



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 11/7/2023

To: Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Staff Name and Phone Number: Sheri Emerson, Stewardship Manager | 707-565-7358
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

As-Needed Environmental Services Agreements

Recommended Action:

Authorize the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to execute seven services agreements for environmental services and planning work on District-protected lands totaling \$555,000 for three years ending on November 1, 2026, as follows:

- A) An agreement with Alta Archaeological Consulting LLC, in an amount not-to-exceed \$40,000.
- B) An agreement with Evans & De Shazo, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$40,000.
- C) An agreement with Pacific Watershed Associates, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.
- D) An agreement with Prunuske Chatham, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.
- E) An agreement with Questa Engineering Corporation, in an amount not-to-exceed \$75,000.
- F) An agreement with Sequoia Ecological Consulting, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.
- G) An agreement with WRA, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, at its option, shall have the right to extend the Term of the Agreement for two additional one-year periods by providing notice to the contractor.

Executive Summary:

Since 1990, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District has protected over 123,000 acres across the county. Currently, the District owns and manages over 1,300 acres and holds conservation easements across almost 122,000 acres. Each property was acquired for a specific conservation purpose and must be stewarded in perpetuity to permanently protect the identified conservation values.

Consultant services are required to complete activities for District-protected properties, ranging from resource assessments, environmental planning and permitting, analysis of agricultural and forestry production potential, environmental and cultural impact studies, short and long-term resource management planning and sustainable protection and enhancement of sensitive resources.

Seven service providers were selected pursuant to a request for proposals process to help satisfy this broad list of technical needs for in-depth study and analysis to safeguard the resources currently protected and to evaluate resources that should be protected into perpetuity (Attachment 1). □

Discussion:

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) staff is committed to monitoring conservation easements, managing fee title lands, and evaluating future conservation projects that continue to enhance the value of the 123,000 acres protected with public funds in the county.

Ag + Open Space currently divides its workload between three technical programs: Acquisition, Stewardship, and Community Resources. Each of these programs address specific technical needs with internal staff and resources. However, the depth and complexity of technical areas such as resource management and environmental impacts, conservation biology and protected species, erosion control and fire recovery, groundwater recharge and economic evaluation of resources, among others, require a robust and diverse set of skills and experience. Given the breadth and depth of expertise required for many of these projects, and the cyclical and unpredictable nature of the work, the most efficient use of taxpayer dollars is to enter into three year as-needed contracts with specialized outside resources that can focus on these issues and provide staff with a range of options and management recommendations. Ag + Open Space at its option, shall have the right to extend the Term of the Agreement for two additional one-year periods by providing notice to Contractor. This allows staff to easily make thoughtful, well-informed, science-based decisions to protect and enhance the conservation values of Sonoma County.

In addition, the cyclical and unpredictable nature of the work, as well as-needed specialized expertise, suggests a need for consultants rather than staff to accomplish these tasks. Ag + Open Space requires a wide variety of services offered by more than one entity. It is necessary to identify technical experts in areas of resource assessments, environmental impacts, working lands, cartography and other advanced fields. The proposed contracts will assist Ag + Open Space in filling information gaps and connecting conservation efforts through strategic planning and analysis of the best available information from sources familiar with Sonoma County as well as sources used throughout the Bay Area and the Central Valley.

Ag + Open Space proposes seven as-needed service agreements for a total amount not to exceed \$555,000:

1. An agreement with Alta Archaeological Consulting LLC, in an amount not-to-exceed \$40,000.
2. An agreement with Evans & De Shazo, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$40,000
3. An agreement with Pacific Watershed Associates, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.
4. An agreement with Prunuske Chatham, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.
5. An agreement with Questa Engineering Corporation, in an amount not-to-exceed \$75,000.
6. An agreement with Sequoia Ecological Consulting, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.
7. An agreement with WRA, Inc., in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000.

These contracts for various services are described in further detail within the body of each at attached contract (Attachments 3- 9). Each firm submitted a proposal that was selected based on its ability to fulfill District needs in one or more of the following three technical tasks:

1. Natural and Cultural Resources Assessment, Habitat Restoration, Management, and Protection Plans;
2. Environmental Impact Assessments and Permitting Services;
3. Forest Management Plan Assessment.

