

II. Executive Summary

a. Project Title and Applicant Name

Benicia Waterfront Marsh Restoration; City of Benicia

b. Project Description and Primary Biological/Ecological Objectives

The Benicia waterfront marsh area is located along the Carquinez Straits at the foot of First Street in downtown Benicia. The area includes approximately 8 acres of degraded salt marsh habitat. The goal of the proposed restoration project is to reestablish open tidal flows within the marsh area, enhance the overall health and habitat quality of the existing saline emergent wetlands (a CALFED Priority Habitat), and provide transitional uplands habitats adjacent to the marsh planted in native grasses.

This restoration project will enhance the quality of an existing saltwater marsh, provide habitat for several plant and animal species closely associated with tidal saline emergent wetlands, increase the exchange of nutrients between the wetlands and tidal aquatic communities, and provide potential rearing habitat for Delta fish species. These results would contribute directly to a number of specific implementation objectives identified in the CALFED ERPP as well as the Near-term Implementation Strategy.

c. Approach/Tasks/Schedule

The restoration project will occur in two phases. Phase 1 will involve preparing a final restoration plan (including channel refinements, a planting plan, weed control strategy, and monitoring plan) and environmental compliance/permitting. Phase 2 will focus on the actual physical implementation of the project, including construction of the tidal channels, removal and disposal of fill materials, planting, and removal of exotic vegetation. The entire project is expected to take approximately one year to complete, with each phase requiring approximately six months.

d. Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED

Saline Emergent Wetlands have been identified by CALFED as a Priority Habitat for restoration. As pointed out in the ERPP, there have been extensive losses of saline emergent wetland habitat in the North Bay and adjacent marshes (ERPP, Volume II, page 84). Such habitat is essential to estuary functions, and the health of many fish, waterfowl, and wildlife species, including many Priority Species identified by CALFED (ERPP, Volume II, page 93).

Many of the options for restoring saline emergent wetlands in the Suisun Marsh/North San Francisco Bay Ecological Zone are limited to the conversion of existing managed freshwater wetlands (ERPP Volume II, page 102) and/or the acquisition of private lands. The Benicia marsh restoration project represents an opportunity to restore existing tidal wetlands on lands which are already publicly owned. The project would not require any land acquisition, could be implemented relatively quickly, would be

highly visible to the public, and would be a cost effective use of CALFED restoration dollars.

e. Budget Costs and Third Party Impacts

Total Cost Estimate:	\$ 338,000
City of Benicia and other cost share dollars:	\$ 85,000
Request for CALFED funding:	\$ 253,000

Any required hazardous materials removal and disposal efforts would be funded entirely by the City and would not involve CALFED funds. No negative third party impacts will result from implementation of this project.

f. Applicant Qualifications

The City of Benicia has already funded preparation of a Waterfront Restoration Plan and environmental evaluation, a draft Marsh Restoration Plan, and an hazardous materials site investigation. The City recently solicited proposals from consultants to assist with continued planning of the restoration project and selected EDAW, Inc. to manage and direct the restoration. At the completion of Phase 1, the City expects to solicit bids for the construction of the restoration project.

g. Monitoring and Data Evaluation

A detailed monitoring plan will be developed during Phase 1 of the project and carried out during construction as well as after construction is complete. Some of the indicators that would be incorporated into the monitoring plan would include, reproduction of target saline emergent wetland vegetation, success of the exotic plant removal, use of channels for fish rearing, and use of the marsh by specific wildlife species.

h. Local Support/Coordination with Other Programs/Compatibility with CALFED Objectives

The Benicia Marsh Restoration Project is broadly supported by local, regional, and state interests, including the County Board of Supervisors, Benicia Unified School District, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), USFWS, and Congressmen Miller's Office. Several letters of support for the project are appended to this proposal. With regard to coordination and compatibility with CALFED objectives, the project is an integral component of the City's long-term vision for the waterfront and has been incorporated into all its planning for this area. The project is directly compatible with several of CALFED ecosystem restoration objectives and is not counter to any of CALFED's other program goals.