

**Agenda Item: 9A**  
**Meeting Date: July 8, 2004**

## **CALIFORNIA BAY-DELTA PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM MONITORING PROPOSAL SOLICITATION PRIORITIES AND SELECTION PROCESSES AND CRITERIA**

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**Summary:** This report summarizes the process proposed for soliciting projects for the CALFED Bay-Delta Program's Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP) during the coming fiscal year. It outlines the priorities and project selection processes and criteria that the Authority and ERP implementing agency staff expect to use in granting a portion of those funds to projects that monitor and evaluate previously funded restoration actions.

**Recommended Action:** BDPAC recommend that the Authority authorize its staff to release its proposed proposal solicitation package on behalf of the Authority and implementing agencies.

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### **BACKGROUND**

ERP implements its annual Program Plan in large part by awarding grants to ecosystem science and restoration projects that meet ERP priorities. Proposals to address these priorities are solicited through periodic Proposal Solicitation Packages (PSP) that outline program priorities and grant application processes.

Proposition 50, the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002, provides \$180 million for CALFED Bay-Delta Program ERP implementation. In fiscal year 2004-05, it is anticipated up to \$122.9 million of these funds will be available to fund grants that carry out ERP projects, including up to \$53.7 million previously appropriated to the California Bay-Delta Authority and up to \$69.2 million that may be appropriated to the Department of Fish and Game. Funds from other sources, including the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Restoration Funds, or Natural Resource Damage Assessment Settlement Funds, may also be available to carry out some of these projects.

## RECOMMENDED APPROACH FOR PROJECT SELECTION IN 2004-05

The recommended approach for selecting 2004-05 ERP projects is to release two PSPs:

- 1. Monitoring and evaluating prior restoration actions.** A solicitation for projects that monitor and evaluate previously funded restoration actions will be issued following the Authority's approval of the solicitation. This solicitation is described in more detail later in this memo. Both the ERP Science Board and the Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee have reviewed the priority, processes and criteria for the monitoring PSP and support releasing the PSP. The Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee's recommendation is included as Attachment 1.

Discussions at the Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee and the ERP Science Board have underscored the importance of continuing to monitor the results of restoration actions. Because ERP grants are limited to three years, many restoration projects will soon exhaust their budgets for monitoring. If new funding is not provided soon, opportunities to sustain monitoring of how well completed restoration projects are affecting the ecosystem will be lost. Results from this monitoring can also support adaptive management of previously funded ERP actions and improve planning for future projects.

ERP staff is working closely with Science Program staff and their science PSP which is also under development at this time. Science and ERP staff will work together to ensure that the two grant solicitations are complementary, and may ultimately choose to consolidate the two processes.

- 2. Other ecosystem restoration and research projects.** A second solicitation for other kinds of projects, including projects that assist farmers in integrating agricultural activities with ecosystem restoration, will be released later. The agencies implementing the ERP are now assessing progress on the milestones of the Multi-Species Conservation Strategy. Assessment results will be available soon. They will provide a basis for updating priorities for a major solicitation for ecosystem restoration and research projects. We anticipate releasing this solicitation in late fall 2004 or early winter 2005.

Proposals to complete fish screens will be considered in cooperation with the CVPIA Anadromous Fish Screen Program, instead of through the review of proposals submitted in response to a solicitation.

## **DESCRIPTION OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROJECTS PSP**

Described below are the recommended eligibility requirements for proposals submitted in response to the solicitation for restoration action monitoring and evaluation projects, the solicitation's priorities, and the criteria and processes proposed to evaluate these proposals.

### **Eligibility**

Any private or public party with an interest in ecosystem restoration and who is capable of entering into a contract with the State or Federal government may apply. This includes, but is not limited to: (1) landowners; (2) local agencies; (3) private non-profit organizations; (4) private for-profit entities; (5) tribes; (6) universities; (7) joint ventures; (8) State agencies; and (9) Federal agencies. Proponents do not need to have received prior CALFED Bay-Delta Program or CVPIA grants to submit a proposal to monitor a previously funded restoration action, because there may be cases where monitoring and evaluation may more appropriately be undertaken by someone other than the organization that designed or built a project.

