

FWS Region 1 Scoring Criteria for SSP Proposals: FY2016

Rationale

The scoring system outlined below is intended to provide standardized criteria for ranking SSP proposals.

Proposals will be judged according to three principal scoring criteria (relative weight in parentheses):

1. Conservation and management needs of the FWS (50%),
2. Proposed work plan (35%),
3. Budget (15%).

Each of the three principal scoring criteria has 2 to 5 ranking elements.

The Coordinating Committee consists of the Regional Coordinator (Chair) and representatives from each major program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in Region 1: Ecological Services, Fishery Resources, Law Enforcement, Migratory Birds, Refuges and Wildlife, and Science Applications. Each program has an equal vote in project rankings and recommendations. If a program has more than one representative on the Committee, then the scores for those representatives will be averaged. Committee members are advised to evaluate proposals according to the immediate needs of the FWS independent of the specific program they may represent. The Regional Coordinator largely serves as a referee but is ultimately responsible for defending project rankings and recommendations to the Regional Director.

The intent of the scoring system is to provide a transparent and objective approach for ranking and selecting SSP projects that best fit regional FWS priorities and needs. However, the scores themselves are intended to guide, not rule, Coordinating Committee decisions. Ultimately, the Coordinating Committee will recommend projects based on a combination of proposal rank scores, best professional judgment, collaborative discussion, and funding availability.

Scoring criteria

1. Needs of the USFWS (50 pts)

a. (10 pts) Problem Description.

- To what extent is the problem a significant conservation and/or management issue for the FWS in the Pacific Region (HI, ID, OR, WA and Pacific island territories) relative to the mission and legal/legislative mandates of the FWS?
- Does the proposal clearly respond to a specific conservation and management need of the FWS (intent of SSP program), or does the proposal primarily reflect the research interests of the Principal Investigator?

b. (10 pts) Resource Implication.

- How would the proposed work benefit fish, wildlife, and/or plant species under FWS jurisdiction?

- What are the management and conservation consequences to fish, wildlife, and/or plants if the proposed work is not conducted?

c. (10 pts) Breadth of Applicability.

- Would the proposed work directly benefit more than one fish, wildlife, or plant species under FWS jurisdiction?
- Would the proposed work be applicable to other fish, wildlife, or plant species under FWS jurisdiction beyond those specifically targeted by the project?
- Would the proposed work be applicable to geographic areas beyond the specific focus of the proposed work?
- Would the proposed work benefit more than one Program of the FWS (e.g., Migratory Birds, Fisheries, etc.)?
- Would the proposed work benefit another region of the FWS in addition to the Pacific Region (e.g., California-Nevada)?
- Is the proposed work collaborative in nature, reflecting a “partnership” between FWS and USGS as intended by the SSP program?

d. (10 pts) Conservation Priority.

- What is the priority of the described information need for the Pacific Region relative to other issues and information needs?
- To what extent does the proposed project relate to a legal, legislative or mission priority of the FWS (e.g., ESA Recovery Plan, Habitat Management Plan, Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Inventory and Monitoring Plan, migratory bird initiative, tribal-trust responsibility, etc.) and/or a national or regional priority (e.g., effects of climate change)?

e. (10 pts) Time Sensitivity.

- Is the desired information considered *time-critical* or *time-sensitive* with respect to the needs of the FWS?
- Examples of time-critical information might include (a) a legally-mandated deadline under the ESA; (b) “before” data on fish, wildlife, or plant populations prior to the initiation of a scheduled habitat restoration project.

2. Proposed work plan (30 pts)

a. (5 pts) Goal of project.

- Does the proposed project have a clearly-identified goal, product, or outcome defined in terms of specific benefits to fish, wildlife, and/or plants?

b. (10 pts) Objectives of proposed work.

- Do objectives follow a clear sequence of steps that lead to the desired goal product, or outcome?
- Do the qualifications of the PI (and Associate PIs) indicate a high likelihood that the goal and objectives of the project will be achieved within the proposed timeline?

c. (15 pts) *Methods for achieving objectives and timeline.*

- Is there a clear and direct correspondence between methods and objectives?
- Are methods clear and understandable?
- Do the methods explain “why” a particular set of methods are proposed if other methods for addressing the same task are often used?
- Do the described methods and tasks have a high likelihood of achieving each objective?
- Does the proposal include a clear and logical *Timeline* – by month - for initiating and completing each objective and major task relative to the defined goal of the project?
- Are there aspects of the methods, or in the expected results, that reduce the likelihood of achieving one or more objectives? For example, do some of the methods for a particular objective have to be “worked out” or “tested” as part of the project before subsequent objectives can be initiated?
- Does the proposal adequately address experimental design?
- Does the proposal include a *Data Management Summary* outlining how data will be stored and backed-up during the project, and then archived and made accessible for future researchers and the public after the project is completed?
- Does the proposal indicate that all data, including raw data where applicable, will be shared electronically with the FWS, thus reflecting a true data-sharing partnership? This latter criterion is important for both scientific and legal reasons (e.g., FOIA, ESA, NEPA, etc.).
- Are all required “deliverables” (annual progress reports, final report, etc.), with due dates, listed in the proposal?
- Does the project fit within the working framework of *Strategic Habitat Conservation*?

3. Budget (20 pts)

a. (10 pts) *Justification and Transparency*

- Are the costs of the project itemized into clearly defined categories (salaries, expendable supplies, etc.)?
- Are the itemized costs justified and commensurate with the goal, objectives, methods, and expected products and benefits of the project?

b. (10 pts) *Cost-share or Match*

- Does the proposal “leverage” other funds or in-kind contributions from USGS or USGS partners to support a significantly more comprehensive project than could be supported by SSP funds alone?
- Does the budget include cost-share or “in-kind” contributions (e.g., “in-kind” salary support) from USGS or a USGS partner?