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Request for *approval* to develop agreements in the amount of up to \$1,450,000 in support of regional planning in the Cache Slough Region.

November 4, 2015

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends board authorization for the Executive Officer to develop agreements in the amount of up to \$1,450,000 in support of regional planning in the Cache Slough Region. Agreements once complete to will be brought back to the Board for authorization to execute.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Delta Conservancy anticipates facilitating locally led regional planning processes to identify priority projects in the Cosumnes (NE Delta), Cache Slough, Western and Southern Delta regions. To support this effort, the County of Solano, the Solano County Water Agency (SCWA), Reclamation District 2068, the Delta Conservancy (DC) - with support from the Delta Science Program (DSP), San Francisco Estuary Institute-Aquatic Science Center (SFEI-ASC), the Intelligent Ecosystem Institute (IEI), and other expert consultants - propose to form a Partnership to conduct comprehensive and collaborative regional planning for the Cache Slough region of the northwest Delta. *The Cache Slough Regional Planning Framework* (Framework) is intended to collaboratively integrate land-use, flood, access to reliable agricultural and urban water supply and quality, and restoration planning for the region. The Partnership will closely coordinate this Framework with the Lower Sacramento / Delta North Region Corridor Management Framework (CMF) process, in order to ensure integrated strategies that recognize the inseparable interconnections between the Yolo Bypass and Cache Slough and to facilitate achievement of the local, state, and federal policy objectives in the CMF. The Framework responds to the need for locally-led land-use planning in the region, the Governor's "Eco Restore" initiative that calls for 30,000 acres of critical Delta restoration throughout the Delta and Suisun Marsh, and the need to identify projects eligible for Proposition 1 funding. It also responds to the Delta Stewardship Council's call for *landscape-scale conceptual models* for each of the six priority restoration areas in the Delta Plan. The project will be guided by State and local agency representatives, with the support and involvement of stakeholders, stakeholder experts and interdisciplinary science experts (The Participants). Stakeholders may include Solano County, other local agencies, landowners, state and federal agencies, and environmental and other non-profit organizations.

The Framework aims to make the best available information actionable by implementing advanced analytical tools, scientific knowledge, and interdisciplinary expert collaboration for the task of

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envisioning how to integrate flood protection, access to reliable agricultural and urban water supply and quality, a robust agricultural economy, heritage values of the Cache Slough region, and ecosystem restoration. The Framework will result in a collaborative plan including alternatives and strategies for achieving these diverse objectives now and into the future. It will also serve as a platform for measuring progress toward objectives and a basis for adjusting alternatives and strategies as conditions change over time. The Framework has three interrelated components.

A. Facilitate Development of a Collaborative, Multi-Objective Plan. Utilizing the information and tools developed in Steps B. and C. below, the process will bring together the Participants in a collaborative environment to focus on developing a broad vision of alternative futures for the Cache Slough region, including strategies for integrating a locally robust, sustained agricultural economy, flood protection, water quality, access to reliable agricultural and urban water supply and quality, recreation, and ecosystem restoration. We envision a facilitated and iterative collaboration among stakeholders, stakeholder experts, expert scientists, and agency participants. The Partnership will use the existing Cache Slough Working Group as the main forum to facilitate outreach to stakeholders. The modeling and data analytics tools will support the collaborative decision process both between meetings and in real-time. The goal will be to produce alternative future scenarios that meet the coequal goals, sustain a robust agricultural economy, and address local and regional flood management and water supply needs while clarifying costs, benefits, tradeoffs, and uncertainties. A facilitated decision support process among decision makers would help the Participants negotiate workable scenario improvements. To be successful, the decision support process must be viewed as neutral, credible, and relevant to the needs of all participants. It must be a place where participants can express preferences and understand tradeoffs and uncertainties among alternative futures.

B. Build Data, Analysis, and Decision Support Tools. The Participants will work to identify relevant existing information (data, modeling output, studies, etc.) that should be brought to bear on the planning process. Staff will integrate this diverse data — including information related to physical and ecological processes, agricultural economics, demographics, flood management, and access to reliable agricultural and urban water supply and quality — within an advanced data analytics and visualization platform. A formal decision support system that integrates land use complexities, agricultural economics, ecosystem responses, and landowner and other stakeholder preferences will also be developed. The goal is to produce modeling, data, and decision support tools that can be exercised in real-time by stakeholders and systems experts alike as alternative futures are deliberated and shared.

C. Develop a Multi-Objective Vision of Regional Potential. The current lack of a science-based articulation of the need for ecosystem restoration is one key challenge to regional planning. Any planning approach in the region must also thoroughly investigate the potential to maintain a substantial and profitable agricultural economy, and to address the region's flood management and access to reliable agricultural and urban water supply and quality. Using the data and modeling tools developed in Step B., the Participants will assess the ecological potential of the Cache Slough region by analyzing ecological and physical processes that support native species resilience. The process will identify key metrics of ecosystem functions relevant to native species.

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The description of the ecological potential is not intended to be a target. It will serve as a science-based understanding of where restoration could be achieved that can be further refined in the Step A. process. The Participants will similarly develop relevant metrics and assess the economic, flood management, and access to reliable agricultural and urban water supply and quality potential of the region.

The Framework will support successful design, selection, and implementation of projects eligible for funding through Proposition 1 grant programs.

Steps B and C will be led by the Partnership. The requested funding will support the participation of consultants, including experts in agricultural economics and the San Francisco Estuary Institute - Aquatic Science Center. SFEI-ASC is a unique public-service institution established as part of the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) for the San Francisco Estuary. Per their founding bylaws, SFEI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, led by a representational Board of Directors that includes high-level representatives from the EPA, the State Water Board, Regional Water Boards, local flood control agencies, clean water agencies, environmental NGOs, and industry. On behalf of the State of California, SFEI administers a Joint Powers Authority to provide science support to natural resources agencies. The SFEI staff are expert in collaborative processes to develop the ecological potential of a given area and the scientific basis for restoration strategies and individual projects. SFEI staff, together with other expert consultants funded by this request, will also develop relevant metrics and assess the economic, flood management, and water supply potential of the region. The cost for completing Steps B and C will not exceed \$900,000. An interagency agreement will be developed between the Conservancy and ASC conditional upon execution of an agreement with Solano County. It is the expectation that all contractual agreement scopes of work for this effort will be collaboratively negotiated and agreed upon by the Conservancy, Solano County and SFEI.

Step A will require expert facilitation and administrative support to ensure that multiple stakeholders, agency representatives, and recognized experts can engage at appropriate times, and efficiently develop broadly accepted multi-objective strategies and projects that support those strategies. The Conservancy will seek input from and collaborate with Solano County to run an Invitation for Bid process to obtain qualified facilitation support from one or more contractors. The cost for facilitating these processes will not exceed \$250,000.

Steps A, B and C will also require significant participation from Solano County and local agency staff, including staff time in meetings, planning, and potential consultant work. The Conservancy will enter into an interagency agreement with Solano County. Costs for this local participation will not exceed \$300,000.

BACKGROUND

The Delta Reform Act of 2009 established the Conservancy and includes four relevant mandates:

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(1) Protect and enhance habitat and habitat restoration, (2) Protect and preserve Delta agriculture and working landscapes; (3) Identify priority projects and initiatives for which funding is needed; and (4) Protect, conserve and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical and living resources.

The Conservancy's Strategic Plan identifies a goal of leading efforts in protecting, enhancing and restoring the Delta ecosystem in coordination with other governmental and non-government entities and citizens in the Delta, and an objective to identify restoration priorities in collaboration with existing federal, state, regional and local governmental and not-governmental entities. The plan also identifies a goal of establishing the Conservancy as a valuable partner with Delta growers, agriculture-related businesses and residents in protecting and enhancing the Delta's agricultural and working landscapes.

The Conservancy's current Three Year Work Plan specifically identifies the planning process envisioned in this project under the Restoration Hub work priority.

Proposition 1 allows for 10% of the Conservancy's allocation to go toward planning and monitoring to ensure successful design, selection and implementation of projects. The project is intended to identify agricultural sustainability projects that would meet criteria and be eligible for Prop. 1 funding, thereby improving the long-term efficacy of the public funding. The need for additional regional planning in the Delta is called for in the Delta Plan, has been articulated in the High Impact Science Agenda as approved by the Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee, and has been specifically called for in the Governor's Eco Restore Program. The Framework for regional planning has been in development for several years. The Conservancy has worked extensively with the Delta Science Program, SFEI-ASC, The Nature Conservancy and several consultants to develop the Framework. The Framework has been vetted through the Delta Restoration Network which includes agencies working in the Delta, several NGO organizations, and local stakeholders. Additionally, countless meetings with agencies and stakeholders have been conducted to get input on the Framework. There is currently support from State and local agencies to do the regional planning envisioned.

BUDGET

The total project cost is \$1,450,000. The funding to support Steps A, B and C of the projects will come from Prop. 1, with interagency agreements with Solano County in the amount of \$300,000 and an interagency agreement with SFEI-ASC for \$900,000. Prop. 1 allows for 10% of the Conservancy's allocation to go toward planning and monitoring to ensure successful design, selection and implementation of projects. These funds are not required to be competed through local assistance grant solicitation process. Federal funding through the US Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) will support the Invitation for Bid for facilitation services for all three steps of the process up to \$250,000. An agreement between the BOR is in the final stages of execution and includes budget to support the Delta Restoration Network.

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