Science Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

The Mississippi Gulf Coast Forest Restoration and Conservation Initiative

LOCATION

Southern Mississippi Coastal Plain

SPONSOR(S)

Department of Agriculture

TYPE OF FUNDING REQUESTED (Planning, Technical Assistance, Implementation)

Planning and implementation

REVIEWED BY:

DATE:

1/12/2015

Best Available Science:

These 6 factors/elements help frame the reviewers answers to A, B and C found in next section:

1. Have the proposal objectives, including methods used, been justified using peer reviewed and/or publicly available information?

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

Objectives and methods should be more specific. More peer reviewed information should be cited to address proposal objectives and methods.

2. If information supporting the proposal does not directly pertain to the Gulf Coast region, are applicant's methods reasonably supported and adaptable to that geographic area?

- (●) YES
- ( ) NO
- ( ) NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

The proposal should synthesize different projects rather than just itemize or list projects to be conducted.

3. Are the literature sources used to support the proposal accurately and completely cited?

- ( ) YES
- ( ) NO
- (●) NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

More scientific journal articles rather than policy documents are needed.

4. Are the literature sources represented in a fair and unbiased manner?

- ( ) YES
- ( ) NO
- (●) NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

Documents like governmental conservation plans are useful to understand the background and regional significance of the proposed projects. However, for scientific reasoning or technical pathways, research findings and results are a must.

5. Does the proposal evaluate uncertainties and risks in the scientific basis for the proposal, including any identified by the public and Council members?

- ( ) YES
- (●) NO
- ( ) NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

The proposal did not explicitly and/or directly address the risks and uncertainties in the scientific basis. The initiative (proposal) briefly introduces a diverse of projects from multiple agencies and organizations, but lacks a systematic integration of them based on the goals/objectives listed on the bottom of page 4. This proposal seems to focus on the "implementation" of a number of designed projects rather than "planning".

6. Does the proposal evaluate uncertainties and risks in achieving its objectives over time? (e.g., is there an uncertainty or risk that in 5-10 years the project/program will be obsolete or not function as planned given projections of sea level rise?)

- ○ YES
- ○ NO
- ◉ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

Southern Mississippi coastal area is a region highly influenced by catastrophic disturbance events (e.g., hurricanes) over a long term. A regional or landscape level restoration project/initiative with multiple phases like this one needs to consider the risks and uncertainties associated with this kind of disturbance regime. At least it should surf the "if-then" questions that may be asked by stakeholders.

Based on the answers to the previous 6 questions, and giving deference to the sponsor to provide within reason the use of best available science the following three questions can be answered:

A. Has the applicant made a reasonable determination that the proposal is based on science that uses peer-reviewed and publicly available data?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO
- ◉ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Information Needed:

see comments above

B. Has the applicant made a reasonable determination that the proposal is based on science that maximizes the quality, objectivity, and integrity of information (including, as applicable, statistical information)?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO
- ◉ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Information Needed:

see comments above

C. Has the applicant made a reasonable determination that the proposal is based on science that clearly documents and communicates risks and uncertainties in the scientific basis for such projects?

- ○ YES
- ○ NO
- ◉ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Information Needed:

see comments above

Science Context Evaluation

A. Have other methods been discussed and reasons provided to why the method is being selected (e.g., scientifically sound; cost-effectiveness)?

It may not be applicable to this proposal.

B. Has your agency/vendor/project manager conducted a project/program like the one proposed?

NO

C. Is there a risk mitigation plan in place for project objectives? (captures risk measures as defined under best available science by the Comprehensive Plan and Act)

Did not see it from the proposal body.

D. Does the project/program consider consequences with implementation? (captures risk measures as defined under best available science by the Comprehensive Plan and Act)

It partly deals with this (see “preparing for the future” on pages 15 and 16). This may be better addressed if this proposal first project the landscape/regional condition after the completion of the projects based on metrics and benchmarks developed by available science and then discuss the outreach and education efforts.

E. Does the project/program have clearly defined goals?

As stated above, the goals (habitat restoration and conservation, restoring water quality, etc.) listed in this proposal seem too general. Need further to specify the habitats/ecosystems to be targeted and how this improvement of habitat will benefit the proposed goals/objectives.

F. Does the project/program have clearly defined objectives?

Same as E

G. Does the project/program have measures of success? (captures statistical information requirement as defined by the Comprehensive Plan and Act)

Yes

H. Is a monitoring program in place to determine project goals, success and help adaptive management (if applicable)? (captures statistical information requirement as defined by the Comprehensive Plan and Act)

Yes

I. Does the project/program consider recent and/or relevant information? (captures statistical information requirement as defined by the Comprehensive Plan and Act)

Yes, but the recent and relevant information should be synthesized.

J. Has the project/program evaluated past successes and failures of similar efforts? (captures the communication of risks and uncertainties in the scientific basis for such projects as defined by the Comprehensive Plan and Act)

Little information is presented on this respect.

Please summarize any additional information needed below:

More information in the budget narrative is needed to justify the proposal.