Science Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Texas Coast Migratory and Shore Bird Habitat Restoration

LOCATION

Spans 621 miles along the Texas Coast at least two counties deep (32 counties)

SPONSOR(S)

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service

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

Project, Planning, Technical Assistance, & Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

DATE:

January 9, 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 that include acquisition may not require extensive citation, so in these cases they may be limited.

However, given that there are multiple sub-components of this proposal that include on-the-ground restoration, more substantial justification via referenced peer-reviewed literature (in particular for methodologies) should have been provided. In some cases there are specific info and datasets referenced (e.g., from USFWS), but no literature references were made to to a resource.

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

No parenthetical document of references included in the proposal's list of references are included within the body of the proposal (including extensive high level budget section, which includes project sub-component details). It should not be assumed that individuals reading (or reviewing) the proposal will make the links to the list of references themselves.

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

The proposal does address risk/uncertainty in the sense that implementation is likely given commitment of leveraged funding from partners, and therefore success is lily given the buy-in.

However, risk/uncertainty is not addressed, as it should be, for project sub-components, in particular those resulting on acquisition or on-the-ground restoration. For example, have willing sellers been identified for acquisition? How sure is the applicant if an agreement is not currently in place? Also, have similar techniques been used on-the-ground near projects (e.g.,

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

This is something that I felt should be addressed, as the proposal includes acquisition, at a sizable scale, and yet only has a project lifespan listed at 10-20+ years. Providing more detail would have been helpful for project sub-components.

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:

While I do not disagree with the applicant on the proposed strategy/methodologies, I do not feel that they have made the case for their approach in this proposal. Without this to substantiate their decision-making, the proposal appears to be a haphazard compilation of projects and partners, with no overall strategy linking components along the entire Texas coast.

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 notation above for part A.

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 notation above for part A.

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)?

No.

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

My previous role/organization managed projects similar to many of this proposals sub-components (both acquisition and restoration).

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)

No, but there are some components of the proposal that could benefit from having such.

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

No.

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

Yes.

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

Yes.

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

Yes. However, some of the expected outcomes seem very pie-in-the-sky and potentially unrealistic (e.g., improve water quality flowing into the Gulf by one third, increase available habitat by 50%, improve wildlife habitat by 50%).

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)

While existing State monitoring programs will be expanded to cover the some of the project areas, it does not appear that there is much in the way of project-specific monitoring. It is likely that there would be additional monitoring for one-the-ground restoration for sub-components, but these are not provided within the monitoring or extensive budget narrative.

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

Yes.

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)

No. (See response to BAS Question #5 above)

Please summarize any additional information needed below:

While I think that this could serve as a valuable project, the applicant appears to have not put much time into adequately packaging the project components. Properly referencing the literature, better connecting project components, addressing long-term uncertainties, and substantiating acquisition/restoration decision-making would likely have strengthened the proposal quite a bit.