### **Project Priorities**

The priority of this solicitation is monitoring and evaluation of the outcome of restoration actions, or groups of restoration actions, previously funded through CALFED Bay-Delta Program ERP solicitation processes or by directed actions. A fuller description of the priority is in Attachment 2.

### **Review Process**

The solicitations will be managed using a website through which proposals and reviews are submitted and viewed, as has been the case for the past two years. A toll-free telephone answer line will be available to assist applicants. Potential applicants without internet access will receive help in submitting proposals.

The proposal review process involves seven steps (Attachment 3). All completed proposals will undergo administrative review, external scientific, regional and technical review prior to initial consideration by the Selection Panel. The Selection Panel will consider comments from local governments, tribes, applicants and others in making its final funding recommendations to the California Bay Delta Authority and other funders.

The ERP relies on many experts to review ecosystem restoration proposals. ERP implementing agency and Authority staff conduct administrative reviews. Seven to twelve regional experts, drawn from resource agencies, stakeholders, and local research institutions, serve on the four Regional Panels: Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley, Delta and Eastside Tributaries, and Bay-Suisun Marsh. External reviewers are experts in the subject areas of the proposal. The Technical Panel will

consist of experienced scientists whose expertise spans the range of topics covered by submitted proposals. The Selection Panel will be recognized scientists and resource managers covering a broad range of expertise. They are familiar with the Bay-Delta-watershed, well connected with others, and represent different fields.

## Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on these criteria:

- **Administrative Review.** Performance on previously funded projects; need for additional funds; environmental compliance; and budget evaluation.
- **Regional Review.** Applicability to ERP goals; priority areas; links with other restoration activities; feasibility based on local circumstances; local involvement; and local value.
- **External Scientific Review.** Clarity, relevance, and justification for project; approach; technical feasibility; appropriate performance measures; value of products; capabilities; and cost/benefit.
- **Technical Review Panel.** The Technical Review Panel considers and integrates all prior reviews in an unambiguous qualitative rating of each proposal's technical merits.
- **Selection Panel.** The Selection Panel will look for high quality proposals: strategic benefit; desirable project features, ERP implementation plan priority; value to decision makers and stakeholders, and implementability. The Selection Panel will also apply the Record of Decision's commitments regarding acquisitions and agriculture to any projects that propose buying monitoring sites or rights of way.

Attachment 4 describes the criteria more fully.

## Outreach

Preliminary funding recommendations will be presented to the public at a publicly noticed workshop, followed by a public comment period. CALFED Program staff will directly notify local governments, tribes, and applicants of the initial recommendation and guidelines for providing comments. Local governments and tribes will be asked to comment on local feasibility concerns. Applicants may provide clarifying comments, but not new information. The Selection Panel considers these comments in making its final recommendations.

## **Funding Recommendations**

The Selection Panel's final recommendations will be forwarded to the appropriate funding agency. When those are CALFED Bay-Delta Program agencies, they will present their proposed funding actions to the California Bay-Delta Authority for its review and recommendation prior to making their final funding decisions. Grants for projects to be funded by the California Bay-Delta Authority will be approved directly by the Authority.

## **List of Attachments**

- Attachment 1 – Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee Recommendation
- Attachment 2 – Solicitation priorities
- Attachment 3 – Solicitation process
- Attachment 4 – Selection criteria

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## Ecosystem Restoration Program Monitoring Proposal Solicitation

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**Description:** This report summarizes the Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee's recommendation supporting the Ecosystem Restoration Program's proposed monitoring proposal solicitation

**Recommended Action:** BDPAC recommend that the Authority authorize its staff to release its proposed proposal solicitation package on behalf of the Authority and implementing agencies.

