



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office
2493 Portola Road, Suite B
Ventura, California 93003

IN REPLY REFER TO:
81440-2010-B-0268

September 24, 2010

Grant Review Committee
Proposition 84 Planning Grant Program
c/o Mr. John Ricker
IRWM Region Steering Committee
701 Ocean Street, Room 312
Santa Cruz, California 95060

Subject: Support for the Santa Cruz Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Region's Proposition 84 Planning Grant Application

Dear Grant Review Committee:

We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), are writing to express our strong support for the Santa Cruz Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Planning Region's Proposition 84 Planning Grant proposal. If funded, this proposal would provide critical support for the development of a comprehensive plan to address key water resources challenges in the Santa Cruz IRWM Region.

The Santa Cruz IRWM region has a long history of successful stakeholder collaboration on watershed and water resource management issues. In 2005, the region developed a comprehensive IRWM plan in advance of Proposition 50. Development of the plan was rewarded with a \$12.5 million dollar grant for the implementation of 15 key projects. Now that the Santa Cruz IRWMP is several years old, it is need of an update. This proposal seeks funding for three key areas of need: technical studies to better support water management efforts; development of additional strategies to address plan deficiencies; and development of a process for prioritization and plan development.

Specifically, this proposal will provide critical information about how to better manage key groundwater basins and increase water supply reliability through the development of improved groundwater models and development of conjunctive use strategies. The area of flood management will be more thoroughly assessed and ecosystem management opportunities will be identified through a hydrologic study of the Middle Watsonville Sloughs. Climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies will be developed from up-to-date, scaled-down climate change modeling. Finally, a method to better prioritize how the plan will be implemented and its success evaluated will be developed based on cutting-edge methodologies being developed in other regions of the state.

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Of particular interest to the Service is the proposed hydrologic study of the Middle Watsonville Sloughs. We have been working with partners for several years to protect and restore habitats within the Watsonville Slough complex. This area is inhabited by the federally threatened California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) and is used by a variety of migratory birds and other wildlife. The proposed hydrologic study would help to inform the design of habitat restoration projects in the Watsonville Slough complex, which could benefit the California red-legged frog and other native wildlife.

Also of interest to the Service is the proposed climate change planning, which would include quantification of expected land subsidence and of the effects of expected sea level rise on wetland habitats. The Service recognizes that climate change will have profound effects on our Nation's fish, wildlife, and plant resources and encourages the collection of data to model and track those effects.

In summary, we believe the IRWM's proposed project would contribute valuable information that would help in management and restoration of important wildlife habitat and aid in planning to respond to climate change. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Jacob Martin of my staff at (831) 464-2950, extension 27.

Sincerely,



Roger P. Root
Assistant Field Supervisor

cc:

Karen Christensen, Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County