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To: CALFED Science Staff
Attn 2006 PSP. FAX (916) 445-7297

From: Robert Fujimura, CDFG, Tel. 209-948-7800, FAX 209-946-6355

Subject: Public Comments on 2006 CALFED Science PSP

Proposal Name: An Experimental and Modeling Approach to Evaluate Environmental Water Effects on Threatened Delta Smelt

Applicant Organization: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Principal Lead Investigator(s):
Gonzalo Castillo
Robert Fujimura

General Response

This letter is my response to the technical review panel's responses. As a co-lead, I appreciated the comments of the technical panel reviewers and their support for the culture, marking, and mark-recapture research. The authors acknowledge the reviewers' recommendation not to fund Tasks 7 and 8 and hope that other researchers will accomplish this work after the funded field results become available. We will attempt to provide more technical details as needed. I will not respond to the reviewers comments concerning these latter tasks.

The researchers are interested in conducting quick feasibility tests on the marking and mark-recapture procedures but opportunities prior to the original implementation schedule may be limited due to available test fish, environmental permitting issues, and coordination issues between the host agency and the researchers.

Given the reduced recommended budget and the numbers of test fish required for these studies, the researchers recognize that many aspects of entrainment processes can not be investigated in detail and loss rates determined from these studies will represent a first step (pilot study effort) toward understanding these processes.

The Department of Fish and Game and University of California Davis staff salaries are appropriate since these positions are funded solely through directed research contracts or grants.

Due to the lag time to culture hatchery delta smelt, we need six additional months beyond the recommended two years to allow two seasons to refine field procedures and conduct the necessary field experiments and to analyze results and write the final report. This can be accomplished within the new recommended budget (\$670,000). The pilot project can be accommodated within revised budget in 2.5 years (e.g. year 1 = July 07-July 08. Year 2 = July 08 - July 09). All laboratory and field work could be completed by July 09 (tasks 2, 3, 4, 5). Year 3 should only be needed for tasks 1 (project management) and 6 (analyses of mark-recapture data): July 09-Dec 09.

Technical Reviewer #1

The lack of empirical information of delta smelt entrainment was the result of the lack of suitable methods (e.g. lack of cultured fish) and funding.

The authors have noted the suggestion that results should be presented at national/international meetings and will attempt to address this suggestion through the federal and university team members. It is extremely difficult for the State researchers to obtain authorization to travel out of state.

The authors recognize that this study design assumes that cultured and wild delta smelt behaves/responses similarly. Quantifying possible differences would be a major expansion of the scope and cost of this proposal.

Given the reduced proposed budget, the authors feel that examining multiple sizes of adult smelt is impractical at this time. We will reconsider this objective if tagging technologies allow the authors to identify the responses of individual fish instead of groups of fish.

Technical Reviewer #2

Since we accept the recommendation to not study the Tasks 7 & 8, I have not comment on this reviewer's comments.

Technical Reviewer #3

The authors will be including contingency plans if less test fish are available. Given the limited budget the authors are adapting the design and scope of proposed work to ensure that adequate number of test fish of suitable size will be available, that sufficient numbers of released fish are recovered, that inappropriate release times are avoided, and the replicate size and numbers are well considered.

The lack of base funding for most of the study's researchers limits cost-sharing opportunities. The CALFED agencies' managers could independently address this suggestion.

The reviewer has a good suggestion to integrate this study with other South Delta fisheries experiments such as VAMP. Detailed planning is limited now since the specific study plans for these studies will be only available when they are closer to their implementation dates. It is unclear whether we would choose to the release test fish during the VAMP period since this program was designed to minimize delta smelt entrainment. We propose to conduct pilot studies during periods of high export flows to evaluate entrainment under normal conditions and to increase the likelihood of collecting marked fish at the Skinner Fish Salvage Facility.

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