



SOUTH YUBA RIVER CITIZENS LEAGUE

December 23, 2021

Jennifer Hanson, General Manager
Doug Roderick, Engineering Manager
Nevada Irrigation District
1036 West Main Street
Grass Valley, CA 95945

RE: Plan for Water Request for Proposals

Ms. Hanson and Mr. Roderick,

SYRCL thanks you for the opportunity to provide feedback on Nevada Irrigation District's Request for Proposals in the Plan for Water process. Organizational capacity has been limited through the holidays, thus we would be pleased to engage in further discussions on the RFP as well as provide additional information or answer any questions you might have.

A. Overarching Comments

Consultant Selection

In a recent Board meeting, several Directors of the Nevada Irrigation District agreed that new modeling efforts for the District, through the Plan for Water, should be completed by a new consultant. The impetus seemed to be to select a consultant that could approach the project with fresh eyes, without bias from past direction, and build a new relationship with the District and community. SYRCL and our coalition agree that a new consultant would produce greater success in the Plan for Water modeling efforts.

SYRCL recognizes that selection of a new consultant, especially for such a large project, can be sensitive and a heavy lift. SYRCL would like to support this effort by participating in selection. Our preference is to participate on a consultant review panel. However, we are open to participating in other capacities, as appropriate. We would appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on applicants, or to attend a meeting with other primary stakeholders where NID staff share details about finalists and solicit feedback. Ultimately our goal is to participate and provide constructive input to the process.

We recognize there are few consulting firms with the expertise and capacity to complete the full scope of the project under the current RFP, which will likely necessitate the use of subcontractors.

Regarding section VI. *Proposal Criteria, Evaluation, and Content Overview*, we suggest NID request resumes for major subcontractors under the consultant. NID may define criteria for “major,” to ensure consistency. Lastly, SYRCL supports the notion of NID listing criteria for applicants’ resumes – specifically, SYRCL would value included information about similar efforts and the firm’s relationships with involved nonprofit organizations, especially environmental organizations, or the academic community.

Lastly, time should be built into the RFP for data transfer at the onset of modeling efforts between the old consulting firm and the new firm.

Presentation of Technical Information

SYRCL supports a robust and accessible public process. To make technical information more accessible and engaging, we suggest NID direct consultants to produce summary materials and guides to accompany each technical presentation and document. Such documents will create a common language and understanding of the process and technical materials. Many tools exist to distill technical information, including, but not limited to flow charts, infographics, interactive maps, etc. Accompanying documents should be formatted to view online and maintained on the Plan for Water website. SYRCL suggests that the RFP include criteria and deliverables for lay communication.

We suggest the following language be added to Items 5, 6, and 7:

Provide summary materials, guides, and other reasonable communications that explain the analytical framework and process, and complex ideas, in coherent and digestible lay terminology.

Additionally, in Section VI.2, we suggest the following language:

Describe the Proposer’s experience in and techniques for stakeholder and public engagement, and in providing innovative communication techniques. Examples should demonstrate ability to translate complex analytical principles and processes, such as assumptions, sensitivities, hydrologic and demand dynamics, and geographic scope in reasonable lay terminology.

Role of Stakeholders and Public

SYRCL and our coalition have expressed concern that the Plan for Water process does not have clear details about how the public and stakeholders will be included. Although NID Board and staff have stated in public meetings that the new process will borrow much from the Raftelis plan, we recommend clearly defining and describing the public process, especially as it pertains to this RFP. For example, NID could more clearly define the role of the public and stakeholders in the process. Additionally, NID could clearly differentiate the roles of the general public and stakeholder groups – the latter of which will likely participate more consistently and provide more structured feedback throughout.

Throughout the RFP, several line items are included to *review public and stakeholder comments/receive feedback*, but it is unclear if the consultants will be required to seek out and incorporate that type of input beyond public comment at meetings. We suggest NID state explicitly what is expected of the consultant regarding stakeholder interactions. Additionally, we suggest adding the term “stakeholders” throughout the document where public participation is mentioned. We also suggest the term “engage” to convey the intent to actively solicit information from participants.