In some cases, the service provider is providing technical expertise across all three technical tasks, other service providers are more specialized, providing services in only one technical task. The contractors may be responsible for environmental evaluation services such as vegetation, and habitat, and fuel load assessment, cultural resources studies, and threatened and rare species surveys. Certain contractors may also provide environmental impact assessment services, such as California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) analysis and documentation, for projects such as capital improvement projects, management plan implementation, or habitat restoration work to be executed on District properties.

Environmental services may be required for work related to interim management of fee land properties or acquisition and stewardship of conservation easements. These contracted services will assist Ag + Open Space in implementing recent Board direction to transfer ownership of its fee land properties to partnering entities (Regional Parks, cities, and other partner entities) in the coming years. Similarly, when assessing future conservation projects, District staff sometimes need to fully understand the agricultural and forestry capacity and productivity analysis to determine a fair market value of a potential conservation easement. Also, with continued implementation of the Vital Lands Initiative, the selected service providers can continue to assist us in using the best available data and scientific insights to protect the next most important lands or natural resources.

Competitive Selection Process

The District conducted a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to identify and screen qualified contractors for the work described above. The work was divided into three basic tasks and four technical tasks, see Attachment 2. The RFP was sent to approximately 915 firms and advertised on the Ag + Open Space website and the County Purchasing website. A total of 14 entities submitted proposals for this RFP. Using a set of selection criteria, an internal and external evaluation committee reviewed all of the proposals, scored each according to the pre-established criteria, and then the top ranked candidates capable of satisfying the services needed were selected. The candidates submitted responsive proposals that clearly addressed the needs of the District and thoughtfully responded to the elements described in the RFP.

Once a project or technical need has been identified, staff will initiate a meeting to describe the agency's needs under the As-Needed agreement. Specific details of each work assignment will be determined during project initiation, including the specific project scope of work, schedule for completion of the project scope, cost estimate, and payment provisions. Staff will then prepare a Task Order (see sample in Exhibit B in each contract) to memorialize the agreement reached during project initiation or through the project cost estimate process. The Task Order must be signed by District staff and the Consultant prior to the onset of work. The District will not guarantee any minimum or maximum amount of work to be completed under the As-Needed agreements. One advantage of selecting multiple service providers is the ability to request cost estimates to a pre-approved group of consultants in order to keep approved task orders competitive across many markets.

Local Preference, Local Experience

All of the selected firms are located in Sonoma County, with significant experience working in our unique

ecological landscapes, and offer a diverse set of skills.

Strategic Plan:

This item directly supports the County's Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Climate Action and Resiliency

Goal: Goal 5: Maximize opportunities for mitigation of climate change and adaptation through land conservation work and land use policies

Objective: Objective 2: Develop policies to maximize carbon sequestration and minimize loss of natural carbon sinks including old growth forests, the Laguna de Santa Rosa, and rangelands. Encourage agricultural and open space land management to maximize sequestration.

The focus of these actions will be to increase overall landscape and species resiliency, reduce the risk of fire and floods, and address sea level rise and biodiversity loss.

Racial Equity:**Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?**

No

Prior Board Actions:

August 14, 2018: Board approved eleven service agreements for environmental services and planning work on District-protected lands totaling \$925,000 effective for three years.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected	FY25-26 Projected
Budgeted Expenses			
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$255,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Total Expenditures			
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$255,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$255,000	\$150,000	\$150,000

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This amount is appropriated in the FY 2023-2024 budget and will be incorporated in the projected year's budgets.

Staffing Impacts:

Position Title (Payroll Classification)	Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step)	Additions (Number)	Deletions (Number)

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

There are no staffing impacts because of this item.

Attachments:

1. List of Consultants and Award
2. Proposal Scope Form: Statement of Requirements - Services Required of Successful Proposer
3. Professional Service Agreement with Alta Archaeological Consulting LLC
4. Professional Service Agreement with Evans & De Shazo, Inc
5. Professional Service Agreement with Pacific Watershed Associates, Inc.
6. Professional Service Agreement with Prunuske Chatham, Inc.
7. Professional Service Agreement with Questa Engineering Corporation.
8. Professional Service Agreement with Sequoia Ecological Consulting, Inc.
9. Professional Service Agreement with WRA, Inc.

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A