

Proposal Reviews

#141: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District

Initial Selection Panel Review

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review

Land Acquisition

Delta Regional Review

San Joaquin Regional Review

External Scientific Review #1
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Initial Selection Panel Review:

CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Initial Selection Panel Review

Proposal Number: 141

Applicant Organization: San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District

Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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:

This proposal would restore vernal pools and would investigate innovative techniques for controlling non-native invasive species. It received support from regional reviewers for the restoration and research concepts, but the research design was considered flawed.

Reviewers of this proposal believe the proposal would have benefitted from a more complete literature review and a more robust experimental design. The acquisition portion of the proposal includes a cost share, and is not time-sensitive. The Selection Panel does not recommend funding for this proposal at this time. The Panel recommends that reviewer comments be addressed if/when this proposal is submitted for future funding cycles.

Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review:

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

Proposal Number: 141

Applicant Organization: San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District

Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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	This above average proposal will protect important vernal pool habitat and provide an important location for future research efforts. This panel recommends funding the land acquisition tasks only and does not recommend funding for the scientific monitoring tasks. The proposal had very mixed reviews caused by a number of weak areas relating to design, performance measures and high costs for delivering a product. The scientific portion can't be recommended due to the lack a proper literature review, hypothesis and experimental design. The panel felt that a research science advisor is needed to assist the RCD in the development of a research plan in the future.
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?

A. Yes, but the hypotheses can not be tested due to poor research design; other burning and grazing research not cited or taken in to consideration B. The project concept is supported by most but the science is weak

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?

A...Due to poor research design, there is a low likelihood of success; however, all of these areas can be corrected with a research science advisor to assist in research design. B. Same as above.

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 to all with the current research design. Yes to all with a proper lit. search and research design.

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

The budget is 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 - Medium - "This research can deliver management information that could be beneficial in long term management and protection of vernal pool complexes", "consistent with San Joaquin co. HCP" San Joaquin - High - "recommends this project, merits a high ranking", "involves local community, enhances work previously started"

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?

Overall excellent - NEPA compliance is necessary.

Miscellaneous comments:

None

Land Acquisition:

Proposal Number: 141

Applicant Organization: San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District

Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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

Yes No

If yes, please import relevant text and citations here:

The 936-acre project site is located approximately three miles north of the town of Farmington at the southeast corner of the intersection of Copperopolis Road and Escalon-Bellota Road, in San Joaquin County, California. The site includes all of Section 4 and the western half of Section 3 in T1N, R9E. The boundary dividing the watersheds of the Calaveras and Stanislaus Rivers passes through the project site.

The site encompasses 394 vernal pools, 49 vernal swales, four stock ponds and three channels. Footprints of former wetlands also exist within the project boundaries and provide an outstanding future opportunity to pursue rehabilitation activities for wetlands and vernal pools. The site is known to support 10 special status species: burrowing owls, golden eagles, California tiger salamanders, ferruginous hawks, merlins, northern harriers, California horned larks, long-billed curlews, great blue heron, and great egret. The site has suitable habitat for 16 additional special status species.... On-site soils include two narrowly distributed soil types associated with vernal pools in the Central Valley--Keyes and Pentz. Based on a county-wide survey and ranking of vernal pools conducted by the San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District (SJCRCDD, 2000), the project site was ranked as one of the top three vernal pool sites in the county for overall quality of vernal pools, quantity of vernal pools and species diversity.

The SJCRCDDs proposed 936-acre acquisition site is immediately south of a large ranch exceed 4,500 acres which also contains vernal pools (although at a lower density than on the proposed acquisition site). The acquisition of easements on the 4,500 site is under consideration.

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 site is zoned + planned for agriculture, and will continue to be used for grazing to control the invasive plants there.

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:

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:

Other Comments:

Delta Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 141

Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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

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

This research can deliver management information that could be beneficial in long term management and protection of vernal pool complexes.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

XYes -No

How?

working with a willing seller

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

XYes -No

How?

goals 4 and 5; protect/restore functional habitat types

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?

consistent with San Joaquin County HCP

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

XYes -No

How?

local ranchers, Resource Conservation District

Other Comments:

San Joaquin Regional Review:

Proposal Number: 141

Applicant Organization: San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District

Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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

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

The committee recommends that this project make sure that current controls for star-thistle are related to and that the new practices will be feasible and cost effective. As an important invasive species and as destructive as star-thistle is to all of California, this project merits a high ranking.

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

XYes -No

How?

It involves local community organizations as well as professional personnel to coordinate and accomplish their goals.

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

XYes -No

How?

1. It works on non-native species as well as riparian and aquatic habitat restoration as well as the reconstruction of channel flood plains. 2. It works on vernal pool complex in this area. 4. Endangered species habitat in relationship to the vernal pools will be enhanced by this project.

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 particular project works in an area currently being worked on by CVPIA grants from previous projects. And it enhances work previously started.

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

XYes -No

How?

The project is managed by the local resource conservation district and professionals under contract with them.

