Science Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Apalachicola Bay Watershed Restoration

LOCATION

Franklin and Gulf Counties, FL

SPONSOR(S)

State of Florida

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

Project planning, technical assistance and implementation

REVIEWED BY:

DATE: 1/3/15

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

Only one of 6 projects bothers to review and cite literature. All the projects are lacking details required to effectively assess feasibility, likelihood of success, risks and uncertainties.

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

Does apply to GC region.

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

- ○ YES
- ◉ NO
- ○ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

For one project that provided any citations (project 6), citations are reasonable (complete and support assertions). I answered "No" because of the complete lack of refereed or non-refereed references in 95% of this proposal.

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

- ○ YES
- ◉ NO
- ○ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

See Q-3.

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

Again, I answered "No" because of the conspicuous absence of required literature, not only to evaluate uncertainties/risks but to provide any foundation for proposed activities. The paragraphs under each of the six projects are uniformly inadequate for required evaluation. As an unpaid reviewer and given this is not a paper that can be improved before acceptance, I will not provide the details of what could have been done. The council science staff should use this first round of proposals as a teaching moment. I hope that they will work with sponsors to build worthy activities to support the worthy goals and objectives.

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

See Q-5.

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 Q-5.

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 Q-5.

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 Q-5.

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. In no case did the proposers satisfactorily suggest or evaluate alternatives.

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

No. However, all of the projects complement existing programs. This is a strength of the proposal, but I am very concerned that the RESTORE Act funding is not used to replace state supported and mandated research and monitoring activities.

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. It appears that the the authors did not get any guidance on expected plans. The inadequate paragraphs under each project cite some factors that may affect success, but provide very little information on mitigation response strategies. They do not provide information required to evaluate science-based strategies.

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?

I support the goals and objectives of each project in this proposal. The state crammed six projects into one proposal, and none are developed adequately enough to support science evaluation. For the amounts requested, none should be funded, but all are worthy of future consideration based on relevance, benefits and potential merit.

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

See Q-E.

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

Yes, all of the projects have sections for "Measures of Success." However, as with the monitoring and risk sections, these are not adequate for science evaluation. They list general "criteria" but I could not generally tell what/where was going to be measured, or against what baselines.

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)

All the projects include some mostly cut-and-paste text on intent to monitor restoration efforts, including measurements and adaptive management efforts. Some of the projects reference outside plans, e.g.: proj. 5, p. 12, "tried and true technologies developed by ..."; proj. 1, p. 3, "Tate's Hell State Forest Hydrologic Restoration Plan"; These sources may in fact provide comprehensive risk mitigation plans, but the reviewers should not be required to dig out this important material.

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

No. Again, literature cited is inadequate and reviewer cannot be expected to dig this out of partnership program plans and web sites. All the projects do not describe baseline data sources. This is especially of concern considering that all the project propose to build on established environmental programs. The lack of publications and baseline data resources from these partners should be considered and rectified before any of the projects are funded.

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.

Please summarize any additional information needed below:

Based on science merit of what was presented in the proposal, my recommendation is to ask only projects 5 and 6 to each resubmit their proposals with complete literature reviews, risk mitigation plans, and experimental designs that include baseline data and monitoring strategies (e.g., where, when and what measurements will be made?).