties or practitioners involved in the proposal. Nor do I.

-BenW

Review:

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	Overall, the program has a high likelihood of success. The properties it would protect provide a substantial benefit in and of themselves, and the information provided about further easement opportunities would make an important contribution toward future conservation. The deficiencies are summarized in "miscellaneous comments" above. If there was a "very good" option I would choose it.
X Good	
-Poor	

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

The goals and objectives are stated clearly and concisely. Addressing CALFED's ERP goals by purchasing development rights and managing flood-irrigated crops to replicate floodplain processes is timely and potentially has broad application.

The "hypothesis being tested" is stated too broadly and goes beyond the scope of the proposed actions. However, in the justification of the conceptual model, a much more testable set of hypotheses are presented which in fact could generate beneficial data for the field.

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?

Yes. The premise that winter-flooding of rice fields may improve the nutrient supply, connect habitat and improve ecosystem management for local and migratory waterfowl is supported by recent scientific studies, although such studies are not cited. The conceptual model is sufficiently clear and consistent with the proposed project. A pilot project of this nature could generate useful and practical information to improve future, larger-scale efforts.

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 purchase of easements will certainly increase to likelihood of waterfowl survival over the long-term. The baseline evaluation and monitoring may add to our knowledge of waterfowl populations in the Central Valley. The GIS component of the project will generate new and useful information for future conservation efforts.

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 purchase of pilot project lands appears to be quite feasible. Landowners are already engaged, preliminary inspections are complete, an MOU has been entered with the county and regulatory concerns have been met. This suggests a high likelihood that the project will go forward successfully if funded. In general, the scale of the project is consistent with the objectives.

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?

In general, yes. GIS maps showing priority sites for ag. easements is an easily verifiable performance measure that is appropriate to the project's goal. The identification and acquisition of funding for easements and development rights on land are likewise quantifiable and appropriate.

Each easement will have Baseline Documentation Report and annual monitoring. In attachment B, the guidelines for the baseline report provide a thorough summary of key ecological characteristics.

The monitoring report will aid in documenting landowners' adherence to the basic terms of an easement. However, the information collected during site visits is targeted primarily toward landscape changes. The document does not provide space for reporting on the actual success of target species in response to the management strategies that are applied. As a result, it is unclear how "adaptive management" decisions will be arrived at and documented.

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?

One of the main "products" would be the purchase of easement on agricultural lands contiguous to the Sutter National Wildlife Refuge. This would buffer the refuge from urban encroachments and winter flooding of the land would create an enlarged area of protected waterfowl habitat.

Baseline Documentation Reports would provide useful information about ecological resources on privatelands in Sutter County.

The GIS mapping project would provide needed guidance for future conservation efforts on working farmland.

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?

Duck's Unlimited has a proven track record in the purchase and monitoring of easements. The two staff named in the proposal have extensive experience in agriculture, real estate transactions, easements, and GIS. Monitoring will be performed by Duck's Unlimited biologists. The organization clearly has the infrastructure to execute the proposed project.

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

The expenditures are reasonable and well justified.

Miscellaneous comments:

There is scientific backing for the premise that flooding rice fields can provide important habitat for waterfowl. The proposal could demonstrate greater engagement with this current findings in this literature, especially given that the fourth objective is to 'establish criteria for wildlife-friendly agricultural easements through monitoring and adaptive management.' Annual monitoring reports could provide a way to document the response of species to the management strategies applied.

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding: #1

New Proposal Number: 57

New Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

1. Prior CALFED project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*

CALFED # 99-B02, USBR # 99-FC-20-0055, Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase II - Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Analysis for Butte Sink Structural Modifications and Flow-Through System.

2. Prior CVPIA project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*

USBR # 99-FC-20-0055, Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase II - Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Analysis for Butte Sink Structural Modifications and Flow-Through System

3. Have negotiations about contracts or contract amendments with this applicant proceeded smoothly, without persistent difficulties related to standard contract terms and conditions?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any difficulties:

4. Are the status, progress, and accomplishments of the applicant's current CALFED or CVPIA project(s) accurately stated?

-Yes **X**No -N/A

If no, please explain any inaccuracies:

Status, No! Progress, Yes. Accomplishments, N/A.

Financial Status of the 99-B02 currently shows \$750,000 obligated towards the CALFED portion and \$250,000 obligated towards the CVPIA portion of the USBR Agreement 99-FC-20-0055. Amount stated by applicant as income (\$531,850.58) may reflect actual expenditures from the CALFED portion of the Agreement at the time of proposal submission.

5. Is the applicant's progress towards these project(s)' milestones and outcomes to date satisfactory?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

6. Is the applicant's reporting, records keeping, and financial management of these projects satisfactory?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

Reporting, Yes! Record keeping, N/A. Financial management, N/A.

7. Will the project(s) be ready for next phase funding in 2002, based on its current progress and expenditure rates?

-Yes -No XN/A

If no, please explain:

Other Comments:

Other comments: Ducks Unlimited, Inc. has been able to enlist other fund sources to add to and maximize the work effort concerning the Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase II. They are very well organized and forthcoming with all of the paper work and reports required under the current Agreement.

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding: #2

New Proposal Number: 57

New Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

1. Prior CALFED project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*

96-M22 Gorrill Dam Fish Screen and Ladder

95-MO5 M&T/Parrott Pumping Station and Fish Screen

96-M21 Rancho Esquon/Adams Dam Fish Screen and Ladder

2. Prior CVPIA project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*
3. Have negotiations about contracts or contract amendments with this applicant proceeded smoothly, without persistent difficulties related to standard contract terms and conditions?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any difficulties:

4. Are the status, progress, and accomplishments of the applicant's current CALFED or CVPIA project(s) accurately stated?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any inaccuracies:

5. Is the applicant's progress towards these project(s)' milestones and outcomes to date satisfactory?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

6. Is the applicant's reporting, records keeping, and financial management of these projects satisfactory?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

7. Will the project(s) be ready for next phase funding in 2002, based on its current progress and expenditure rates?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain:

Other Comments:

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding: #3

New Proposal Number: 57

New Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

1. Prior CALFED project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*
2. Prior CVPIA project numbers, titles, and programs: *(list only projects for which you are the contract manager)*

Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase III- Butte Creek, Drumheller Exclusion Barrier Final Engineering, Permitting and Construction, 11332-9-J006 Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase II- Butte Creek, Butte Sink/Sutter Bypass Stakeholder Coordination/Facilitation, 11332-9-J135 Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase II- Butte Creek, Sutter Bypass East-West Diversion Dam Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Review, 11332-9-J122 Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase II- Butte Creek, Sutter Bypass Weir #3 Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Review, 11332-9-J122 Lower Butte Creek Project, Phase II- Butte Creek, Sutter Bypass Weir #5 Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Review, 11332-9-J136 Sutter Bypass Eastside, 11332-0-J004 Lower Butte Creek, Butte Slough Phase II - Preliminary File, 11332-0-J003

3. Have negotiations about contracts or contract amendments with this applicant proceeded smoothly, without persistent difficulties related to standard contract terms and conditions?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any difficulties:

4. Are the status, progress, and accomplishments of the applicant's current CALFED or CVPIA project(s) accurately stated?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain any inaccuracies:

5. Is the applicant's progress towards these project(s)' milestones and outcomes to date satisfactory?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

6. Is the applicant's reporting, records keeping, and financial management of these projects satisfactory?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

7. Will the project(s) be ready for next phase funding in 2002, based on its current progress and expenditure rates?

XYes -No -N/A

If no, please explain:

Other comments: Ducks Unlimited has provided the strongest project management services I have been involved with on the Lower Butte Creek Project. Relative to the Lower Butte Creek Project, DU is managing a very complex effort with many funding sources and project components. If project management standards exhibited by Mr. Zirkle are practiced by other project managers within Ducks Unlimited, CALFED will be well served.

Other Comments:

Environmental Compliance:

Proposal Number: 57

Applicant Organization: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

1. Are the legal or regulatory issues that affect the proposal identified adequately in the proposal?

☒Yes ☐No

If no, please explain:

No permits or environmental documentation needed. There will be no change in land use.

***During monitoring, if any wildlife species will be collected, a Scientific Collecting Permit is necessary. However, from the description, it sounds like this will not be the case.**

2. Does the project's timeline and budget reflect adequate planning to address legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal?

☒Yes ☐No

If no, please explain:

N/A

3. Do the legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal significantly impair the project's feasibility?

☐Yes ☒No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments:

Budget:

Proposal Number: 57

Applicant Organization: Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

Proposal Title: Conservation Easements for Agricultural Lands/CEAL Project

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

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

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

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

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

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

4. Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

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

XYes -No

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

6. Does the budget justification adequately explain major expenses?

XYes -No

If no, please explain:

7. Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

-Yes ☒No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments: