

G1047

1998 CALFED Category III
Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Programs
Section II: Executive Summary

Project Title and Applicant Name

Title: American River (North and Middle Forks) Integrated Watershed Stewardship Strategy

Applicant: Placer County Resource Conservation District on behalf of the American River Watershed Group (ARWG)

b. Project Description and Primary Biological/Ecological Objectives

The project will develop a Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy addressing a wide range of environmental, institutional, social, and economic issues in an integrated manner on a watershed basis. 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.

The ARWG represents all three forks of the American River. This proposal is for the North and Middle Forks of the American River. The El Dorado County Resource Conservation District will submit a separate proposal for the South Fork. Each of these proposals stands on its own; if both are funded, we will thoroughly integrate them.

c. Approach, Tasks, Schedule

For a 36-month period, the ARWG will work with agency staff and a team of biology, hydrology, 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 under tasks 2 and 3 and providing a holistic understanding of watershed conditions, functions, and processes;
5. Develop a Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy, using a significant level of community participation;
6. Conduct a pilot implementation of the Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy on one privately-owned and one publicly-owned site.
7. Conduct an evaluation of overall project, including monitoring of pilot implementation. Prepare a final evaluation and monitoring report for CALFED, ARWG, and other interested parties.

d. Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED

Development of this Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy, to be done in a manner consistent with overall CALFED goals and objectives, is essential to local implementation of CALFED and CVPIA programs. The ARWG and its members from federal, state, and local government, environmental groups, and business/industry provide the best vehicle for developing local responses to CALFED goals and objectives. This proposal will address these goals and objectives through the biological and ecological objectives identified above in section b.

e. Budget Costs and Third Party Impacts

Funding in the amount of \$220,750 is requested from CALFED Category III to support the work outlined here. Contributions from project cooperators are estimated at \$65,500, for a total project cost of \$286,350. No third party impacts are contemplated as project proposals will be consistent with current land-use planning or will involve voluntary agreements with affected parties.

f. Applicant Qualifications

The Placer County Resource Conservation District staff will administer this proposal. ARWG member agencies implementing this strategy include Placer County, Placer County Water Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US 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 execute this proposal.

g. Monitoring and Data Evaluation

The Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy will be developed with extensive technical and public input. Evaluation of the extensive biophysical, socioeconomic, and institutional data developed as a part of the project will be conducted by the project coordinators and reviewed by the public. The Watershed Management Plan and Stewardship Strategy has a monitoring component that will continue as an ongoing element of ARWG activities after the end of the three-year Category III support. Evaluation information and monitoring data 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 on-the-ground implementation. As the CALFED Comprehensive Monitoring and Research Program (CMARP) is developed, this project will work to incorporate CMARP monitoring approaches.

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

Local support/coordination is provided through the American River Watershed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signatories (See Exhibit A for the ARWG MOU). These signatories include a variety of federal, state, and local agencies, private landowners, and business/industry representatives. Proposition 204 funding will implement water quality monitoring, wildlife habitat improvement, and fuel load reduction program projects that will roll up into the broader planing perspective provided by this proposal. This proposal also recognizes connections with the US Forest Service Category III proposal to study cumulative watershed effects on the American and Cosumnes River watersheds. The proposed project will be done in coordination with the recently initiated Placer County open space and habitat conservation planning process. The project's outcomes in enhancement of water quality, water flows, habitat restoration are compatible with CALFED goals and objectives.