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### **Background**

The Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee and its predecessor, Ecosystem Roundtable (a Subcommittee of the Bay-Delta Advisory Committee), have a long and successful history of input to the Ecosystem Restoration Program's proposal solicitation efforts. At the Subcommittee's May 20 meeting, the Subcommittee was presented with the draft priorities and project selection process and criteria that the Authority and ERP implementing agency staff expect to use in granting funds to projects that monitor and evaluate previously funded restoration actions. Subcommittee members reviewed the draft and agreed at their June 17 meeting to recommend that BDPAC support the proposed monitoring proposal solicitation. The Subcommittee is aware of and supports the extensive input the ERP Science Board provided staff on the approach to solicitations. The Subcommittee emphasized support for criteria that encourage strong integration and coordination across entities that propose and carry out monitoring efforts, and for the selection process to favor efforts that include multiple entities and funding sources

**Subcommittee Recommendation:** The Ecosystem Restoration Subcommittee recommends that the California Bay-Delta Public Advisory Committee recommend that the California Bay-Delta Authority authorize its staff to release its proposed proposal solicitation package on behalf of the Authority and the Ecosystem Restoration Program implementing agencies.

## SOLICITATION PRIORITIES

The priority of this solicitation is monitoring and evaluation of the outcome of restoration actions, or groups of restoration actions, previously funded through ERP solicitation processes or by directed actions. These prior restoration actions may have been funded by the CALFED Bay-Delta Program or by the Central Valley Project Improvement Act's Anadromous Fish Restoration Program, Anadromous Fish Screen Program, or Habitat Restoration Program.

We seek monitoring and evaluation projects that can help the ERP and its restoration partners to continue learning:

- How well restoration actions are attaining their objectives? How are ecosystems responding to multiple restoration actions in local areas? Are harmful ecosystem stressors, such as disrupted hydrology, poor water quality, or invasions by alien species, reduced? Are ecosystem processes and functions recovering? What measures of project performance indicate the ecosystem's response?
- How much progress has been made towards the restoration objectives of the Ecosystem Restoration Program and the Multi-Species Conservation Strategy and the environmental water quality objectives of the Water Quality Program Plan?
- What adjustments to prior restoration actions are needed to better achieve their objectives? Were the ecosystem restoration problems that these actions were intended to address accurately defined?
- What new information or understandings are resulting from restoration actions that may lead to adjustments in our understanding of Bay-Delta ecosystems?

Monitoring of several types may be appropriate:

- **Trends.** Tracking status and trends of species' populations or other environmental variables in ecosystems where restoration is occurring to determine whether conditions are returning to desired objectives.
- **Implementation.** Evaluation of restoration actions' immediate, short-term environmental effects.
- **Effectiveness.** Assessments that relate restoration actions' implementation to changes in ecosystem processes or species abundance and diversity.
- **Model Validation.** Investigations of the causal relationships between ecosystem structure and functions and restoration actions.

Monitoring and evaluating outcomes in ecosystems where the ERP has undertaken its most significant restoration actions is especially important. These are: Clear Creek, Butte Creek, the Sacramento River, the Cosumnes River (including adjacent areas in the eastern Delta), the Tuolumne River, the Merced River, the North Delta, and San Pablo Bay, especially the Napa and Petaluma Rivers.

Another especially high priority is monitoring and evaluation that assess and compare outcomes of similar restoration actions, such as a group of actions to restore tidal marshes, meandering main stem rivers, or Central Valley tributaries.

Monitoring and evaluation that provide information about the status and trends in the population of key species, such as salmon or steelhead, to assess how these species have been affected by restoration projects, are also important.

Monitoring and evaluation that assess an ecosystem's cumulative response to several restoration actions, continuation of monitoring initiated with previously- awarded ERP or CVPIA grants, or new studies intended to fill gaps in prior monitoring, are also appropriate.

Projects should help inform ecosystem management by synthesizing data, drawing conclusions, and reporting results to appropriate audiences, including decision makers, resource managers, stakeholders, researchers, and others.

