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BOOK I-057

INQUIRY SUBMITTAL

a. Project Title and Applicant Name

REGION-WIDE ENHANCEMENT OF BASINS, PONDS, RESERVOIRS, CANALS AND DITCHES FOR AQUATIC, WETLAND, RIPARIAN HABITATS AND SPECIES

Friant Water Users Authority - 854 N. Harvard, Lindsay, CA 93247

b. Project Description and Primary Biological/Ecological Objectives

This project is to develop a region-wide watershed enhancement program for the 25 water districts of the Friant Water Users Authority (FWUA), encompassing 1.2 MM acres of farm lands, 12,000 growers, and extensive acreage encompassed by the affected watersheds. The primary biological objectives are to improve overall ecosystem health of the basins contributing directly and indirectly to the Bay-Delta and San Joaquin Valley ecosystem health and hydrologic balance. This is planned to be accomplished by increasing conjunctive use of groundwater, enhancing ponds, reservoirs, ditches, stream drainages and their habitats. The overall positive impacts of this extensive program are tremendous from both short-term and long-term aspects.

c. Approach/Tasks/Schedule

The approach taken for this project is for the Friant Water Users Authority to coordinate and provide technical and biological assistance for the districts to initiate, accomplish and monitor this program. The individual projects would be implemented by districts, growers and partners. The tasks would include enhancing existing and building new water facilities (recharge ponds, reservoirs, canals and ditches). Some of this work is already underway (FWUA Vegetation Management Program), Toledo ponds, Lake Woolomes, Kaweah River, etc). Over 8,000 acres of ponds already exist which could be enhanced. Some new ones (about 500 acres) are under construction. Drainages include Poso Creek, Deer Creek, White River, Wahtoke, Navalencia, Sand, Cottonwood, Tule River, St. Johns River, Kings River and over a dozen other intermittent drainages, all part of the Central Valley, Tulare Lake and San Joaquin River Basins. Several districts have projects lined out on which work could begin this fall, in addition to those for which separate funding applications are being submitted at this time. This program is already starting, and could be fully initiated in less than ten years.

d. Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED

The San Joaquin Valley has experienced the largest percentage loss of aquatic and wetland habitat of the entire Great Central Valley, yet the least amount of habitat enhancement and restoration activities have been implemented here. In conjunction with the North American Waterfowl Plan, shorebird management, Riparian Joint Venture, the San Joaquin River Riparian Restoration Project (FWUA, NRDC, PCFFA, BOR and USFWS), this program has the potential to improve the ecological health of the entire region. The southern Central Valley is directly and indirectly connected with the Bay-Delta both through hydrological connections and species connections, which interweave the ecosystems. This system periodically refills and flushes the Central Valley and Bay-Delta during times of high precipitation and snowmelt. Today, increasing the conjunctive use of groundwater for increasing the flexibility of water

d. Justification for Project and Funding by CALFED (continued)

management to respond to flood and drought situations is becoming increasingly important for helping to maintain and improve the overall ecosystem health of Central California and the Bay-Delta. These programs are needed to accomplish the CALFED goals, including providing additional groundwater storage/conjunctive use south of the Bay-Delta. As the region is chronically water short and conjunctive use of groundwater is expensive, programs to assist development of conjunctive use of groundwater, while also enhancing regional habitat provides multiple benefits in the most cost effective way. The public environmental education generated by these programs is needed to sustain support of ecosystem improvements by everyone.

e. Budget Costs and Third Party Impacts

This program would be expensive. Cost sharing would be necessary. Initial start-up could occur with an average of \$250,000 per district. Third party impacts could occur if land is removed from production for construction of additional recharge facilities.

f. Applicant Qualifications

The districts, growers and technical specialists of the FWUA have numerous years experience in water facility planning and management. Our staff biologist has over 25 years experience in habitat restoration planning, design, implementation, long-term monitoring, and research design as well. Additional species experts and specialists are used as appropriate. Partnerships with environmental groups and others are already ongoing or are being initiated.

g. Monitoring and Data Evaluation

Project monitoring would occur at all sites as appropriate. Monitoring and data evaluation would be coordinated by FWUA for efficiency, consistency and data exchange. FWUA currently participates in the San Joaquin River Basin Quarterly Monitoring Meetings, San Joaquin River Management and CALFED programs for data exchange and problem solving.

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

Major support for this program is provided by the US Bureau of Reclamation. This program is consistent with many of the goals of the Central Valley Improvement Act (CVPIA). Water management is a major portion of this program. Credit is being requested for Restoration Fund fees for waters used for habitat enhancement. Most districts will purchase water at Class II rates for use in these projects if credit is provided. However, for all types of years, water re-regulation, an increase in conjunctive uses, continuing water conservation, groundwater pumping and sometimes water purchases will be necessary. However, the overall program, if employed on the scale proposed, has the possibility to increase water availability for all needs. The program is widely supported. Ducks Unlimited, the California Waterfowl Association, the NRCS, the California Department of Fish and Game, the Safari Club and many others are already partnering on existing and these planned projects.

Table 1. Summary of pertinent stressor, species, habitats and planned actions.

Stressors	Habitat	Species	Restoration Action
<p>1. Hydrographic alteration</p> <p>2. Flood plain changes/ hydrological isolation of flood plain/marsh plains</p> <p>3. Physical isolation of flood plain/marsh plain</p> <p>4. Undesirable species interactions</p> <p>5. Land use and grazing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Wetland · Riparian · Seasonal wetland · Aquatic · Shaded riverine aquatic 	<p><u>All Phases</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Waterfowl · Shorebirds · Sandhill crane · Riparian wildlife guild · Neotropical migratory bird guild · Swainson's hawk · Bald eagle · White-tailed kite · Aleutian goose · Giant garter snake · Red legged frog · Western pond turtle · All aquatic and terrestrial Central Valley species of concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Reregulation or management of water to provide appropriate fall/winter waterfowl habitat · Reregulation or management of water to provide appropriate nest and brooding habitat for waterfowl and shorebirds and other aquatic dependent species · Construction of reservoirs/wetlands · Restoration of intermittent natural channels · Revegetation of berms and uplands with native species for waterfowl brood habitat · Planting of large trees and shrubs for raptors and neotropical migrants · Environmental education · Recreational opportunities (birding, hunting, picnicking) · Grazing management · Fencing · Develop CRMP/watershed management programs · Enhancement/exotic removal · Recharge/riparian flood overflow