

II. Executive Summary

a. Project title: Cosumnes River Floodplain Acquisition, Restoration Planning, and Demonstration

Applicant: The Nature Conservancy in Cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management and the California Wildlife Conservation Board

b. Project description and primary biological/ecological objectives

The project proposes a block grant totaling \$3,417,000 to help acquire between 300 and 800 acres of fisheries, riparian, and wetland habitats along the lower Cosumnes River floodplain.

Requested funds will be used for (1) land acquisition, (2) start-up stewardship, (3) floodplain restoration plans including engineering and hydrological studies, (4) long-term operations and management, (5) an outreach program designed to demonstrate the techniques used to restore the Cosumnes floodplain and the results achieved, and (6) monitoring. We will seek funding for actual construction of setback levees and/or modification of existing structures from other sources. The primary biological/ecological objectives of this proposal are to:

- protect existing riparian, wetland, and aquatic habitats and associated species.
- reestablish riparian, wetland, and aquatic habitats by restoring natural processes and expanding the floodplain.
- facilitate population expansion of species associated with the Eastside Delta Tributaries Ecological Zone, particularly eastside tributary fall-run salmon, splittail, sandhill cranes, neotropical migrant bird species, and waterfowl.

c. Approach/tasks/schedule

The proposed approach is to acquire fee interests from willing sellers on two properties that are contiguous to the Cosumnes River Preserve, have high habitat values, and/or offer conservation managers excellent opportunities to expand the floodway and restore the mosaic of floodplain habitats of the lower Cosumnes River. We will initiate start-up stewardship and management activities as we acquire the properties, and we will prepare hydrological and engineering plans for levee setback and modification. We will expand our ongoing floodplain restoration demonstration and monitoring programs to better reflect CALFED objectives. We expect to complete all elements of the proposed project within three years. Actual construction and/or modification of levees is outside the scope of this proposal, and we will pursue additional funds from partner agencies or subsequent CALFED funding rounds. We will submit quarterly financial and programmatic reports to CALFED.

d. Justification for project

The land acquisition, stewardship, restoration planning, conservation management, demonstration, and monitoring activities proposed here will protect and expand tidal wetlands, seasonally flooded wetlands, the riparian corridor, perennial grasslands, and farmland of high habitat value. This proposal addresses multiple priority stressors and benefits numerous species of concern to CALFED in the Eastside Delta Tributaries Ecological Zone. These activities will also improve water quality and will have broad ecosystem benefits.

e. Budget costs and third-party impacts

\$3,417,000 is sought from CALFED. An additional \$1,000,000 will be sought from CALFED or other sources to implement the floodplain restoration plans developed in this project. Total funds available for cost sharing are unknown at this time. More than \$35 million has been spent on the Cosumnes project to date.

There are no known negative third-party impacts from the activities for which we are requesting funding. Third-party impacts associated with modification or construction of levees will be evaluated as part of the proposed restoration planning.

f. Applicant qualifications

The Nature Conservancy has extensive experience in property acquisition, habitat restoration, and land management. TNC has successfully implemented the activities described in this proposal at this site and elsewhere.

g. Monitoring and data evaluation

The project proposes to expand the extensive habitat evaluation and species monitoring programs already in operation at the Cosumnes River Preserve to include these new properties as they are added to the Preserve. We will develop specific reporting requirements in consultation with CALFED staff. A specific monitoring element pertaining to floodplain restoration is described in the scope of work.

h. Local support/coordination with other programs/compatibility with CALFED objectives

The Cosumnes River Preserve was dedicated in 1987. Preserve staff and volunteers have developed extensive community support in a decade of working with local and regional schools, community groups, and public agencies. The Sacramento County General Plan supports expansion of the Preserve, and the expansion proposed here will in turn help the county achieve some of it's objectives.

The activities proposed are compatible with the objectives of CALFED, the ten agencies and partners of the Cosumnes project, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, the Central Valley Habitat Joint Venture, and the Wetland Reserve Program.

The following CALFED objectives, as indicated in the Ecosystem Restoration Program Plan, Volume II (March 1998) relating to the Eastside Delta Tributaries Ecological Zone are partially achieved through this proposal: Central Valley Streamflows (p. 352); Natural Sediment Supply (p. 354); Natural Floodplain and Flood Processes (p. 356); Central Valley Stream Temperatures (p. 357); Seasonal Wetlands (p. 359); Riparian and Riverine Aquatic Habitats (p. 359); Invasive and Salt Marsh Plants (p. 362); Predation and Competition (p. 363); Contaminants (p. 363); Land Use (p. 365); Sacramento Splittail (p. 366); Chinook Salmon (p. 366); Resident Fish Species (p. 368); Giant Garter Snake and Western Pond Turtle (p. 368); Swainson's Hawk (p. 368); and Greater Sandhill Crane (p. 369).