ACTION ITEM

Approval of a Contract Amendment with the University of California, Merced

Summary: Council staff requests an amendment to a contract with the University of California, Merced (UC Merced) to allow for a budget adjustment between the contract's fiscal years. The contract amendment would allow for a funding shift between budget years but would not add any funds. The original contract dollar amount of $863,160 will remain the same. This amendment allows for the project's adjustment to account for changes resulting from the COVID-19 emergency and will enable researchers to finish the project as initially funded by the Council. The study performed under this contract was selected for an award from the 2018-2019 multi-agency Delta science proposal solicitation.

REQUESTED ACTION

Council staff recommends that the Council approve a contract amendment with UC Merced, to allow for a budget adjustment between the contract's fiscal years, but would not add any funds.

The Executive Officer has delegated authority up to $500,000 to enter into contracts on the Council's behalf. This contract amount is in excess of the Executive Officer's delegated authority and requires Council approval. The Council approved the original contract on April 25, 2019. Consequently, this amendment also requires Council approval.

BACKGROUND

This contract, "Integrated science and management of nutrient, salt, and mercury export from San Joaquin River wetland tributaries to the Delta," is headed by Principal Investigator Dr. Peggy O'Day at UC Merced.

Mercury, salinity, and nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus are major contaminants of concern and are an understudied source of water quality impairment to the Delta. This study will (1) examine seasonal variation and transfer of salt, nutrients, and mercury out of managed wetlands; (2) establish and verify whether other routinely monitored water components can serve as reliable alternatives for detecting mercury and nutrients; (3) integrate monitoring data and proxy relationships to estimate levels of contaminants; and (4) develop science-based strategies for adaptive co-management of salt, nutrients, and mercury from seasonal wetlands to improve water quality in the Delta.

Outcomes from this study will provide improved best practices and guidelines for the management of salt, nutrients, and mercury in wetlands. Results will also address key knowledge gaps identified in the Delta Nutrient Research Plan and support the Delta Mercury Control Plan.

This research connects to three Science Action Agenda (SAA) areas: "Modernize Monitoring, Data Management, and Modeling" (SAA area 5); "Improve understanding of Interactions between Stressors and Managed Species and their Communities" (SAA area 4); and "Invest in Assessing the Human Dimension of Natural Resource Management Decisions" (SAA area 1).

JUSTIFICATION

The budget adjustments in this amendment are required due to some delayed fieldwork, but primarily due to the very limited laboratory access in the last year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, processing laboratories were closed for an extended period of time. When reopened, only one person at a time has access. This necessitated the switch in the budget payroll to have samples processed by people authorized to do so unsupervised (e.g., shift sample processing from lab technicians to the lab manager).

FISCAL INFORMATION

No additional funds are being requested. The total budget of $863,160 remains the same.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

None.

CONTACT

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