



CENTRAL VALLEY JOINT VENTURE

Conserving Bird Habitat in California's Central Valley

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Request for Proposals

Central Valley Joint Venture Communication and Outreach Plan

The Central Valley Joint Venture (CVJV) is a partnership of public and private entities whose mission is to work collaboratively to protect, restore, and enhance habitats for birds of the California's Central Valley in accordance with the [2020 CVJV Implementation Plan](#) (2020 Plan).

The CVJV has a long history of public outreach, supporting environmental events, conferences, and trainings, providing press releases and support letters, and maintaining a presence on social media. In the 2020 Plan's Human Dimensions chapter, the CVJV examined what people think and do related to conservation, discerned their reasons and motivations, and determined how best to incorporate these understandings into policies and programs for engaging people. Building on the 2020 Plan, the CVJV Management Board held a retreat in 2023 and identified the largest constraints hindering progress towards achieving 2020 Plan objectives and identified strategies to successfully move forward, many of which involved a communication component. The retreat resulted in the attached list of priority challenges and potential strategies to focus short-term CVJV efforts (see attached CVJV 2023 Board Retreat Document)

Objective: The CVJV is requesting proposals to

- Develop a targeted communications and outreach plan to ensure 1) broad awareness of the CVJV, our mission, and the 2020 Plan, 2) we communicate progress towards meeting CVJV objectives, and 3) we engage an expanded range of external stakeholders.
- Coordinate a communications and outreach plan launch period to ensure key components are developed and to test plan implementation for a short period.

The CVJV Management Board has authorized up to \$40,000 for the development of the communications plan and the launch of its key components.

Please note: Ongoing communication plan coordination/management, post launch, is not part of this RFP. However, it is envisioned to be a time commitment of up to 32 hours a month. Ideally, the firm or consultant that writes and launches this plan would also have the capacity and desire to manage it going forward. Annual funding will be made available for

the sustained implementation of the communications plan.

Proposals should address the following priorities:

1. Increasing general awareness of the CVJV, our mission, and the 2020 Plan, including the expansion of targeted bird groups; an increased focus on the foothills and mountain meadow habitats; and our priority Human Dimensions topics in recognition that conservation is something that is done for, with, and by people.
2. Communicating the successes of the CVJV and our partners in meeting our objectives, as well as any collective impacts and multiple benefits for wildlife, wild lands, and local communities.
3. Increasing our partnership network, focusing not only on the key stakeholders identified in our 2020 Plan (hunters, farmers, non-hunters, and urban communities) but also tribal and underserved communities.
4. Communications and Outreach Plan launch that tapers off into a monthly management cycle of around 32 hrs./month. Potential actions for the launch period and beyond include:
 - Coordination of the communication plan implementation,
 - Integration of the communications strategies identified at the CVJV 2023 Board Retreat
 - Development of key targeted outreach products
 - Review and contribute sample material to CVJV.org and our social media sites,
 - Oversee initial engagement with priority stakeholders.

Eligibility: Open to all CVJV Board members and partnering organizations, publicity firms, and individual contractors.

Proposal Evaluation: Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The degree to which the proposal addresses the priorities described above,
- Clarity of objectives, and how likely the objectives would result in measurable, demonstrated, and meaningful outcomes,
- Firm's/Consultant's capacity and ability to manage and complete the proposal in a timely and effective manner,
- Personnel with knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully implement proposal (see below).

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of Personnel:

- Experience in facilitation and collaborative planning
- Knowledge of communication best practices, particularly related to conservation,
- Strong copywriting skills and ability to take technical information and make it understandable for a variety of audiences,
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills.

Preferred Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities of Personnel:

- Experience collaborating with conservation organizations in the Central Valley,

- Familiarity with basic concepts of restoration, ecology, and conservation biology,
- Skills operating web authoring software (WordPress),
- Skills managing and maintaining social media sites,
- Knowledge of the Joint Venture program and the CVJV.

Instructions: Applicants should submit a proposal, following this suggested outline, and addressing the Proposal Evaluation criteria above:

- Proposal Title/Submitting entity/primary contact,
- Proposal Description, and how it specifically addresses the Priorities listed above,
- Proposal outcomes/products,
- Proposed timeline and budget for the plan development and its launch period,
- List of project personnel with description of education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities (see list of qualifications above).

Due Date: April 30th, 2024

Address proposals to: James Cogswell, CVJV Coordinator, james_cogswell@fws.gov

Attachment:

CVJV Retreat 2023: Priority challenges, strategy ideas, and leads for next actions forward

CVJV Board Chair, Committee Chairs, and Coordination Office

December 1, 2023

1. CVPIA – Full L4 is usually not delivered and efforts are stalled or progressing very slowly, so managed wetland objectives are not met or wetlands are not optimally managed. Increasingly frequent Congressional challenges to CVPIA threaten secure water supplies and the Restoration Fund critical to the backbone of managed wetlands in the Central Valley (e.g. Valadao bill and other appropriations related bills)
 - Advocate for sufficient funding to acquire water and construct/maintain infrastructure for L4; JV can be instrumental in getting earmarks
 - Continue advocacy, pressure politically (letters, meetings)
 - **Who: Legislative Affairs and Water Committees**
 - Use AJVMB fly-in (messaging/materials to support CVPIA and funding)
 - **Who: Legislative Affairs Committee**
 - Advocate/apply pressure to do up-front planning work to be in position to receive funding for CVPIA projects.
 - Continue advocacy, pressure politically (letters, meetings) (e.g. have lists of potential projects and funding needs available and updated; list of projects in draft CVPIA strategic plan may be helpful reference)
 - **Who: Legislative Affairs, Water, and Land Committees**
 - Educate new members of Congress about CA wetland priorities and needs; continue advocacy and maintain funding support for this work (e.g. letters, DC visits, congressional meetings, road show)
 - Educate new congressional members and staff – Find new Champions (workshop events, tours, YouTube Video “CVPIA 101”)
 - **Who: Communications & Outreach Ad Hoc Committee lead, working with Water, Leg, Lands Committees as needed**
 - Communicate a message of success rather than failure. Celebrate where we have been successful (e.g. Gray Lodge conveyance improvements). Turn CVPIA into a success story as a strategy to get more \$ and attention.
 - Build on success story messaging while listing what still needs to be done (e.g. CVPIA Celebration Event, communication products, NCWA tour tag-on)

- **Who: Communications & Outreach as lead, working with Water, Leg, Lands as needed on messaging**
 - Support new opportunities to acquire water for wetlands. Support including wetland water in new or enlarged storage projects (groundwater or surface water) if there is commitment of public funding. (E.g. Track projects in planning phases such as LVE, recharge projects that are advocating for or have received public funding to ensure wetlands are beneficiaries.) Support funding for water infrastructure projects that include a share of water for wetlands.
 - **Who: Water & Leg Affairs Committees**
 - Ensure key CVPIA and Refuge Water Supply Program vacant positions are filled. (E.g. write letter on behalf of CVJV Board, meet with management staff, etc.)
 - **Who: Water & Leg Affairs Committees**
2. Winter flooded rice may be declining, ag habitat objective at risk
- Advocate that terrestrial habitat impacts be considered in water transfer agreements, and advocate that those impacts be offset or agreements changes; work through GGS or Western Pond Turtle requirements; support funding for and directly fund the science that evaluates impacts of transfers; consider mechanism, who pays, balance with ricegrowers and political implications that may impact our ability to achieve our objectives in other ways
 - **Who: Water Committee create ad-hoc group with interested partners to discuss impacts of water transfers, what we want to accomplish, for what species (waterfowl, shorebirds, GGS, all and/or other?), and how, especially in dry years**
 - Support funding for permanent rice easements and temporary habitat incentives on agricultural lands
 - Engage with Rice Commission on rice “footprint” evaluation
 - **Who: Lands Committee**
 - Engage Rice Commission, NRCS, NWR, and others on easement approaches for small grains
 - **Who: Lands Committee**
 - Continue support for old and new incentive program funding (short-term) through NRCS, temporary flooding, etc.
 - **Who: Leg Committee**
3. State/Federal conservation staff shortages slow pace of conservation and miss opportunities, and turnover results in loss of institutional knowledge (e.g. Staff turnover in federal Refuge Water Supply Program, FWS regional permanent staff down by ~30% in last decade)

- Advocate for FWS and State budget increases
 - Identify adequate/ideal staffing levels (e.g. through staff interviews)
 - Cultivate champions (legislators)
 - Advocate for alternate funding mechanisms (bonds, etc.)
 - Connect with AJVMB and Friends of NWR groups for support
 - CVJV find funding from other sources for staff/function (IWJV model)
 - **Who: Leg Committee, working with Communications & Outreach on materials and messaging**
 - Educate members of appropriations committees (and others, including state policy makers) about the problem and consequences; attempt to quantify impacts
 - Impacts to hunting, wildlife, access and recreation
 - Distinguish between NWR and the regulatory side of FWS
 - **Who: Leg Committee, working with Communications & Outreach on materials and messaging**
4. Declining hunting interest, resulting in less will to manage land as wetlands and loss of funding to support.
- **Who: Board will explore further through HD workshop in 2024 and by directing HD committee. Ideas to be discussed by the Board and Committee are listed below.**
 - Advocate for incentive programs to reduce cost of wetland management (maintain what we have and incentivize development of new clubs), reduce cost of private hunting programs (encourage new interest in conservation)
 - Promote hunting education and mentoring programs
 - do communication/storytelling around the role of private wetlands and hunting culture, why it's important for conservation
 - support youth programs
 - **Who: Coordination Office and Communication & Outreach Committee**
 - Promote private/public wetland value for non-consumptive recreationalists; Explore and support new and unconventional funding opportunities and funding streams by developing and promoting other wetland uses (beyond hunting)
 - Develop strategy to get financial support, identify who has a financial interest
 - **Who: Legislative Affairs Committee**

- Educate/build awareness in the non-hunting community about the role of hunting/hunters in protecting the environment and furthering conservation
 - **Who: Communication & Outreach Committee**
 - Build case for public and private investment in private wetlands. (E.g. wetlands provide clean water, CO2 capture, biodiversity). Tell story on how public dollars are helping land health/conservation easements from development. Tell the story of biology and what birds need/what's available in terms of land AND water in CA.
 - **Who: Communication & Outreach Committee work across hunting and non-hunting Board members to develop case and messaging**
5. Managing water allocations and deliveries without appropriately considering wetland water needs has or could lead to wetland impacts or losses.
- **Who: Water & Leg Committee to discuss this topic further through ad-hoc group to help align Board on points of agreement and identify science that's available or needed to support better multi-species water management, at the system level (CVP/SWP allocations, how reservoirs are managed, etc.) and district level. (all points below)**
 - Advance multi-species water management as a better way to meet the needs of wetlands, and as many species as possible, at the right times and places. Advocate that wetland water is factored into decision making and elevated in priority in regulatory-associated water allocation processes when possible/appropriate (e.g. Delta WQCP Phase 2 process, VAs, ROC on LTO, etc.)
 - As a JV, stay engaged and take a seat at the table to ensure birds are considered in planning in water allocation decisions.
 - Advocate for FWS Mig Birds Program and Refuges staff to be at species recovery planning table; consider other approaches that may work better than our experience in 2021-2022. Advocate for applying the science that shows what water birds need.
 - **Who: Water Committee ad-hoc group of interested partners, e.g. W4W and others**
 - In education, advocacy, and communication, drive landscape-scale management that emphasizes ecologically functional rivers and terrestrial habitats as one system.
 - Support development of bioenergetics models for multiple species so metrics between species are better aligned (apples to apples).
 - Support science to better understand benefits and scalability of projects that provide for birds and fish collectively.
 - Monitor planning processes for water allocations and new water storage/conveyance projects to ensure CVPIA is included in modeling and documentation.

6. Wetland conversion, conversion of wildlife-friendly ag lands to other crops is reducing the extent of managed wetland and post-harvest rice habitat we rely on to meet CVJV objectives.
 - Advocate for sufficient funding for wetland enhancement
 - **Who: Legislative Affairs Committee**
 - Develop tracking tools and compile data to tell the story
 - **Who: Technical Committee to consider how to track and fund effort**

7. Tulare and Suisun Basins wetlands are critical to achieving CVJV objectives, but these wetlands are at risk or declining.
 - Convene, engage, and support groups working in the Tulare (funded by MLRP) or Suisun - create a venue to share information and develop recommendations for the JV to take action.
 - **Who: (Lands Committee) determine process for regular check-ins with local groups in other planning regions, increase connection with CVJV**
 - **Who: (Board, Lands, and Tech Committees) help define clear tangible conservation priorities and strategies, provide support**
 - Tie into local expertise in Suisun and Tulare (Suisun RCD, Tulare partnership and MLRP grantees); connect at the local level to take a more grassroots approach
 - Tulare-specific:
 - **Who: (Lands Committee) Focus on Tulare first, identify local expertise who could lead if possible, and identify how/where CVJV can help (all points below)**
 - Support multi-benefit recharge and FloodMAR planning that provides wetland co-benefits
 - Support/Sponsor legislation to exempt wetlands from fees (e.g. AB 828)
 - Align with disadvantaged community advocacy groups in support for sustainable access to groundwater for vulnerable communities including wetlands. Explore other exemptions to help private wetlands with SGMA implementation.
 - Explore implications of subsidence on wetland water conveyance and infrastructure to align with ag interests and funding in this area.
 - Support funding for groundwater recharge that includes habitat benefits.
 - **Who: Board, Policy/legislative Committees: Advocate for projects/actions that incorporate CVJV objectives (e.g. water recharge that benefits birds, provide habitat for grassland birds and upland nesters through land retirement)**
 - Suisun-specific:

- Consider supporting water quality management sensors, decision support for existing wetland enhancement.
- Reach out to and partner with the Suisun RCD on solutions.
- **Who: (Lands Committee) Start process with Suisun RCD, take temperature and determine how to proceed and how to increase connections to the CVJV.**