

Proposal Reviews

#103: Delta Island Restoration Project

Old River Committee, Inc.

Final Selection Panel Review

Initial Selection Panel Review

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review

Land Acquisition

Delta Regional Review

External Scientific Review #1

#2

Environmental Compliance

Budget

Final Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Final Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 103

Applicant Organization: Old River Committee, Inc.

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration Project

Please provide an overall evaluation rating.

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"):

-

Provide a brief explanation of your rating:

Several letters from the Homestead Land and Water Alliance oppose the project. These comments underscore the need for the applicant to assure wider local support for the project and to better develop their plans for the site, so that its ecosystem benefits are more apparent and its impacts to adjacent lands are clearer.

Initial Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Initial Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 103

Applicant Organization: Old River Committee, Inc.

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration 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 evaluated this proposal as not being sufficiently developed to merit funding. There was not a well developed management plan for the property to be acquired and questions remained as to the breadth of local support for the project. The cost of the project compared to the potential ecological benefit seemed quite high.

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review:

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

Proposal Number: 103

Applicant Organization: Old River Committee, Inc.

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration 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 outside scientific reviewer rated it excellent, the other good. The latter had issues with monitoring, alfalfa management, and certain deliverables. The regional ranking was high. Community buy-in and strategic overview look excellent. Pre-project monitoring is a strength of the proposal. It may be difficult for the Old River Committee to re-submit next year, given the nature of unfunded non-profit organizations. We rate as above average the first goal, which is purchase of the island with the remnants of the Great Valley riparian oak forest, if the land prices are in accord with CALFEDs determinations on fair market value. We rate as not recommended all the other goals and objectives. We suggest that the applicant submit a much more detailed proposal on the other three goals and objectives (increase habitat, improve water quality, develop plan for public access). As submitted, the approaches to accomplishing these goals are not clearly stated. For the alfalfa management section (improve water quality), scientific literature, formal replicated scientific studies and monitoring will be essential. We suggest involvement of a pest management adviser or researcher to support this aspect of the project. We note that there is now a market for organically produced alfalfa, and that this option would be worth looking at, to reduce pollution caused by conventional insecticides and other pesticides. We also note that pocket gopher burrows are believed to provide shelter for many native amphibians and reptiles, so alfalfa management regimes that permit moderate densities of pocket gophers may be desirable.
XAbove average	
-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?

Goals were clearly stated. Justification was weaker, in part because of lack of breakdown on the acreages assigned to different uses. Details are missing on alfalfa trials. Alfalfa can be grown organically and there is increasing demand for this. More specifics are needed. The literature review could have been better.

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?

The project involves an unusual diversity of community members: very good buy-in. Capabilities are difficult to gauge, but the breadth of experience is impressive. Deliverables and methods are sketchy, and may require negotiation with CALFED, if a decision to fund is made.

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?

This is a weak area in the proposal. See the reviewers comments. Acquisition of the target land is the best-stated deliverable. Details on the other three objectives and goals are vague.

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

The budget appears reasonable.

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: Ranking high. Panel felt the acquisition portion of the project in particular was urgent. Panel rated this proposal high because it was action-oriented and could be an integral step to restoring critical parts of the Delta's habitat corridors.

No local constraints were identified that would impede the projects ability to move forward in a timely and successful manner. Project proponents have essentially completed an extensive collaborative effort to form the Old River Committee, Inc. There could be some resistance to the project from locals who may perceive their lands being overrun by trespassers who are attracted to the area by its features. .

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?

No significant concerns.

Miscellaneous comments:

None

Land Acquisition:

Proposal Number: 103

Applicant Organization: Old River Committee, Inc.

