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***Request for Approval of Funding not to Exceed \$93,000 to support the Rapid Assessment of Aquatic Habitat Restoration Opportunities for Juvenile Salmonids in the Delta***

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**Staff Report**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the Board approve funding not to exceed \$93,000 to support the Rapid Assessment of Aquatic Habitat Restoration Opportunities for Juvenile Salmonids in the Delta, consistent with the attached scope of work.

**DESCRIPTION**

The purpose of this proposal is to conduct a rapid assessment of aquatic habitat restoration and predator disturbance opportunities for juvenile salmonids in the Delta, and identify near-term priority efforts that can be funded by Proposition 1 and other funding sources.

Project objectives include:

1. Compiling information regarding juvenile salmon rearing habitat and predator hot spots in the Delta;
2. Establishing habitat selection criteria for salmon rearing in the Delta; and
3. Identifying near-term and long-term priorities for aquatic habitat restoration in the Delta that can be funded by Proposition 1 and other funding sources.

Under current conditions, relatively few juvenile salmonids that enter the Delta survive (generally less than 10 percent). As a consequence, investments to improve growth and survival in upstream areas are often lost in the Delta. Restoring aquatic habitats in the Delta to improve rearing conditions and reduce predation for juvenile salmonids has been identified as a common goal in numerous programs and plans including the Delta Plan, EcoRestore, the Central Valley Project Improvement Act, the Delta Conservation Framework, the Sacramento Salmonid Resiliency Strategy, and the 2008 Biological Opinions for operation of the State Water Project and Central Valley Project.

The project proposed herein would be guided by the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team (CAMT) working closely with the San Francisco Estuary Institute, the Delta Conservancy, and its partners in a collaborative team effort. The project will be supported by a standing Advisory Panel consisting of experts in salmonid biology, restoration, and agriculture. The Advisory Panel will consist of the experts listed below, as well as one representative from the counties and one representative from the agricultural community (to be self-identified). The project would include in-kind technical

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support and other cost sharing through the Collaborative Adaptive Management Team’s (CAMT) member organizations, including engagement of agency and non-governmental organization scientists with expertise in salmonid biology and restoration.

**BUDGET**

The total project cost is estimated to be \$235,000 with cost share provided according to the schedule below.

<u>Cost Share Partner</u>	<u>Cost Share Amount</u>
Collaborative Adaptive Management Team	\$142,000
Metropolitan Water District and Dept. of Water Resources	Approx. 90 Hours In-Kind

Conservancy funding to support this effort would come from Proposition 1. The Conservancy anticipates developing a non-competitive contract with the San Francisco Estuary Institute, Aquatic Science Center, for an amount not to exceed \$93,000, to perform the tasks included in the attached scope of work.

**BACKGROUND**

The Delta Reform Act of 2009 established the Conservancy and includes three relevant authority areas: (1) Protect and enhance habitat and habitat restoration, (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.

This project is consistent with the following objectives as outlined in the Delta Conservancy’s 2017-2022 Strategic Plan Goal 2, Delta Ecosystem Viability.

- Objective 1: Protect, restore, or enhance habitat and improve water quality through implementation of grant funding projects
- Objective 3: Complete regional restoration strategies and priorities for the Cache Slough Complex and for additional region(s) in coordination with Delta stakeholders; collaborate with partners to implement high priority projects identified in regional plans

Proposition 1 allows for 10 percent 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 habitat enhancement and restoration projects that would be eligible for Proposition 1 funding, thereby improving the long-term efficacy of the public funding.

**Contact**

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