RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS
November 30, 2020

RFP: DEVELOPMENT OF DRAFT RESTORATION PLAN FOR ENHANCEMENT OF WETLANDS HABITAT IN THE COACHELLA VALLEY STORMWATER CHANNEL AND DELTA CONSERVATION AREA, RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

1) Will the current site management team be available for use during the pilot project?
   Yes, the current site management team is available for use during the pilot project. Currently, there is one site manager who lives on site at North Shore Ranch. He is knowledgeable about the water system, and assists with maintenance of facilities, vegetation, and other related needs. There is also a heavy equipment operator on site for maintenance needs.

2) Can we propose the use of herbicide on the property?
   Yes, herbicide can be used on the property but must be applied by a California State Certified Herbicide Applicator. The use of herbicides must be carefully planned to limit impacts to aquatic habitats. We have previously used Imazapyr on site in the fall and winter for removal of tamarisk.

3) Is the property open to the public for dog walking, hiking?
   The site is open to the public for dog walking and hiking, although at this time public access would require advance notice to CVCC. As it was previously a hunting club and is surrounded by hunting clubs, we do not see many people entering the property for that purpose. We would like to encourage more use in the future. As mentioned above, there is a site manager on site who also watches for illegal activity such as OHV trespass, camping and illegal dumping.

4) Do people still hunt on the property?
   The CVMSHCP does not prohibit hunting on preserve properties, but it is no longer used as a hunting club. CVCC does not encourage hunting or provide access to hunters.

5) Do you wish to reinforce the berms for the use of regular vehicles?
   The berms can currently be accessed by four-wheel drive vehicles / utility vehicles and we would like to have access for those vehicles for maintenance purposes. We would prefer not to bring asphalt or aggregate in to reinforce the berms if possible.
6) What kind of current information, biological or otherwise exists for the area? With regard to the surveys and studies conducted on the North Shore Ranch property, would you please let me know how we can access the following:

All surveys and information we have will be collected and available to the chosen contractor.

a) Bio-surveys? Yes, through Grinnell surveys completed by the San Diego Natural History Museum. These include mammal trapping, vegetation surveys, bird surveys conducted a couple years ago. SDNHM is currently publishing the data, but we have the species lists available.

b) Current aquifer/ground water levels? These records should be available for the CVCC owned property to the south and possibly are also available for North Shore Ranch and from Coachella Valley Water District if needed.

c) Water quality? No, the prior owners of North Shore Ranch may have information on water quality in their records.

d) Topographic surveys? No.

e) Soil survey? No – other than Soil Conservation Service mapping.

f) Cultural? No.

g) Any information that CVCC has on the age of the well, how long it has been used (continuously or significant down times), and how it has been performing (any major repairs or concerns):

The well has been used continuously by the previous landowner to fill the ponds over the last 20 years. The western well has a capacity of approximately 700 gallons/min and has not had any significant reports of malfunction or concern. That said, our goal is to try to maintain the project as sustainably as possible, so proposing alternate sources could also be considered.

h) Contact information for the Ranch in order to access additional hydrology surveys and water quality studies conducted on the property:

Contact info for the managers of North Shore Ranch will be provided to the selected contractor so they can work directly with the site manager to obtain any records needed.

i) Are there any additional surveys and/or studies completed for this property (other than Rail Habitat for CVCC at North Shore Ranch provided in the RFP)? No.

7) Do you need an engineer stamp on the plans?

For the Draft Restoration Plan, it would be preferable, but not required.
8) Have you considered not using the well water for the project? What about the perched ground water?

The previous owner attempted to use the perched groundwater for vegetation growth at the site but found it to be extremely salty. This could work for recruitment of some native plants, but he found the well water was much easier to control for quality. He uses well water to dilute the salts for the vegetation he grew for the game birds to forage, including millet and other food plants. Due to CVWD’s groundwater recharge project, the groundwater is known to be very close to the surface in the area, although we currently do not know the actual depth from ground level.

9) Is it possible to run a direct line from the well instead of controlling the water with drop structures and gates?

It is possible to upgrade the infrastructure and even to run a direct line but may be more cost effective to install and maintain the drop structures. Also, we may want to expand the project to the northern ponds if the pilot project in Pond 5 is successful, so we would not want to remove the existing infrastructure. The restoration plan could include a direct line as a possible scenario with a cost analysis.

10) Have you considered using solar power for the well to reduce costs?

Currently, CVCC pays for power from Imperial Irrigation District to power the well, but installation of solar power would be considered if it reduces cost over time and provides enough power for the well to run sustainably.

11) Are coyotes a problem on the property?

The property has many different predators, including coyotes, feral dogs, bobcats, raptors, and at least one cougar has been documented visiting the ponds. As far as we know, coyotes have not been an excessive nuisance on the property. As a MSHCP, even though we are looking to enhance rail habitat on the property, our mission is to maintain the habitat for all species, and we do not usually control one species over others, unless they are invasive.

12) What kind of budget are you looking to stay within for the draft restoration plan?

As this is a grant funded project, the CVMSHCP has budgeted up to $65,000 this fiscal year. External funding may be available for subsequent phases of the project.

13) The contract period extends into 2022, for consultation as the pilot project begins implementation. Is it your intention to do implementation in-house, or will you be reaching out for another consultant/contractor to do design-build for you? If the latter, would the firm that wins the current job be ineligible to bid on the design-build in the future?

The firm that bids on the draft restoration plan will be able to bid on the design / build and subsequent phases; we do not foresee a conflict in that. However as mentioned in Question 1, we do have some staff capacity and assistance from on-site manager to implement the initial pilot project.
14) Can you provide any relevant resource management plants or baseline biological monitoring reports for the sites? See question 6 A - I above.

15) What is the current budget for the project and for the restoration plan?

   CVCC budgets by fiscal year, so any subsequent funding is subject to approval by CVCC. See Question 12 above.

16) Is there an incumbent consultant for this project? No

17) Will Burn Plans or Avoidance and Minimization Plans be required with the Habitat Restoration Plan?

   Burn plans have not been used in the past to manage vegetation on site. The AQMD regulates burning of vegetation for farmers/ranchers in the area, so this should be part of an ongoing conversation. Avoidance and Minimization would be required for nesting birds.

18) Can you provide documents or examples for what the Prescribed Fire Program has involved in the past?

   There has been no prescribed fire program in the past.

19) Are there any other species protected under the CVMSHCP that are known to be present/active on the project site?

   There have been incidental reports of black rails and Yuma clapper rails on Johnson St drain. There are known populations of desert pupfish in the drains as well.

20) Will there be any Special Provisions that outline specific performance standards/success metrics for this restoration project?

   There are no specific performance standards or metrics associated with this project. The proposal should identify performance standards and metrics.

21) Will hydroseeding vehicles be able to access the restoration site? Yes.

22) Is the firm that prepared the Preliminary Site Assessment conflicted out for any reason or will they also apply? No, they can respond to the RFP with a proposal if they so choose.

23) Can we view a list of firms that attended the pre-proposal meeting on November 17th?

   Restoration firms that attended the field trip include Dudek, ESA, GPA, ICF, River Partners, SWCA, Wood, and WRA