

Altamont Scientific Review Committee (SRC) Recommendations to the County on the Avian Monitoring Team Consultants' Budget and Organization

Developed by the SRC on December 6, 2006
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Preface

Recognizing that the Board of Supervisors has stipulated that the SRC will have to reduce the consulting team to one company if unable to reduce costs substantially, the Scientific Review Committee recommends these modifications to the budget and team configuration in an effort to reduce avian monitoring costs.

Future Function and Team Configuration

The SRC is recommending changes to the function and configuration (including some roles and responsibilities) of the consultant team in an effort to:

- improve functioning and efficiency and create a more effective management structure,
- support effective communication between the monitoring team and SRC and the monitoring team and County, and
- reduce redundancy of effort and overall project costs.

The SRC Recommends:

- Establish a Monitoring Team Management Board.
- The level of expertise represented in the monitoring team is valuable and contributes significantly to overall strategy and credibility of the study. All the senior consultants would participate in a review and strategy-setting function through the management board. The Project Director would schedule meetings for the management board to review reports and provide strategic insights. The director would always consult with the management board. If the director disagrees with the management board or the management board cannot reach consensus, the director would bring the issue back to the SRC for discussion.
- Brian Walton continues as principal investigator and contract administrator.
- Request that Wally Erickson serve as Project Director. His responsibilities would include the following:
 - Attend SRC meetings
 - Serve as the point of contact for the County for deliverables related to the monitoring program

- Coordinate the monitoring team and project deliverables
- Be responsible for timely completion of all deliverables
- The County would coordinate with Brian Walton for contractual matters and Wally Erickson for implementing the monitoring program and program deliverables.

Feedback on 6-Month Budget and Recommendations to be Reflected in all Future Budgets

Overall Concerns

- The 6-month budget does not reflect the 80/20 field work/administrative split described verbally in meetings.
- The consultants need to revisit the duplication in effort in all budgetary items and eliminate staff redundancy:
- Need to explore ways to reduce reimbursable expenses such as buying used field vehicles instead of leasing them and reducing per diem since field crews are provided housing.
- Provide detailed explanation of the turbine search rate of 2 or 2.5 turbines/hour, including hours estimated for travel to and from project site, and between sampling plots on project site, actual hours searching for fatalities, hours devoted to data processing, and hours spent on utilization monitoring.
- Reduce the number of people on GIS, as represented on the org chart.
- For future budget, recommend adding a contingency fee, to address uncertainties in cost raised in discussions between the SRC and monitoring team.

Task 1, Management/Admin

- \$50,000 for 6 months of management is excessive. Need to review the project management effort and reduce hours.
- Walton's hours seem excessively high. The total equates to 1/3 of full time.
- Project management roles for other senior staff are unclear and there appears to be redundancy between Walton and the other managers.
- Also address inter-firm redundancy, such as both West and Miller at J&S with Project Management role.
- Need to clarify role of Drager, and explain who this person is.

Task 2, Review/Revise Draft SOW

- Increase Erickson hours to reflect role as project lead and reduce other staff hours to reflect review capacity.

Task 3, Conduct Field Studies

- Recommend 1 field team leader with oversight by Erickson.
- Assume a 2.5 to 3 turbine per hour multiplier (instead of the current 2), reduce monitors from 6 to 5, and make field crew leader (Latta) a full time position.
- Explain different labor rates between Latta and field monitors.
- Recommend the minimum salary, contingent on qualifications, for field staff be \$24/hour.
- Recommend a 1.75 multiplier on field staff.

- Agree that hiring the field staff through the University would be a good cost cutting measure.

Task 5, Data Management

- Overall hours seem excessive – is it really a 1/3 full time position?
- Clarify difference between Linthicum role and hours and those of Research Associate under Task 6. These appear redundant.
- Recommend eliminating Task 5 and, if necessary, placing data management hours under Task 6; or clearly identify the data management role and explain level of effort.

Task 6, Data Analysis/Review/ Statistics

- Too many hours for data analysis – reflects possible redundancy.
 - Clarify role of research associate (See Task 5 above)
 - Clarify role of Kendall and Pollack
 - Clarify Thelander's and West/Mobrand role and consider eliminating those hours to reduce redundancy; possibly shift some of these hours to Erickson.
- In general, it is clear that the costs were developed to spread the effort between the firms. This results in duplication of effort and lack of efficiency between the different firms. Recommend clearly identifying the lead and reducing hours for reviewers.

Task 7, Report Preparation

- Do not need everyone to participate in the report writing. Already have review hours in Task 6, not required again in Task 7.

Task 8, Attend Meetings / SRC Interaction

- Reduce attendance at regular SRC meetings to one representative.
- Budget for whole team to attend one additional technical workshop in addition to the September and December 2006 workshops.

SRC Recommendations on Sample Design for American Kestrels and Burrowing Owls Budget

- This rate seems achievable given concentrated location of survey plots (selected based on bird occurrence data), short grass where these birds are found, and relatively flat terrain.
- Task 1 – Reduce hours
- Task 3 – Field Studies: Clarify why lodging and meals are in budget since monitors will be living in a rented house.
- Task 4—GIS/Mapping/Spatial Analysis: Make a small line item under Task 6
- Task 5—Data management: 8 hours per quarter maximum
- Task 6—Redundancy, please see other recommendations
- Task 7—One person should write this report.