



**Consideration of Award of Proposition 1 Grant Funds for Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project, Phase Two
Staff Recommendation**

This agenda item presents for Board consideration a recommendation to award Proposition 1 Grant Program funding for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project, Phase Two.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Applicant	Ducks Unlimited, Inc
Project ID	2207
Project Type	Implementation
County	Yolo
Funding Request	\$887,516
Total Project Cost	\$1,887,468
Funding Recommendation	\$887,516
Score	93/100

RECOMMENDATION

Conservancy staff recommends that the Board approve up to \$887,516 in grant funding for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project, Phase Two proposed by Ducks Unlimited. The project proposal received overall favorable reviews from staff with no additional requirements. Staff prepared the text below based on staff’s best understanding of the information provided in the application. Conservancy staff and the Professional Review Panel consisting of the following agencies: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Delta Protection Commission, Delta Stewardship Council and California Department of Food and Agriculture scored this proposal against the established criteria. Conservancy staff contacted local governments and districts, water agencies, and tribes via the local notification process to receive comments and ensure project support. Prior to entering into a grant agreement, staff will work with the applicant to further refine the project’s scope of work.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The proposed Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project, Phase Two, is the final phase of a broader project that will construct hydrological improvements in the Yolo Bypass. The efforts will restore 220 acres of managed seasonal wetland, improve water management to enhance 1,803 acres of existing managed seasonal wetlands, and enhance 140 acres of semi-permanent wetland and 1,180 acres of wildlife-friendly agriculture. Phase one, which was completed in summer 2021, included construction of components one, three and five. This project, Phase two, will construct components two and four which will provide improved water control structures, a new pump station, and canal grading to help achieve the desired management capabilities necessary to implement moist-

soil best management practices, improve semi-permanent wetland habitat and improve wildlife-friendly rice farming. By increasing the management capabilities related to flood up and draw down rates, managed seasonal wetlands can produce greater germination density and abundance of seed yield and limit mosquito production. The project will use proven construction methods such as dewatering, a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan and other best management practices to achieve and verify the project objectives. The project will also increase public access by an average of seven days per year by reducing localized flooding resulting from insufficient capacity in the existing drainage and water supply system. This project is a continuation of a previously completed project (P1-1503), the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project, Phase One, funded in part by the Delta Conservancy.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

This implementation effort is considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). On January 8, 2018 the California Department of Fish and Wildlife as the Lead Agency under CEQA, submitted a Notice of Determination based on the results of an Initial Study that found potential significant project impacts on air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, and hydrology and water quality; determined all of the identified impacts can be reduced to insignificant levels through implementation of Mitigation Measures outlined in the Initial Study; and prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project to satisfy the requirements of CEQA.

On January 24, 2018, the Conservancy Board voted to approve resolution 2018-01, which adopted responsible agency findings for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and Drainage Improvements Project and staff filed the corresponding CEQA Notice of Determination. These CEQA actions fulfill the Conservancy's role as a responsible agency for both phase one (P1-1503) and phase two (current proposal) of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area and Drainage Improvements Project.

COST SHARE

The cost share amount is 53 percent of the project budget. The applicant will provide \$999,952 as cost leverage from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's California Duck Stamp Program to support administration, pre-construction surveys, construction management, site preparation, and purchasing and installation of water control structures.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE PRIORITIES

The project is consistent with and directly and specifically links to multiple actions and priorities identified in the Conservancy's governing statute, the Conservancy's strategic plan, the Delta Plan, and in other state and regional plans. Considerations are made that will promote wildlife conservation, ecosystem restoration and economic development, enhance managed wetlands and working lands, and improve water quality.

LONG TERM VIABILITY

The proposal describes long-term management that will cover the required 15-year duration. The project will be maintained and operated by California Department of Fish and Wildlife in accordance with the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Land Management Plan for a minimum duration of 15 years. Ongoing management funding will be provided by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The applicant

will remain a project partner and will aid in the long-term management by providing technical expertise and fundraising should unforeseen problems occur.

LOCAL SUPPORT

The proposal demonstrates local support and was originally conceived as one of 12 projects identified in the Yolo Bypass Drainage and Water Infrastructure Improvement study prepared by Yolo County in April 2014. This study included extensive interviews with local landowners, farmers, government representatives, water managers, wetland managers and non-government organizations with detailed knowledge of the Yolo bypass. The applicant notified adjacent landowners of the project, as required by California Environmental Quality Act, providing an opportunity to submit comments. Further, the project has received letters of support from Yolo County, Yolo Basin Foundation, Central Valley Joint Venture, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, Cobra Farms, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Ducks Unlimited. Phase One of the project included extensive local outreach and dissemination of project information via social media. Phase Two will include similar efforts.

SCIENTIFIC MERIT

The proposal describes and references the scientific basis of the project and incorporates the best available science. The proposal demonstrates consideration for the accommodation of native and migratory species, farming of wildlife friendly rice crops, and improved substrata for critical invertebrate food sources. The proposal addresses concerns of future increased flood risk and makes sufficient effort to account for and mitigate the impact of those occurrences with researched backed methodologies.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no additional considerations.

SUGGESTED MOTION LANGUAGE

Move to award funding up to \$887,516.29 to the Ducks Unlimited from the Proposition 1 Grant Program for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project, Phase Two.

CONTACT

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FIGURE 9.3. YOLO BYPASS WILDLIFE AREA HABITAT AND DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT, PHASE TWO PROJECT AREA