Other Comments:

None

External Scientific: #1

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **141**

Applicant Organization: **San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District**

Proposal Title: **Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex**

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):

Dave Simpson and Tish Espinosa work for the agency I work for, USDA-NRCS, they will be providing technical assistance. The Lockeford PMC will provide some seed and plants at no cost.

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	This is a needed project which will provide information leading to new BMPs for vernal pool management. It will help ranchers demonstrate that they want to manage vernal pool areas in the most effective way.
<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?

Excellent 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?

Excellent yes, yes, yes, yes.

This project is an excellent real world study which will help landowners/ranchers minimize vernal pool disturbance and remove invasive sp.

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?

Excellent 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?

Excellent yes, good, 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?

Excellent 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?

Excellent 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?

Excellent yes

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

Excellent yes

Miscellaneous comments:

External Scientific: #2

Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: **141**

Applicant Organization: **San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District**

Proposal Title: **Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex**

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
-Excellent	Important goals but major flaws in the research design eliminate the capacity for actually testing the hypotheses posed in the proposal.
-Good	
XPoor	

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

3 -Good The goals for increasing the number of NIS control options is important and timely. An attempt to examine a multifaceted approach to NIS control is also an important goal expressed in this proposal.

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?

4 -Fair The basic justification for this pilot study is that 1) controlled burning techniques, although very effective in controlling both medusahead and yellow starthistle, are difficult to implement and 2) that rotational grazing with cattle or sheep is not effective in control. It is not clear to me that the applicants have really made their case here. Although burning can be logistically complex, it is not as overwhelmingly difficult as the applicants apparently contend. For example, the citations they provide on the difficulties on timing burns relate primarily to Jepson Prairie which actually now has a regular burn program implemented. Further, the applicants do not cite some of the best studies on controlling starthistle using cattle and sheep grazing that were conducted by Thomsen et al. These studies are the best out there and it is really surprising they were not cited; the results from this work really should be used as a criterion to gauge the relative effectiveness of goat grazing. Finally, although the applicants make a good case for the potential usefulness of goats for controlling discrete patches of starthistle, it is not clear at all whether concentrated goat grazing late in the season will be effective at all for medusahead which is usually widely distributed in the grassland and flowers much earlier than starthistle.

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?

4 - Fair There is no replication of the various treatment combinations so no valid statistical tests can be made. Hypothesis testing as proposed is impossible. This is a basic flaw in the design that could be remedied by splitting the five pastures into two and at least having two replicates per treatment combination. The single sampling for plant composition is also very problematic because the species in these grassland systems flower at very different times so that repeated sampling is necessary for positive identification (even by experienced botanists). Finally, it is rather disturbing that the applicants apparently refer to Berber orchard grass as a native (e.g., pgs. 6 & 10). This is an exotic perennial *Dactylis glomerata* from the Mediterranean and this mistake makes one wonder as to the level of knowledge that the applicants have with regards to native plant restoration.

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?

4 - Fair It is likely that the treatments will be executed but no valid statistical conclusions can be made (see above)

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?

4 - Fair Because the performance measures are primarily based on measurement of plant composition change and the analysis of those changes is completely compromised by the lack of replication in the experimental design, the measures of performance are also not valid

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?

4 - Fair Similar to performance.

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?

3 - Good I think the personnel are quite capable in some aspects of the proposal but the poor experimental design and apparent confusion re: Berber orchard grass shakes my confidence a bit.

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

3 - Good Budget seems reasonable for the experimental work. I'm not sure re: the land acquisition.

Miscellaneous comments:

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding: #1

New Proposal Number: 141

New Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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

ERP 99-N15 - Lower Mokelumne River Watershed Stewardship Program

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

N/A

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

Yes -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 -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?

Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

The project has been progressing successfully and smoothly.

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

Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

Financial management and reporting has been detailed, organized, effective and timely.

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

Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain:

Other Comments:

The project manager, Amy Augustine, has been an efficient and knowledgeable contract manager.

Funding for this project is currently under consideration by the Board of Directors at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Prior Performance/Next Phase Funding: #2

New Proposal Number: 141

New Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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)*

BR was the contract manager not FWS.

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

Yes -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 -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?

Yes -No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

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

-Yes No -N/A

If no, please explain deficiencies:

Clarification of line 17b- in 2001 funding was provided by CVPIA and the Central Valley Project Conservation Program for the total of the stated amount \$625,000. Both funding sources are identified in line 19.

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:

Environmental Compliance:

Proposal Number: 141

Applicant Organization: San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District

Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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

Yes No

If no, please explain:

There is federal funding for this project thus NEPA compliance is necessary.

Already possess a US Fish and Wildlife Service collecting permit for vernal pool species.

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:

No budget or timeline listed since they have already obtained collecting permit.

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

Yes No

If yes, please explain:

NEPA compliance needed, all other aspects of environmental compliance good.

Other Comments:

Budget:

Proposal Number: 141

Applicant Organization: San Joaquin County Resource Conservation District

Proposal Title: Non-Native Invasive Species Control and Wildlife-Friendly Agriculture in a Rangeland Vernal Pool Complex

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: