Science Evaluation

Bucket 2 – Council Selected Restoration Component

PROPOSAL TITLE

Mobile Bay and Beyond – Watershed Implementation to enhance Marsh, Marine, and Estuarine Ecosystems

LOCATION

Southern Baldwin County and Southern Mobile County, Alabama

SPONSOR(S)

State of Alabama and USDA/NRCS

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

Planning, Technical Assistance, Implementation

REVIEWED BY:

DATE: 1/26/2013

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

The authors of this proposal cite one peer reviewed paper; the other cited works are agency reports or similar. From a scientific perspective this is very poor. I cannot evaluate this proposal based on these cited works and simply believe their assertions that they can do this work.

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

Same as above, they expect you to go based on faith of their past and who they are.

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

- ○ YES
- ○ NO
- ◉ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

There really is nothing cited that I would deem "literature".

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

- ○ YES
- ◉ NO
- ○ NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

Same as 1-3 above.

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?)

- [x] YES
- [ ] NO
- [ ] NEED MORE INFORMATION

Comments

Should have been more thorough than just saying they recognize that there may be critical unwilling landowners, and that severe storms (hurricanes) may arise and be problematic, but they know how to deal with it. They are expecting the reviewers to just trust them.

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
- [x] NEED MORE INFORMATION

Information Needed:

One peer reviewed paper is not sufficient, and at that the "Journal of Political Economy" is hardly a well known scientific resource.

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
- [x] NO
- [ ] NEED MORE INFORMATION

Information Needed:

same as above

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
- [x] NO
- [ ] NEED MORE INFORMATION

Information Needed:

same as above

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)?

This is almost impossible to assess by this reviewer as almost no science is cited, demonstrated, or discussed.

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

Yes, in many ecosystem types and settings.

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.

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?

Oddly, the only place I could find anything that looked like a goal statement was in the executive summary: This project will restore water quality in select watersheds through installation of conservation practices, primarily on private land. If this is truly the overall goal, it is not very inspiring.

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

No.

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

Yes. One of the few strengths of this proposal.

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)

Yes, they have a considerable amount of experience with these sorts of projects.

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

Not other than their own work.

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)

Yes, another strength of this proposal.

Please summarize any additional information needed below:

Overall, this is a weak proposal, and is not adequately assembled to justify funding. I think it is a reach to think they would be successful based on what is presented in the proposal.