

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

97C-10

Panel A

99-C-134

- a. **Project Title:** American River (Middle & South Forks) Watershed Stewardship Project
- b. **Applicant Name:** Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District
- c. **Project Description and Primary Biological/Ecological Objectives:**

The project will produce a Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy for the South and Middle Forks of the American River. The plan will address a wide range of environmental, institutional, social, and economic issues in an integrated manner at a watershed scale. A major emphasis will be on improving the ecological functioning of the watershed, including protection and restoration of riparian and aquatic habitats, protecting watershed integrity, improving water quality and flows, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, avoiding and mitigating growth-related watershed impacts, and addressing factors such as connectivity with the mainstem Sacramento River.

As a result of this project, a Coordinated Resource Management Plan (CRMP) will be developed for all three forks of the American River. This proposal is for the Middle (El Dorado County part) and South Forks of the American River. The Placer County Resource Conservation District has already begun work on the CRMP for the North and Middle Forks. We will thoroughly integrate the efforts of these programs.

Approach/Tasks/Schedule:

Over a 36-month period, a CRMP committee will work with agency staff and a team of biological and socioeconomic planning consultants to:

1. Conduct a preliminary public scoping process for the overall project;
2. Collect relevant biophysical, social, economic, and institutional data;
3. Develop these data, to the extent possible, within a central geographic information system (GIS), accessible to all interested parties;
4. Prepare a report integrating data and information collected and providing a holistic understanding of watershed conditions, functions, and processes;
5. Develop a Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy, using a the Coordinated Resource Management Plan process and using extensive community participation;
6. Prepare a monitoring assessment and volunteer monitoring plan;
7. Conduct an evaluation of the overall project, including monitoring of pilot implementation. Prepare a final evaluation and monitoring report for CALFED, CRMP members, and other interested parties.

Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED:

Development of this Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy will be the foundation for local implementation of watershed restoration under CALFED and CVPIA programs. The CRMP committee and its members from federal, state, and local government, environmental, and business are the best vehicle for developing local responses to CALFED goals and objectives.

d. Budget Costs: \$203,250, of which \$50,000 is in-kind labor from cooperating entities.

e. Third Party Impacts: No third party impacts are expected.

f. Applicant Qualifications:

The Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District staff will administer this proposal. Member agencies implementing this strategy include El Dorado County, Natural Resource Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. These agencies have extensive natural resources planning and implementation backgrounds and are well qualified to execute this proposal. The American River Watershed Group (which is already working on a stewardship plan for the North Fork and Middle Fork in Placer County) and the South Fork Dialogue Group will provide the members for a CRMP committee for development of the stewardship plan and strategy.

g. Monitoring and Evaluation:

The project will develop extensive biophysical, socioeconomic, and institutional data. Much of this data will serve as baseline data on watershed condition. Task 7 of the project will also identify suitable indicators of watershed condition, and will collect existing data or develop new data on these indicators, eg. miles of unsurfaced road, number of water control problems on a sample of forest roads, and riparian condition inventory. The Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy will also include a monitoring component so that monitoring of watershed condition is an ongoing element of the CRMP process, including after the end of the three-year Category III support. Evaluation and monitoring results will be used as part of an adaptive management process to update data inventories, GIS data layers, the Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy, and will guide the choice of watershed restoration activities.

The success of the community-involvement objective will be monitored by evaluation questionnaires given to community members involved at different points in the project. As the CALFED CMARP program is developed, this project will work to incorporate its monitoring approaches.

h. Local Support/Coordination with other Programs/Compatibility with CALFED objectives:

Local support/coordination is provided for in the American River Watershed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The signatories include a variety of federal, state, and local agencies, private landowners, and business/industry representatives. Water quality monitoring, wildlife habitat improvement, and fuel load reduction projects provided for with Proposition 204 funding will complement this project, and results from those projects will provide feedback into this planning process. This project also will incorporate results from the US Forest Service Category III (proposed) project to study cumulative watershed effects on the American and Cosumnes River watersheds.