

**Proposal**  
**Project Education & Interpretive Plan**  
**Milt Brandt Visitor Center & Don Clausen Fish Hatchery**  
**Warm Springs Dam/Lake Sonoma Project**  
**Sonoma County, CA**

**A Joint Proposal with the Army Corps of Engineers, California  
Department of Fish and Game, and the Sotoyome Resource  
Conservation District**

**INTRODUCTION**

The State of California, Department of Fish and Game, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Sotoyome Resource Conservation District are submitting this proposal for the development of a new Interpretive and Education Master Plan of the Warm Springs Dam and Lake Sonoma Project. The Plan will be based on the history and uses of the Russian River Watershed and their impacts on the chinook, and coho salmon, and steelhead trout. In addition, the Plan will provide the framework for the design, fabrication and installation of new exhibits at the Milt Brandt Visitor Center and Don Clausen Fish Hatchery. This is a tremendous opportunity to develop these two facilities into a community-based educational outreach center with regard to the habitat of the chinook, and coho salmon and steelhead trout within the context of the Russian River Watershed.

**BACKGROUND**

The Don Clausen Fish Hatchery is located outside Healdsburg, CA a community 50 miles north of San Francisco. The hatchery was constructed in 1980 below Warm Springs Dam on the Dry Creek tributary of the Russian River to mitigate for the loss of spawning habitat for chinook and coho salmon and steelhead trout when Warm Springs Dam was constructed for water retention and flood control. The hatchery is owned and funded by the US Army Corps of Engineers, and operated by the California Department of Fish and Game.

The Don Clausen Fish Hatchery is first and foremost, a working hatchery that produces 500,000 steelhead trout each year, ( 300,00 from Dry Creek, 200,000 from Russian River), and is the centerpiece of a multi-million dollar native wild coho salmon recovery effort. In addition, over 140,000 people visit the hatchery annually. While visitors are welcomed and encouraged to view the operation, the Hatchery must be accessed via the Visitor Center and all interpretive services are provided by Corps of Engineers staff. Therefore, it is critical that the hatchery education and interpretive program be fully integrated into the Visitor Center. The Visitor Center provides critical "first point" contact with visitors, school visits and public information.

The exhibit area for the Visitor Center is 2736 square feet and the Fish Hatchery is 2690 square feet of elevated exhibit/viewing area open to the hatchery and spawning rooms below. In addition, an access footbridge over hatchery settling ponds provides opportunity for rail-mounted interpretive signage about hatchery operations. A number of visitor contact points

exist throughout the project and provide opportunity to relate the story of the Russian River Watershed, its history, management and stewardship.

Mission and Philosophy of Hatchery. One of the missions of the hatchery is to conserve steelhead trout populations on the Russian River as mitigation for the construction of Warm Springs Dam in 1980. In addition, a consortium of Federal, State, local agencies and local organizations have formed the Russian River Coho Salmon Recovery Working Group to preserve the remaining wild coho salmon in the watershed. The Department of Fish and Game believes that the long-term conservation and enhancement of Russian River salmon and steelhead requires a combined effort of state-of-the-art hatchery operations and production with strong community support and involvement through an aggressive public education and outreach effort.

Current Conditions- Exhibits. The current condition of the existing exhibits in the Hatchery are suffering from 13 years of exposure to damp air and outdated information on hatchery operations. The current exhibits do not interpret the newest programs of the hatchery, nor educational standards required by schools utilizing the hatchery. Further, the educational messages are not reflected within the larger Russian River Watershed in which the hatchery resides. Unlike the myriad organizations that work to improve the conditions of the watershed for fish and habitat, no community-based information or exhibits are provided on this process.

The current condition of the remaining existing exhibits in the Visitor Center are also 13 years old and do not provide a thematic approach to interpreting the history and management of the Russian River Watershed. The Visitor Center is vital to the overall educational program of the project. This is the first point of contact for visitors arriving to the project and what they see, hear and experience in this facility lays the foundation for understanding in the hatchery. The two facilities are integrated, not separate.

Neither facility complies with standards for Universal Accessibility in exhibit design.

In addition to the two visitor facilities, there are a number of project sites that currently provide no educational messages despite their high use by visitors. Facilities such as overlooks, boat ramps, campgrounds, wayside stops and trailheads.

Visitation And Seasonal Uses The majority of the hatchery-related visits occur during the spawning season in December through March. During this time, visitors flock to the fish ladder to watch the steelhead returning to the hatchery holding ponds. Spawning generally occurs during the morning on Thursdays and visitors can watch this procedure by peering down from the walkway above. Don Clausen Hatchery is a popular destination for regional school field trips and a reservation system has been established for school field trips to minimize crowding. Interest in viewing by the general public is growing each year and public programs could be more fully developed if the facilities were upgraded to accommodate the programming efforts. The Visitor Center and hatchery are located on Skaggs Springs Road and is a frequently used visitor information and contact point for all recreational users to the Lake Sonoma Project.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will be divided into two phases; Phase One: the development of an Interpretive Plan, and Phase Two: the design, fabrication and installation of the exhibits. **Only Phase One is being submitted for funding under this proposal.**