Other features we seek are:

- Multi-Institutional initiatives. Projects that combine (1) current monitoring of restoration action outcomes or ecosystem status and trends, (2) universities or other research institutions talented in synthesizing and evaluating information, and (3) agencies or organizations responsible for managing important ecosystems.
- Durable Partnerships. Projects likely to endure beyond the term of an ERP grant, because they establish readily replicated monitoring and evaluation processes, make full use of ongoing data-gathering programs, and build partnerships capable of attracting funding from multiple sources over time.
- Joint Fact-Finding. Projects that involve stakeholders and others in evaluating and reporting results in ways that lead to shared understanding about ecosystems and restoration action outcomes.
- Interdisciplinary Understanding. Projects that draw fully upon experts in physical and environmental sciences and other disciplines needed to understand restoration action outcomes and the associated ecosystem processes.
- Program Coordination. Projects that, where feasible, produce results readily integrated with those of other long-term monitoring efforts, such as the Interagency

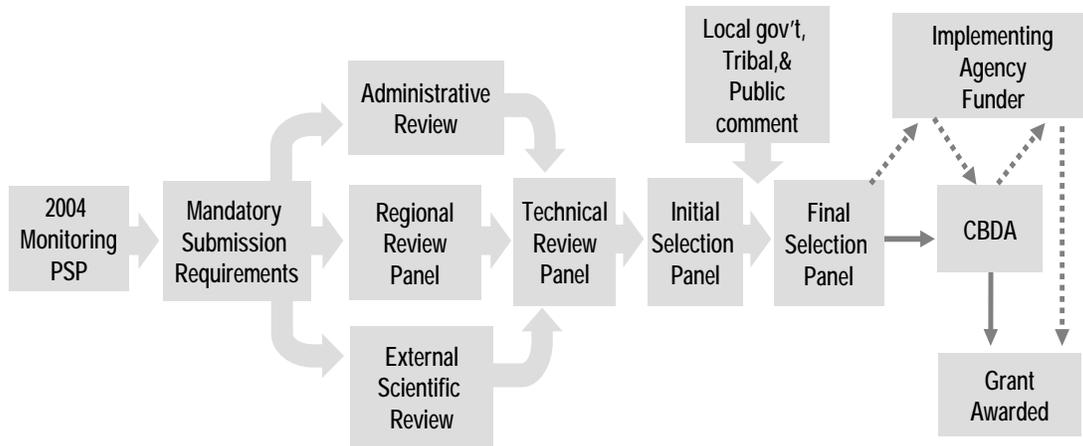
Ecological Program, the CVPIA's Comprehensive Assessment and Monitoring Program, the Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program, the San Francisco Bay integrated regional wetland monitoring program, or endangered species recovery programs.

- Appropriate Scale. Investigations whose results are useful to resource management at various scales: regions/"ecozones", watersheds/"ecological management units", or local project area.

No one project can have all these attributes. Projects should incorporate them where appropriate to their proponents' needs and capabilities.

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# Review process



.....> Grants funded by implementing agency  
——> Grants funded by the Authority

## PROPOSAL REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA

A. **Administrative Review.** Summary evaluation information will be provided for each proposal, using these criteria:

- Past performance, including effective grant management, on projects previously funded by CALFED or CVPIA programs;
- Next-phase funding (proof of earlier phases' progress is shown);
- Environmental compliance (accurate identification of potential environmental compliance or access issues);
- Budget evaluation (clarity and consistency of budget and budget justification; availability of matching funds is noted, but matching contributions are not required); and
- Land acquisition summary, where necessary (see Land Acquisition Selection Criteria).

B. **Regional Review.** The regional panels will review projects based on these regional criteria:

- Applicability to ERP goals, the MSCS, Draft Stage 1 Implementation Plan, CVPIA priorities, and restoration of priority areas
- Linkages with other restoration activities in that region, such as long term monitoring programs, ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts;
- Feasibility based on local circumstances (e.g., are there local constraints on the project's ability to move forward in a timely and successful manner?);
- Local involvement, including participation by universities, other research institutions, resource management agencies, and others with an enduring interest in the region.
- Local value, including extent to which the project will contribute to increased understanding by resource managers, stakeholders, and others, and will aid resource management decisions.

Comments on technical quality are appropriate but are a secondary output of this review.

