

Executive Summary

Project Title: Cottonwood Creek Watershed Monitoring and Assessment

Applicant Name: Cottonwood Creek Watershed Group

Project Description:

Continued management of the Cottonwood Creek Watershed Group (CCWG) to oversee the implementation of a watershed plan. This phase would assess current conditions in the watershed, both as to the land and stream conditions to give a baseline for future projects. The next phase effort would evaluate and develop recommendations for watershed stewardship including: vegetation management, land use, fire and fuel suppression, managing oak woodlands, erosion reduction, maintaining riparian zones, and providing more sustained runoff patterns in the upper watershed area. The plan will also seek to return to natural or near natural functions, reactivate and maintain natural sediment supply, flood plain and flood processes, gravel recruitment and stream meander, and protect salmon spawning and rearing habitat in the lower watershed area.

Project Approach:

To have a consultant review known reports on the condition of the Cottonwood Creek Watershed, work with public land management agencies, interested parties and resource managers to form consensus on issues and their importance. Coordinate with resource managers, who have studied regional needs and correlate those studies with input from stakeholders. Identify additional work that is needed to form a good baseline for the plan. Prioritize identified projects in accordance with the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan "The Vision for Cottonwood Creek Ecological Management Zone."

Tasks: Ongoing management of the watershed, watershed assessment, monitor for current and long-term biological conditions, map current conditions and list the watershed's needs.

Schedule: January 1, 2000 to December 31, 2009.

Justification:

CALFED states the need for this proposal in its Volume II: Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan, Cottonwood Creek Ecological Management Zone Vision, Revised Draft: February 1999 (ERPP, vol.2, page 221-232). The project will produce an assessment of current watershed conditions which could be used by the Watershed Group, or agencies and landowners to prioritize and address objectives needed to achieve ERPP's vision for Cottonwood Creek's ecological units.

The Cottonwood Creek Ecological Zone is located many miles from the Delta, but its status and health are reflected in the health of the Delta

Collaboration between public and private interests is necessary for a comprehensive program to create and sustain long-term, viable solutions for Cottonwood Creek Watershed. This non-profit entity will continue to provide a forum to coordinate cooperative efforts and maintain consistency among public and private interests. CCWG will strive for public outreach to educate the people on the importance of a healthy watershed.

Cottonwood Creek Watershed's 930 square miles impedes a grassroots organization's ability to form, receive and represent the community concerns without technical and financial assistance. The watershed is too vast for citizens to accomplish all that needs to be done on a volunteer basis.

The process of continuing to identify stakeholders, establishing and maintaining communications with them is too time consuming and too costly for citizens to fund from their own financial resources.

Budget Costs: \$935,000

Third Party Impacts:

Improved watershed processes will maintain and restore seasonal water runoff patterns, improve water yield and water quality and reduce sediment loads downstream. Healthier watersheds will provide ancillary benefits to upper watershed habitats and species. These improvements will be reflected in a healthier Sacramento River and Delta.

Applicant Qualifications:

The Cottonwood Creek Watershed Group is a group of landowners; with some families having lived in the watershed since the late 1800s. These landowners are integrating with more recently arrived residents, business owners and other private parties to improve watershed conditions, fisheries and habitat.

The applicant will review the work products and consult with other groups and agencies, such as Battle Creek, Mill Creek, Deer Creek Watershed Conservancies, State and County Farm Bureaus, the Anderson-Cottonwood Irrigation District, Sierra Pacific Industries, CDF&G, USF&W and other Resource Agencies to support the efforts of this project.

Monitoring and Data Evaluation:

A monitoring program will be developed early in this phase and implemented in coordination with CDFG and USFW to evaluate the fish populations that are currently using Cottonwood Creek Watershed. A long-term plan will monitor the effectiveness and needs for identified and implemented projects in the watershed.

Local support:

This is a landowner-based group supported by local public and private entities along with State and Federal agencies.

Coordination with other Programs:

The applicant will research and coordinate with other programs doing similar work in the watershed. The applicant will coordinate with the Anadromous Fish Restoration Plan and the Salmon and Steelhead Restoration Plan.

Compatibility with CALFED Objectives:

The proposal will establish a baseline for the projects that are in the "Visions For the Ecological Management Zone and Units" ERPP, vol. 2, pp. 225 as revised draft of February 1999 for the watershed improvement and management actions as described in the 1999 revised plan. The baseline must be established to have the local landowner buy in to the long term needed projects.