

Health and Environment

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July 25, 1997

CALFED Bay-Delta Program Office
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA
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DWR WAREHOUSE
97 JUL 28 PM 12:05

RE: Request For Proposals-1997 Category III
Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Programs

Dear CALFED Representative,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the attached "Inquiry" Submittal for A Proposal for a Watershed Awareness Center. This project is submitted in response to your Request for Proposals, 1997 Category III, Ecosystem Restoration Projects and Programs. The proposed project is submitted within the "Group 3: Services" category.

We appreciate CALFED's commitment to ecosystem restoration, and look forward to your review and feedback on our project proposal.

Sincerely,



Randall W. Thomas, Ph.D.

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Summary of A PROPOSAL FOR A WATERSHED AWARENESS CENTER

by the Informal Group for the Establishment of a Watershed Awareness Center
881 11th St., #108, Lakeport, CA 95453

A Watershed Awareness Center is proposed to promote cost-effective, informed, collaborative, and ecologically sound management of watersheds in Lake County and neighboring areas. Important supporting goals are to promote:

- public awareness of the nature, function, and importance of watersheds to our communities
- commitment to the care and wise management of watershed resources
- cooperative efforts to plan for, and restore or improve, watersheds (e.g., reduction of upland erosion and subsequent nutrient loading to streams through more effective land use practices; increase in watershed water absorption capacity to ground water storage; reduction of fine sediment loading and fish/wildlife habitat via stream and marsh restoration; and reduction of non-native plant species including water weeds such as Hydrilla).
- economic development related to watershed care, enjoyment, and education.

It is expected that the accomplishment of these goals will produce a statistically, biologically, and economically significant improvement in stream and lake water quality, and in the availability of water during the dry season. Water outflow to the Sacramento Valley via Cache and Putah Creeks should be similarly improved. In 1994, the Soil Conservation Service estimated that restoration of Clear Lake water quality would generate a minimum of 7 million dollars annually in local tourist revenue alone. A subsequent study by U.C. Davis estimated the economic development potential of water quality improvement to be in the 10s of millions of dollars.

Habitats affected include seasonal wetland and aquatic, in-stream aquatic, shaded riverine aquatic, and upland slope tree, brush, and grassland communities. Species affected include a number of migratory and resident waterfowl and water-dependent species, and a world class bass fishery.

Approaches based on education, establishing common interests, and working together in a collaborative, mutually respectful fashion will be used to achieve these goals. The activities of this Center will be designed to contribute in an important way to the economic vitality and general well being of our communities.

In its work, the Center will build upon earlier partnerships and accomplishments, including, for example, those of the Lake County Coordinating Resource Management Committee, the environment education projects of the County Office of Education, and others. The Center will closely coordinate with existing local activities related to watershed science and management (e.g., those of the U.C. Davis research facility here). Emphasis will be placed on building partnerships between agencies, land owners, Native American councils, private organizations, research institutions, schools, and the general public.

Specific tasks of the Center will include:

- further development and implementation of a program for public outreach and education on watershed ecology, restoration, and care (adults and grades K-12); The Center will build on curriculum materials developed in Lake County (and now in Statewide use), coordinate activities with anticipated U.C. Davis lake ecology public outreach to start within the coming year; and coordinate with educational efforts of the State Parks, USFS, BLM, and others. The expected annual educational exposure by the end of the third year of the program would be estimated at 15,000 individuals, with sustained growth of 10 percent per year for 10 years in individuals reached. Importantly, the Watershed Center educational activities are intended to

draw people regionally from the Sacramento Valley and the Bay area. The scope of our audience will enable education on the inter-relationships of upper and lower watersheds, and impact of human activities that affect quality and quantity of water within the region.

- watershed and habitat restoration, through (1) facilitating the use/hiring of trained ecotechnician work crews and volunteers by land owners and managers, and (2) education of contractors, homeowners, land managers and owners regarding the nature of restoration, its direct and indirect benefits, and practical steps for implementation. By the end of year 3 of the program to be conducting workshops for at least 60 contractors, land owners, etc. per year, and to have at least 15 paid ecotechnicians fully employed in the county and surrounding areas.
- facilitation of watershed planning and stewardship groups, and regional planning and educational activities; the former would include assisting in the evolution of the county land use plan by assisting local communities to plan at a watershed level; the latter would involve helping to facilitate the development of a living county-wide water use and conservation plan.
- economic development via (1) the development of a watershed/habitat restoration job demand as described above and (2) promotion of ecotourism-related educational activities, outdoor experiences, and businesses in association with local businesses and the communities affected, and, importantly, (3) recovery of the overall tourist, business, and agricultural base in the Lake County area, and in downstream areas, as a result of cleaner streams and lakes and an enhanced water supply. These benefits (in the 10's of millions of dollars) will accrue largely beyond the 3 year time span of this contract.
- cooperative research will be conducted to support these four main functions of the Center.

This project is required precisely because awareness of the importance of watersheds to each of us, knowledge of watershed function, and individual commitment to contribute to watershed improvement are keys to the long run achievement of CALFED's goals. This project request is also made to CALFED because the large majority of Lake County's stream outflow reaches the Sacramento Valley, and the educational and economic models developed here could be of significant value in other parts of the CALFED area of interest. In addition, the educational activities should, over time, touch a significant number of citizens in the region.

Funding requested is 150 thousand dollars per year to support all five tasks, for each of three years. Matching funding is being sought from private foundations and public institutions.

The Center will be staffed by a wildland resource science professional (with Ph.D. from U.C. Berkeley), an educational specialist with a masters in environmental communication (and trained professionally in group facilitation skills) from the University of Wisconsin, one of the leading K-12 environmental curriculum developers in California (also with masters degree), a college educated, experienced watershed/stream restoration specialist well known in the area for his excellent work and development of watershed restoration teams, and administrative staff. Close working relationships will be fostered with U.C. Davis research staff, government agency representatives, Native American representatives, watershed stewardship groups, the county Coordinating Resource Management Committee, and others.

Each task will have measurable indicators of performance established (see 3 year numbers above as an example) and year by year goals to be tracked.

The Watershed Center proposal has already been reviewed by a number of elected officials, administrators, educators, and resource management professionals in Lake County. Their response has been quite positive. In addition, the goals of the Center directly support achievement of five of the seven goals of the current Lake County Five Year Plan.