C. **External Scientific Review.** The External Scientific Reviewers will be asked to review proposals based on the following criteria:

- Clearly stated goals, objectives, and hypotheses, and relevance of the monitoring proposed;
- Justification for project, including conceptual model;
- Approach and scope of work, including study design, information richness, and replicability.
- Technical feasibility and likelihood of success;

- Appropriate performance measures;
- Value of products, including accessibility of data, reliability (including sampling designs, statistical methods, and quality assurance and control procedures), and usefulness to decision-makers and other scientists;
- Capabilities (project team qualifications and track record, appropriateness of interdisciplinary team, ability of project team to complete the project); and
- Cost/benefit comments (Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?).

D. **Technical Review Panel.** The Technical Review Panel will consider all previous criteria and reviews in its overall evaluation of the proposals. Its role is to evaluate and provide a qualitative but unambiguous rating of each proposal's technical quality to the Selection Panel. The panel will evaluate proposals on the external scientific criteria, while taking the regional and administrative review criteria and reviews into consideration. The desired end result of these discussions is a panel rating of the technical quality of the proposals, along with clear evaluation statements for each review criterion.

E. **Selection Panel's Initial Selection Process.** The Selection Panel will make recommendations for funding based on the evaluations conducted at all previous levels of review. The Selection Panel will be comprised of technical and resource-management experts covering a broad range of expertise. ERP staff in conjunction with the Lead Scientist will choose panel members, considering nominations from the ERP Independent Science Board and others. Panel membership will be balanced among practicing scientists and science managers or advisors knowledgeable about agency and stakeholder concerns. As a body the Selection Panel should be recognized and experienced, well-connected with others in their respective fields, represent different specialties within these fields, and be familiar with the issues and ongoing activities in the Bay-Delta watershed.

The Selection Panel will provide a check on earlier reviews, but its primary purpose is to make strategic funding recommendations from among the high quality proposals based on the following criteria (in order of priority):

- Strategic benefit toward accomplishing ERP and CVPIA goals, including focus on high priority areas or species or widely replicated restoration actions
- Desired project features, including multi-institutional initiatives, persistent partnerships, joint fact-finding, interdisciplinary understanding, program coordination, and appropriate scale.
- Implementation Plan priority
- Value of information to decision makers and stakeholders
- Public support and implementability

All previous review criteria are embedded within the criteria listed above. The first bullet represents the overall evaluation criterion. The second ensures that proposals to evaluate monitor and evaluate especially important ecosystems, restoration actions or population responses will have a high priority for funding. The third and fourth of the five bullets are the selection criteria outlined in the *Strategic Plan for Ecosystem Restoration*. There is overlap among these criteria but they are presented here so that all will be considered and addressed by the Selection Panel.

**Land Acquisition Selection Criteria.** Proposals that include land acquisition to secure rights of way or sites for monitoring activities will be subject to additional review criteria. These criteria reflect the commitment made by CALFED Bay-Delta Program agencies in the ROD to minimize the impact of ERP implementation on agricultural land, and to utilize publicly owned lands and land already acquired with CALFED Bay-Delta Program funds in prior years, when feasible, prior to acquiring new private property. Summary information for these criteria will be compiled by Authority staff and provided to the Selection Panel:

- No public lands that would meet the project's needs are available.
- Willing seller;
- Consistent with county/city general plan or evidence of local government support;
- Prioritize land not mapped as Prime, of Statewide Importance, or Unique Farmland, or where use remains agriculture;

The Panel may recommend that projects be funded, in whole or in part. Conditions of funding may be recommended to address issues raised during the proposal review. The panel may also identify projects that are high priorities and that should be considered for funding as directed actions if they are revised to address shortcomings identified during the reviews.

**Public Comment Period.** Local governments and tribes will be asked to comment on local feasibility concerns. Applicants may provide clarification comments on proposals submitted, but no new information, additional supporting documentation, or additional justification of a proposal will be accepted.

**Selection Panel's Final Selection Process.** The Selection Panel will meet again after the public comment period to consider written comments on technical aspects and local feasibility. The Selection Panel may revise its preliminary recommendation based on comments received.