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Proposition 68 Program Update

Staff Report

UPDATE

Staff is developing the Conservancy's Proposition 68 Community and Economic Enhancement program to promote a robust Delta economy and support the vitality of Delta communities. The program will increase the Conservancy's network of partners and help further establish the Conservancy as a trusted resource in the Delta.

Proposition 68 provides funding that is pivotal in advancing the Conservancy's Community and Economic Enhancement program. Staff is designing a program that will fund projects through a non-competitive grant program. Once the program begins, project proponents may at any time submit high level concept proposals to Conservancy staff using a simple form. Staff will review each concept proposal as it is submitted, then meet with project proponents to ensure an understanding of the concept, request information as needed, and examine the need for technical assistance. Based on the information provided in the concept proposal and at the meeting, staff will conduct a viability evaluation to determine if the project concept is consistent with the purposes of the Bond Act, technically and financially feasible, is likely to provide benefits to the Delta, and if it significantly advances the Conservancy's community and economic enhancement priorities. This may often be an iterative process wherein staff works with the project proponents. If staff determines at this stage that a project concept appears to be viable, they will then work closely with proponents to develop the concept into a full proposal, providing technical assistance as appropriate. Proposals that meet the Conservancy's Board-approved project assessment guide will be presented to the Board for consideration of funding.

Staff proposes to:

- Allow proposals for both planning and implementation projects.
- Consider projects for any level of funding, with no minimum or maximum grant award amounts. (All projects will be subject to a cost-benefit analysis for the Conservancy's staff time.)
- Encourage cost share, but not require it.

Proposition 68 emphasizes technical assistance provided to projects that benefit disadvantaged communities. Conservancy staff will provide technical assistance that is within their capacity; grants and/or contracts will be used to secure additional technical assistance as required, resources permitting.

Staff is conducting outreach through presentations at community and town association meetings; community meetings organized by other agencies, such as the Delta Protection Commission; and

through informal conversations with stakeholders. This outreach allows staff to educate communities about the direction of the Proposition 68 program and to gather information on potential projects. This will help to ensure that the Conservancy's Proposition 68 program meets the needs of the Delta communities within the scope of the Conservancy's mission and priorities.

Information gathered through public outreach will help finalize priorities submitted to the Board for consideration. Staff is considering the following priorities for the program:

- a. Recreation and Tourism – Expand recreation and tourism opportunities in the Delta that are compatible with the unique natural and cultural values of the Delta.
- b. Historic and Cultural Preservation – Preserve the historic and cultural significance of the Delta.
- c. Public Access – Increase public access to publicly-owned lands in the Delta.
- d. Agricultural Viability – Support the economic and environmental viability of Delta agriculture.
- e. Environmental Education – Increase awareness about the value and challenges of wildlife, ecosystems, and other natural aspects of the Delta.

Staff will present draft program guidelines to the Board for consideration this fall. If approved by the Board, the Conservancy will post the draft guidelines for public comment for a minimum of 30 days. During the public comment period, staff will hold three public workshops in different geographic regions of the Delta. Staff will consider comments in developing final guidelines to be presented to the Board for consideration. Once the Board approves the guidelines, they will be posted on the Conservancy's website and project proponents may submit concept proposals to the Conservancy. Staff anticipates opening the grant program by January 2020.

BACKGROUND

Proposition 68 is the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Public Resources Code (PRC), Division 45) that was passed by California voters on June 5, 2018. Proposition 68 makes \$12,000,000 available to the Conservancy to use for the purposes specified in its governing statute (Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy Act, Public Resources Code, Division 22.3). The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy's (Conservancy) Proposition 68 Grant Program will fund projects that support community and economic development in the Delta in a manner that is complementary to ecosystem restoration and other Conservancy programs.

Contact

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