Phase one of this project will be the development of a project-based Interpretive Plan that will be used as a basis for planned renovation of wayside signage, visitor center and fish hatchery exhibits. The plan will be developed using a combination of community-based stakeholder meetings, and specialized focus groups with educators. The Sotoyome Resource Conservation District will coordinate these meetings and provide the guidance on developing the most comprehensive plan to meet the needs of those in the Russian River Watershed. Sub-themes, as they are developed, will contain the following:

- A storyline that describes the take-home messages (e.g.: coho and steelhead recovery stories, conservation efforts and the history/management of the Russian River Watershed, life cycles of each species)
- Working title and sub-titles (e.g.: habitat restoration techniques, watershed processes, limiting factors of fish populations such as stream structure, water quality, sediment loads, good vs. bad habitats)
- Written description of proposed media (photo mural, diorama, aquarium, computer simulation, video, etc.) and how it relates to diversity of age levels and correlations to CA Content Standards.
- Renderings and schematic drawings.

The Interpretive Plan will also include detailed floor plans, and samples of recommended materials.

Phase two of this project will be the design, construction and installation of the exhibits. Phase two is dependent on the availability of future funding efforts by this joint team. The team will be seeking funding from a variety of sources (Sonoma County Community Foundation, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, National Environmental Education Training Foundation, Packard Foundation), to fully implement this design and fabrication effort.

The visitor center exhibits will be divided into three sections. These sections do not need to have equal space, but do need to have equal weight in presenting the overall story of salmon and steelhead and the history of the Russian River Watershed.

The first section will depict the natural history of the salmon and steelhead in the Russian River ecosystem.

The second section will focus on the historical and modern human uses of the watershed and impacts to salmon and steelhead. Limiting factors would logically be included in this section.

The third section will focus on the hatchery operation and the role of Fish and Game, and the US Army Corps of Engineers in the management of salmon and steelhead populations. Extensive recovery/restoration efforts are currently underway and planned throughout the watershed, and this section would include exhibits that explain those efforts and the processes involved in implementing the work.

## **LOCATION**

The Russian River Watershed and its associated tributaries are located in a 1500 square mile area of Mendocino and Sonoma Counties. The majority of the watershed is within the boundaries of Sonoma County and the river is accessible from many points along its length. However, the need for access is not required for this proposal in this subject area. The project location is approximately 50 miles north of San Francisco, 5 miles outside Healdsburg, CA on Dry Creek Road.

## **USGS 7.5 QUAD MAPS**

An 8.5 x 11" copy of the of project site & surrounding area is enclosed with this document. USGS 7.5 minute quad maps include *Warm Springs Dam, Cazadero, Geyserville, Tombs Creek, Cloverdale, Guerneville and Asti.*

## **SCHEDULE OF WORK**

The start date will be begin when the contract is awarded but this date is assumed to be July 1, 2003. All tasks for this grant will be completed by June 30, 2004.

## **BUDGET**

The total budget for the project is \$115,000.00, see enclosed estimated budget sheet.

## **LIST OF PERMITS**

No permits are necessary for this proposal.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRE**

An Environmental Project Questionnaire is not necessary for this proposal.

## **LANDOWNER ACCESS AGREEMENTS**

No Landowner Access Agreements are required for this proposal.

## **EVALUATION PLAN**

Phase I - Formative evaluation techniques will be used via input from community stakeholder meetings and subject matter focus groups such as local educators.

Phase II - CA State Content Standards will be correlated within the exhibit design plan and be tested with students and teachers in the planning stage.

## ESTIMATED BUDGET

			Amount Requested	Amount of Cost Share	Project Total
<u>PERSONNEL COSTS</u>					
	<u>Number of Hours</u>	<u>Hourly Rate</u>			
<u>Level of Staff</u>					
Army Corps of Eng.	120	30.00	0.00	\$3,600.00	\$3,600.00
Meeting Coordinator (SRCD).	100	32.00	3,200.00	0.00	3,200.00
Aquatics Educator	42	24.03	0.00	1,009.26	1,009.26
CA Dept. Fish/Game	80	39.00	0.00	3,120.00	3,120.00
Architect/Engineer (ACOE)	40	<u>100.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>4,000.00</u>	<u>4,000.00</u>
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS			<u>\$3,200.00</u>	<u>\$11,729.26</u>	<u>\$14,929.26</u>
<u>OPERATING EXPENSES</u>					
Consultant/Contractor to develop Comprehensive Interpretive Plan			\$64,000.00	40,000.00	\$104,000.00
Mileage (SRCD)			160.00	0.00	160.00
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES			<u>\$64,160.00</u>	<u>40,000.00</u>	<u>\$104,160.00</u>
SUBTOTAL			<u>\$67,360.00</u>	<u>\$ 51,729.26</u>	<u>\$119,089.26</u>
ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD @ 10%			\$6,736.00	0.00	\$ 6,736.00
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TOTAL ESTIMATED BUDGET			\$74,096.00	\$51,729.26	\$125,825.26
PERCENT COST SHARE: 58.8%					
SOURCE OF FEDERAL COST SHARE: <u>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers</u>					
AMOUNT OF FEDERAL COST SHARE (IF ANY): <u>\$47,600.00</u>					