Geographic Review Panel 4 – San Joaquin River

Proposal number: 2001-C205 **Short Proposal Title:** SJRNWR Riparian Habitat and Floodplain Restoration

1. Applicability to CALFED ERP Goals and Implementation Plan and CVPIA priorities, and relevance to ERP and CVPIA priorities for your region. Panel agrees with Staff Review, applicable to both ERP Goals and CVPIA priorities. Lessons learned could be applicable to riparian and floodplain restoration upstream on the San Joaquin. Panel agrees with Staff Review comments that the project would benefit from oversight by panel of technical experts to help refine the projects experimental approach.

2. Linkages/coordination with previously funded projects or other restoration activities in your region. Should provide more details on how this is being coordinated with and is consistent with the USCOE Comprehensive Study. Panel questioned how the proposed project is being coordinated with proposals D201 (Habitat Acquisition for Riparian Brush Rabbit and Riparian Woodrat) and D202 (Non-Structural Alternative at the SJRNWR: Refinement for Habitat Enhancement).

3. Feasibility, especially the project's ability to move forward in a timely and successful manner. Agree with TARP that feasibility appears, at first glance, to be technically straightforward. Not clear if all the flood management issues, especially those dealing with private land, have been dealt with which could delay implementation of the project. Also the concerns of adjacent private landowners regarding re-introduction of an endangered species need to be resolved and could delay implementation. Panel noted potential for D202 to help address flood management issues once completed.

4. Qualifications of the applicants and others involved in implementing the proposed project. USFWS personnel appear to be qualified. Other technical people and agencies will presumably be involved in the levee breaches and the floodplain restoration but no other qualifications are given. While this Panel is aware of Sacramento River Partners qualifications, the proposal should have provided more detail given that over half of the 7.6 million dollar budget is directed to them.

5. Local involvement (including environmental compliance). Proposal indicates that flood management issues are being dealt with by planning process and USCOE. Very little detail on this and other potentially sensitive issues with local landowners.

6. Cost. Agree with staff review, budget detail lacking but overall cost seems reasonable.

7. Cost sharing. About 25% of total cost committed.

8. Additional comments. Would liked to have seen more on next phases and linkage to other proposals (e.g. D201 and D202) to see how whole program fits together. There should be explicit coordination and integration with these other projects.

Educational opportunities are quite high and there should be more specificity on educational outreach. Lessons learned from this non-structural flood management and habitat restoration could be quite applicable to similar opportunities upstream and in other areas. More concerted effort should be made to disseminate results since this is a large-scale effort. Panel agrees with Staff Review comments that the project would benefit from oversight by panel of technical experts to help refine the projects experimental approach.

The hypothesis being tested about floodplain and riparian habitat restoration are not well-defined. The monitoring program is described in very general terms; some of the monitoring should be geared more towards hypothesis testing. Monitoring program states it will evaluate passive vs. active riparian restoration but task and enclosed attachment only refer to active restoration.

Agree with the other comments by the TARP regarding an experimental design component.

Fish monitoring not part of this proposal but presumably it would be done after levee is breached as implied in Proposal D202.

Regional Ranking

Panel Ranking: Medium

Provide a brief explanation of your ranking: Lot of valuable lessons can be learned and high applicability for region but needs more rigorous presentation of hypothesis and description of monitoring as well as a concerted effort on educational outreach. Would recommend higher ranking if concerns are addressed.