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration Project

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

Yes -No

If yes, please import relevant text and citations here:

The island is at the juncture of Old River, Paradise Cut, and Tom Paine Slough. In times of high water this is a floodway. In the summer it is a lazy, backwater with Western Pond Turtles (*Clemmys marmorata*) sunning themselves on logs. Nests of Swainsons hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*) have been sighted in the surrounding cottonwoods. The island has remnants of the Great Valley Oak Forest all around its perimeter. The acquisition of this parcel would fulfill Programmatic Target/Action EO11608: Purchase riparian woodland property or easements. The purchase and restoration of the parcel would also fulfill the Programmatic Target/Action EO11101: Restore twenty five miles of slough habitat where the channel width is less than fifty to seventy five feet wide. Lastly it would fulfill Programmatic Target/Action E011602: Restore fifteen to twenty -five miles of riparian and riverine aquatic habitat along other Delta island levees throughout the South Delta Ecological Unit to create corridors of riparian vegetation of which 60% is more than 75 feet wide with 10% no less than 300 feet wide and one mile long. This would be the extension of an existent habitat corridor. To the east is an eighty acre island held by a construction company for mitigation for a project elsewhere in the county. Beyond that is Reclaim Island/Stewart Tract, a.k.a., Califia. The southern portion of which borders Sugar Cut. This low lying portion of the island is to be habitat mitigation for any development that occurs there.

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:

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:

The General Plan designation is Open Space. The zoning A/G, general agriculture. The parcel will remain in agriculture, encircled by an interpretive trail, and restored habitat. No changes of use will be made in this Phase I.

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:

Because the applicants propose to retain agricultural use of the site, information about soils wasn't collected in the application.

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:

This is a time sensitive acquisition. There is no publicly owned land in this part of the South Delta for habitat restoration projects. More to the point, this is a very unique parcel of land.

Other Comments:

Delta Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 103

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration Project

Overall Ranking: -Low -Medium **XHigh**

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

Panel felt the acquisition portion of the project in particular was urgent. Panel rated this proposal high because it was action-oriented and could be an integral step to restoring critical parts of the Delta's habitat corridors. The panel fully supported the riparian protection and restoration element. Some concern was raised about the stated cost to acquire the island. The panel rated the proposal to develop wildlife friendly alfalfa as medium since the overall strategy for ecosystem restoration in this area may suggest other habitats for this island that could conflict with growing alfalfa.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

XYes -No

How?

I could not identify any local constraints that would impede the projects ability to move forward in a timely and successful manner.

 Project proponents have essentially completed an extensive collaborative effort to form the Old River Committee, Inc.

 There could be some resistance to the project from locals who may perceive their lands being overrun by trespassers who are attracted to the area by its features.

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

XYes -No

How?

Proposal claims it meets four of the eight priorities for the Delta Region and many of the related Strategic Goals:

 DR-1- Restore habitat corridors in the North Delta, East Delta and San Joaquin River.

 DR-3- Restore upland wildlife habitat and support wildlife-friendly agriculture.

 DR-4- Restore habitat that would specifically benefit one or more at-risk species; improve knowledge of optimal strategies for these species.

 DR-5- Implement actions to prevent, control and reduce impacts of non-native invasive species in the Delta.

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?

Proposal claims relationship to other projects such as the In-Channel Island Project and the Georgianna Slough Project.

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

Yes -No

How?

Most of those involved in the project are locals. Nevertheless, the project proponents intend to have one large community meeting in Tracy. Invitees will include the DPC. Smaller meetings will also be held with local property owners.

The plan for local involvement, therefore, appears adequate.

Other Comments:

 Highly qualified vegetation ecologists such as Dr. Jeff Hart have the experience and perspective to ensure the success of this proposal as it relates to the restoration and protection of valley oaks on the island.

 Continued farming of this island may not make the most sense in the long term. Instead, this parcel along with the two other parcels mentioned in the proposal could be components of a larger tidal wetlands and floodplain restoration corridor in this part of the Delta.

 The benefits that are claimed of reducing pesticide applications associated with the alfalfa may not be significant.

 This project could be significant since it contributes to meeting CALFED tidal wetlands goals in a key area of the estuary. The results could guide more successful restoration projects in the future.

 The project represents an excellent example of the kind of integrated ecosystem restoration project that will not only contribute to meeting the Strategic Goals of CALFED but other needs as well such as flood control and improving water quality.

 The proposed acquisition price for the 138 acre island is calculated to be nearly \$15,000 per acre. This price is likely to be substantially higher than other equivalent agricultural properties in the Delta.

 Simply limiting pesticide use does not necessarily result in the project contributing to priority DR-3- Restore upland wildlife habitat and support wildlife-friendly agriculture.

External Scientific: #1

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **103**

Applicant Organization: **Old River Committee, Inc.**

Proposal Title: **Delta Island Restoration Project**

Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

Correct

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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	See miscellaneous comments.
<input type="checkbox"/> -Good	
<input type="checkbox"/> -Poor	

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

Yes. Yes.

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 literature review could have been better. Implementation: yes.

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?

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

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?

Yes. P>90%. Yes.

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?

Yes. Yes. Yes.

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?

Yes. Yes. 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?

Good. Yes. Yes: very good community buy-in.

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

Yes.

Miscellaneous comments:

This is not a polished proposal. Simple use of spell check would have cleared up some of the problems. However, the proposal includes a good strategic overview and reflects a strong team and good community support. The budget appears reasonable. Fund.

External Scientific: #2

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 103

Applicant Organization: Old River Committee, Inc.

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration 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	This can be a very worthwhile project. I do wish the proposal included a monitoring plan, more site specific detail, elements to be included in 'Phase II' and long term operation details.
XGood	
-Poor	

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

The proposal could describe the projects goals and objectives a bit more clearly. There are numerous inconsistencies eg: size of site has 4 different acreages listed. There is no acreage delineation for the different proposed uses on the site.

However, the concept proposed is indeed timely and important: preserve open space, enhance habitat for Swainson's Hawk and bats, restore riparian forest, allow public access enhancing environmental education.

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 underlying basis for the proposed work is not fully described in the proposal. It appears that "wildlife friendly agriculture" is the main component of the demonstration project, however, details are missing as to pesticide application trials. It is inferred that the Old River Committee will continue to grow alfalfa under differing pesticide application rates. Are any pesticide free trials to be made? Water quality monitoring should be included in the proposal considering that the site is occasionally inundated by flood.

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 proposal does not indicate that any novel information would be obtained. Proposed are important increases in acreage of riparian forest along the islands edge, but by how much? Large patch of forest in the islands interior could have great habitat benefits.

Trials of bioengineering methods along the delta's islands and along the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers have all contributed to the base of knowledge. The techniques can be successful in providing erosion control, wildlife habitat and riparian forest at reduced cost. Additional trials at Delta Island could add to our knowledge. The chosen consultants are highly competent in this area. How many acres of this treatment are proposed?

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 project is technically feasible but could be documented more fully in this proposal. With the caliber of consultants chosen, the likelihood of success is great. The project scale seems acceptable and will positively impact habitat for the chosen species.

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 is not enough detail listed to indicate how performance measures will be quantified. The monitoring plan is to be submitted with a future 'Phase II'. A summary of monitoring plan elements would have been valuable in this proposal. The applicant does state that performance measures will be included.

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 applicant's monitoring of results from the project are very sketchy. A great deal of data could be obtained. Interpretation of changes in water quality, agricultural production, soils, hydrologic and habitat data could and should be made.

Agreements could be made with local schools, colleges and universities for outdoor environmental experiences for students. Student monitoring could be obtained in exchange.

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?

There is no mention of previous Old River Committee projects, however the project team appears to have the depth and breadth of personal experience to acquire, construct and operate the project successfully. Long term goals and objectives for the project management could be clearer.

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

The budget does appear reasonable. The land cost of \$2,100,000 for +/- 140 acres calculates to approx. \$15,000. per acre. How does this compare to other agricultural land purchases? Consultant fees appear reasonable.

If the land were not purchased, would development still occur considering that the area is in floodplain and subject to flooding?

Miscellaneous comments:

Since the island floods in periods of high flows and/or levee breach events, pesticide free agriculture should be researched. Why continue to grow alfalfa at such a net loss per acre? Where will the 100 plus acres of crop go? Will the local dairies benefit?

The applicant mentions that there is a proposed second phase to this project but provides no additional information as to what they will do. I feel that the applicant should partner with California Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and local water quality monitoring organizations.

Environmental Compliance:

Proposal Number: 103

Applicant Organization: Old River Committee, Inc.

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration Project

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

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

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:

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:

This is a Phase I - Acquisition and Plannin - project only. No additional NEPA/CEQA documentation is necessary at this time.

Budget:

Proposal Number: 103

Applicant Organization: Old River Committee, Inc.

Proposal Title: Delta Island Restoration Project

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

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

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

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

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

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

4. Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

Yes -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?

Yes -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?

Yes -No

If no, please explain:

7. Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

-Yes No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments: