



State of California – Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Nutria Eradication Program
P.O. Box 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090
www.wildlife.ca.gov/nutria

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM, Director



August 15, 2019

Campbell Ingram
Executive Officer
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy
1450 Halyard Drive, Suite 6
West Sacramento, CA 95691

REQUEST TO AMEND PROPOSED BUDGET – NUTRIA ERADICATION PROJECT- PHASE TWO

Dear Mr. Ingram:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is requesting a formal amendment of the proposed project budget previously approved at the Delta Conservancy's May 2019 Board Meeting. This request proposes to shift one [of three] year's worth of funding (\$1,046,835) out of the nutria-detection dog contract and into new line items to fund twelve (12) project vehicles (\$420,000) and construction of Judas nutria pens (\$400,000), with the remainder to fund increased temporary help (\$189,030) and indirect costs (\$37,805). As the dynamics on the ground have changed, CDFW has attempted to adapt to meet the project needs. This amendment will allow us to be more responsive with a greater chance of success.

Through internal redirection of vehicles and the recent BCP for the nutria eradication, CDFW has procured a portion of the required project vehicles. However, there is still a critical need for additional vehicles to facilitate the work of the staff funded by this grant, who contribute largely to the 17 teams of field staff expected to conduct surveys, trapping, and Judas releases/tracking across a project area spanning from north of San Pablo Bay to the Kings River. Without inclusion in the grant budget CDFW is unable to procure/lease these vehicles, effectively impeding the work of these grant-funded staff.

Similarly, the Judas nutria project, which is partially funded by this grant, requires long-term (10-20 year) availability of live nutria in order to meet its ultimate objectives of detecting and locating the last few remaining nutria in the State and helping to verify localized eradications as the campaign progresses. Given that this is an eradication, within a few years, at most, we expect to struggle to find a sufficient number of nutria for the Judas project. The Judas nutria pens are needed to securely house 1-2 breeding pairs of nutria; juvenile nutria until maturation, sterilization, telemetry-outfitting, and release; post-surgical/outfitted nutria; and injured/recuperating Judas nutria over the life of the eradication campaign. Construction of these pens is critical to the Judas project's longevity and efficacy, and most importantly the overall success of the eradication effort.

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The redirection of funding proposed in the amended budget makes optimal use of shifting needs and will have no negative impacts upon the overall eradication project.

Prior to committing to the establishment of a nutria detector dog program in California, CDFW and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have agreed to first implement field trials to evaluate the expected efficacy in California. Though the dogs have been an effective tool in the Chesapeake Bay, the habitats they work and are trained to work in vary substantially from the environmental conditions in California. CDFW and USDA are currently pursuing a contract to bring to California two (2) dog/handler teams from the Chesapeake Bay Nutria Eradication Project and the nutria dog/handler training instructor from the USDA National Detector Dog Training Center to conduct seasonal field trials (under variable water conditions). These trials will evaluate the accuracy of dog teams in California and efficacy of training strategies, with the goals of ensuring confidence in the tool prior to establishing a long-term effort and identifying any potential training or implementation modifications necessary to optimize efficacy in California.

These trials will conclude in either spring or fall of 2020. As a result, the earliest CDFW could confidently enter into a contract for the detector dogs would be Fall 2020. Given that this grant is expected to begin in early October 2019 and conclude in early October 2022, the three years of dog contract funding in the approved grant budget cannot be feasibly expended as originally proposed and requires a reduction to two years (2020-2022). This warranted reduction coincides with our critical and justified need for vehicle and construction funding.

Should this amendment not be approved, the field staff funded by this grant will be significantly inhibited in their ability to complete the tasks and deliverables of this grant, threatening the successful completion of this project and the broader nutria eradication effort.

We appreciate your consideration of the proposed budget amendment and will look forward to your determination. If you need any additional information or have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 654-4267 or Valerie.cook@wildlife.ca.gov.

Respectfully,



Valerie Cook
Nutria Eradication Program Manager
California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Enclosure:

Nutria Eradication Project-Phase Two Amended Budget Tables 5-6