Science Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Matagorda Bay System Priority Landscape Conservation Project

LOCATION

Within 15 miles of San Antonio, Espiritu Santo, Matagorda or East Matagorda Bays and associated estuaries

SPONSOR(S)

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

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

Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

DATE:

13 January 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

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

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

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

Comments

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

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

Comments

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

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

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:

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:

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:

More information on monitoring plans would be very desirable. See H below.

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)?

There was no discussion of alternatives, but that is probably alright given the type of project proposed here.

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

Not on this scale.

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)

Risks are discussed but are believed to be minimal. Under any future scenario, having these lands in public ownership will allow more flexibility in responding to present and future risks to these areas and the ecosystem they support.

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

See above.

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

Yes, but they are very general.

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

Yes, but they are very general.

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

Yes (acres and miles of shoreline acquired or conserved). Beyond that, success is defined very broadly (net contribution to health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico).

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)

The proposal describes in general terms the types of monitoring that will take place, but there is not sufficient detail to evaluate from a scientific standpoint. At the least, it would be helpful for the proposer to provide a table specifically outlining the "regular regimen of surveys" that will assess the "true net conservation value" of the acquisition. This table should include citations describing the methods, results, etc.

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

I think so.

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)

There could be more discussion of the consequences of no action.

Please summarize any additional information needed below:

This is a good and important project, and the benefit of completing these acquisitions will only increase over time. However, more attention to specific objectives and especially to describing and documenting the proposed monitoring would greatly strengthen the proposal.