Demand Modeling

Demand modeling could be the most consequential on Plan for Water outcomes. Overestimating demand could indicate need for expensive new infrastructure, and underestimating demand could cause water shortages in the future. The accuracy of this modeling effort will rely on many variables – some of which might not be listed or predictable at the outset of the modeling exercise. SYRCL suggests NID incorporate time for iterative and interactive feedback with the public and key stakeholders to discuss and adjust the demand model.

B. Specific Comments

Some specific edit recommendations for each section are described below.

II. Problem Statement/Scope of Work

- Paragraph 1:
 - Suggest adding “, specific to our watershed, and that have the flexibility to be updated as new information becomes available.” After “the next 50 years” in the first sentence. This language affirms the intent of NID to use these efforts to continue evaluating strategies over the next 50 years, using the Plan for Water as a tool.
 - Suggest adding a sentence about *development of the demand model* after the third sentence. Currently the third sentence describes how the supply analysis will be developed, and the fourth sentence jumps into how the supply and demand analyses would be used. It seems appropriate to add a sentence about demand analyses here because there is a small logical jump.
- Paragraph 5: We are encouraged to see the language about vetting the models through the public process at the end of this paragraph.

III. Description of Project Components

- Item 2: We are encouraged to see the following language under bullet h: “Provide anticipated dates for deliverables and allotted District and Stakeholder review

time.” This language appears to be a good faith effort to give Stakeholders a reasonable amount of time to review deliverables and provide feedback.

- Item 3: Bullet d – Many of the comments received by the district might be better answered by in-house expertise. Consider changing the language here to “Consultant shall acknowledge and respond in writing to all public comments as necessary and appropriate.”
- Item 6: As stated above, demand modeling could be the most consequential on Plan for Water outcomes. The below suggestions are offered with that in mind.
 - Bullet b – SYRCL suggests that the following items, if included in demand modeling, will make it more accurate:
 - Remote sensing data for agricultural, land use, and water use trends.
 - Current academic literature and industry publications (PPIC, ACWA, etc.) on demand concepts and climate projection. We recommend a literature review on these and other relevant topics be included as a reasonable deliverable in this process, especially for engaging and educating the public.
 - Groundwater – Although NID is a surface water district, groundwater and surface water are scientifically linked. Additionally, Nevada County is one of the most well-dense counties in the state. Well use, failures and development impact the District’s supply and demand, and this variable should be accounted for in scenarios and projections.
 - Bullet b6 – We are happy to see “Crop Report Data” listed here and believe there may be opportunities in the future to provide information about and encourage water-conscious crops that provide ecosystem services.
 - Bullet c – Suggest adding “to determine a range of demand scenarios and the influence of water supply on future general plan development. Identify policy recommendations for consideration of water supply and demand management on future general plan development.” after “growth projections.”
- Item 7:
 - SYRCL requests the addition of accurate and updated climate change modeling as part of supply modeling.

- Bullet a – It is unclear here how the demand model, referenced in text, will be used relative to the supply projections.

Other Comments

1. The RFP references many Appendices – we would appreciate the opportunity to review them when they become available.
2. SYRCL suggests adding an Appendix to the RFP that clearly lists each deliverable expected from the consultants upon completion of the project. Additionally, SYRCL recommends the District provide a rough timeline that corresponds with the list of deliverables. This could set clear expectations on workload and timelines.

C. Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on Nevada Irrigation District's Request for Proposals in the Plan for Water process. We appreciate this act of good faith and look forward to future collaborations. Best of luck to NID staff and Board of Directors as this RFP is developed further. We truly wish you success in the Plan for Water process. If you have any questions, please direct them to Keiko Mertz, Policy Manager, keiko@yubariver.org, 530-265-5961 ext. 215.

Sincerely,



Melinda Booth, Executive Director



Keiko Mertz, Policy Manager