The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) requests $9,384,000 in reimbursement authority over three years for grants from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy. The Proposition 1 grants provide supplemental funding to the Department’s Nutria Eradication and Control Program to expand field operations and eradicate the highly invasive, semi-aquatic rodent from the State.
# BCP Fiscal Detail Sheet

**BCP Title:** Nutria Eradication and Control Program Reimbursement Grant Funding  
**BR Name:** 3600-302-BCP-2019-A1

## Budget Request Summary

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**Operating Expenses and Equipment**

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## Fund Summary

**Fund Source - State Operations**

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## Program Summary

**Program Funding**

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A. Budget Request Summary

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife requests $9,384,000 in reimbursement authority over three years for grants from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy. The Proposition 1 grants provide supplemental funding to the Department’s Nutria Eradication and Control Program to expand field operations and eradicate the highly invasive, semi-aquatic rodent from the State.

B. Background/History

Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) are large, semi-aquatic rodents native to South America and highly invasive in the United States. Following the 2017 discovery in California, invasive nutria have been confirmed within Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Fresno, Mariposa, and Tuolumne counties, threatening California’s wetlands, agriculture, water conveyance, flood protection, and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta (Delta) ecosystem. In March 2018, the Department instituted the Nutria Eradication Project Incident Command System, which redirected resources and over 40 staff to develop an eradication strategy, pursue partnerships, land access, funding, and to begin implementation of eradication efforts. To date, all project implementation efforts have been conducted by redirected staff and funded by redirected state funds and state and federal grants. Field efforts have primarily sought to locate nutria, classify habitat suitability, and control breeding populations while sufficient, dedicated resources are secured for the long-term project. To date, nutria have been detected in 123 locations in the six-county area, with over 410 nutria being removed from the population thus far.

Given the geographic scope, reproductive and dispersal potential of the nutria population, and inherent longevity of eradication efforts, the Department has determined a formal, dedicated program with long-term, stable funding is necessary to successfully eradicate nutria from the State. The FY 2019-20 Governor’s Budget includes $1.95 million in budget year and $1.62 million ongoing to create the Nutria Eradication and Control Program (Program). However, since the initial funding requests were submitted, the scope of the issue has grown substantially, including the resources needed to address it. In response to the need for expanded field operations and additional project components, the Department applied for grant funds from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy’s Proposition 1 grant program. The grants would augment the current funding proposed in the 2019-20 Governor’s Budget and facilitate the expansion of field operations necessary for successful eradication.

C. State Level Considerations

This Nutria Eradication and Control Program is vital to providing reliable, clean, and safe water and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Nutria colonies create extensive burrows, which increase soil erosion and sedimentation, reduce bank stability, and increase the risk of levee failure; these nutria colonies are vectors for disease and parasites transmissible through water supplies. Their herbivory is notorious for causing extensive loss of wetland habitat and soils that are critical for carbon sequestration. Further, this program is consistent with California’s State Wildlife Action Plan in which invasive species are the most commonly identified pressure across all terrestrial and aquatic conservation targets; direct management of invasive species is one of the strategies most commonly identified as needed to improve ecosystem conditions across California.

The persistence of invasive nutria in California will result in increasingly prevalent impacts to multiple resource sectors, including wildlife and habitat conservation, agriculture, water supplies and conveyance, flood protection, greenhouse gas reduction, and the agencies charged with their management. The Department of Water Resources, Department of Food and Agriculture, Department of Parks and Recreation, and numerous Conservancies will benefit from the enhanced Program provided by the grant and increased budget authority through protection of resources and damage prevention.
D. Justification

To implement the Program most effectively and achieve eradication most efficiently, the Department has identified the need to implement Phase 2 of the Nutria Eradication Project. The proposed Delta Conservancy grant would fund field staff responsible for surveys, trapping, managing land access, and external contracts. The impending grant would also provide the funding for nutria detection dog teams.

E. Outcomes and Accountability

The increased reimbursement authority will allow the Department to implement the full-scale Program through the anticipated funding in the Governor’s Budget and the reimbursable grant funding. Eradication of nutria will be achieved by implementing the five-phase eradication strategy: 1) Survey/delineate the population; 2) Knock-down systematic trapping of nutria; 3) Mop-up removal of remnant nutria; 4) Verification of site eradication; 5) Surveillance to ensure/declare successful eradication from the State. The grant funds will provide the dedicated field staff necessary for meeting the following objectives:

- Completing nutria surveys of all grid cells containing suitable, aquatic habitats of reasonable connectivity
- Releasing Judas nutria (sterilized, GPS-collared) and monitoring their movements for association with previously undetected nutria
- Continuing trapping within all cells with existing infestations and implement trapping in cells where new detections occur
- Deploying nutria scent-detection dog teams to conduct surveys in mop-up phase cells

Receipt of the grant funds and corresponding increase in reimbursement authority will facilitate the high-intensity response necessary to eradicate nutria from the State most efficiently, both in terms of time and overall costs. The more effective, efficient, and comprehensive the response is in the early stages of the infestation, the more rapidly progress can be made toward project milestones that will ultimately allow for tapering of the program size and annual costs.

F. Analysis of All Feasible Alternatives

Alternative 1: Approve the $9,384,000 increase in reimbursement authority

Advantage:
- The Department will be able to implement a full-scale eradication program and meet its full financial obligations for the Nutria Eradication and Control Program.

Disadvantage:
- None

Alternative 2: Approve an increase of a lesser amount

Advantage:
- The Department may be able to meet the majority of its financial obligations for the Nutria Eradication and Control Program personnel and operations.

Disadvantage:
- The Department will likely be unable to execute the proposed $3.2M contract for nutria-detection dog teams.

Alternative 3: Do not fund this proposal

Advantage:
- None
Analysis of Problem

Disadvantage:

- The Department is likely to experience fiscal constraints in meeting its quarterly financial obligations for grant-funded personnel, operating expenses, and contractual obligations. The Department will likely be unable to execute the proposed $3.2M contract for nutria-detection dog teams.

G. Implementation Plan

The eradication project is currently underway with redirected staff and resources and anticipates transitioning to a dedicated Department program on July 1, 2019, and/or upon approval of the Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget. The grant term is expected to begin January 1, 2020, and will expire December 31, 2022. We would begin immediate hiring of temporary staff to continue eradication efforts, contracting for experimental nutria dog detection teams and development of the Judas nutria project to aid in detection of remaining nutria populations.

Supplemental Information

None

H. Recommendation

Alternative 1: Approve the $9,384,000 increase in reimbursement authority over three years to accommodate the grant-funded positions, operational expenses, and contractual obligations of the Nutria Eradication and Control Program.