



COUNTY OF SONOMA

575 ADMINISTRATION
DRIVE, ROOM 102A
SANTA ROSA, CA 95403

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 12/16/2025

To: Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma

Staff Name and Phone Number: Scott Orr and Mark Shurvinton, (707) 565-1900

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisorial District(s): First District

Title:

File No. AGP24-0013 The Sonoma Land Trust Land Conservation Contract, 25301 Ramal Road, Sonoma

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Resolution to approve and authorize the Chair to execute an agreement to mutually rescind and replace a Non-prime (Type II) Land Conservation Act Contract with an Open Space Land Conservation Act Contract and Land Conservation Plan for open space land on a 1,149.44-acre property located at 25301 Ramal Road, Sonoma; APN 128-491-060; Permit Sonoma File No. AGP24-0013. (First District)

Executive Summary:

Sonoma County's Land Conservation Act program has four contract-types: a) Prime contracts for crop agriculture with a 10-acre minimum parcel size requirement; b) Non-Prime contracts for grazing with a 40-acre minimum; c) Open Space contracts with a 40-acre minimum, and d) Hybrid contracts with a mix of agricultural and/or open space also with a 40-acre minimum.

This action is to replace a Non-prime (Type II) Land Conservation Contract with a new Open Space Contract to reflect the current open space uses of the property. Land Conservation Act contracts assist in the preservation of agricultural and open space lands throughout Sonoma County. In exchange for retaining land in agriculture and/or open space use, the landowner receives reduced property taxes. An expansion or modification to the existing Agricultural Preserve area is not required. Staff recommends the Board of Supervisors approve the rescind and replace contract request.

Discussion:

The Sonoma Land Trust seeks approval of a replacement Open Space Land Conservation Contract for the 1,149.44-acre parcel located within Agricultural Preserve Area Number 2-237, to reflect the current open space uses of the property. This action would replace the existing non-prime Land Conservation contract with an open space Land Conservation contract that corresponds with the current open space uses of the property.

Site Characteristics:

The project site is located along Ramal Road, approximately 1.5 miles west of the Sonoma/Napa border. The project site is developed with a small pole barn and pump house associated with the previous agricultural uses on-site, but is otherwise largely vacant and dedicated to open space consisting of seasonal wetlands, waterways, xeric grasslands, and coyote brush scrub. The Third Napa Slough and Steamboat Slough runs along

the northwest and southern portions of the property, and the Hudeman Slough runs along the southeastern portion of the property.

Zoning for the subject property is Land Extensive Agriculture (Allowed density: 100 acres per dwelling) and combining zones for Accessory Dwelling Unit Exclusion, Riparian Corridor with 50-foot and 25-foot setbacks, Biotic Habitat, Floodplain, and Valley Oak Habitat.

In December 2024, a wildlife habitat assessment was conducted on the approximately 1149.44-acre property by WRA, Inc. (refer to Attachment 4). The assessment evaluated the project site's qualification for an Open Space Land Conservation Act contract and concluded that the property presents the open space qualities and wildlife resources consistent with an Open Space contract. The Land Conservation Plan (refer to Exhibit B) requires the landowner to implement management practices that will enhance and maintain the wildlife habitat values identified in the assessment.

Uniform Rules:

As part of the Board of Supervisors' December 2011 update of the *Sonoma County Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones* ("Uniform Rules") the Board eliminated the distinction between Prime (Type I) and Non-Prime (Type II) Agricultural Preserves. This allows the County to enter into either a Prime or Non-Prime contract in any established Preserve. The subject land at issue here is within established Preserve Number 2-237.

Also, as part of the update of the Uniform Rules, the County implemented a Land Conservation Plan which is incorporated into Land Conservation (Williamson) Act Contracts. Land Conservation Plans show locations for open space, agricultural, permitted, and compatible land uses on contracted land. Future changes to the Land Conservation Plan may be approved by the Director of Permit Sonoma and recorded on title of the subject parcel.

New Land Conservation (Williamson) Act Contract:

To be eligible for a new Open Space Williamson Act contract, the subject parcel must be at least 40 acres in size and have 50% of the total parcel dedicated to a qualifying open space use. The subject parcel is a single legal parcel, is located within an established agricultural preserve, is 1,149.44 acres in size, and has 1,149.07 acres of land devoted to open space and wildlife habitat. The pole barn and pump house, which were accessory to the historic agricultural use on-site, are permitted as they meet the criteria for compatible uses, do not impair the open space use of the contracted land, and occupy less than 5 acres of the parcel. For these reasons, the parcel qualifies for a Land Conservation Act contract for open space land.

CEQA

The project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per Section 13517 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Board approve the request to rescind and replace the existing Non-prime contract with a new Open Space contract because all of the state and local requirements for the replacement request on the 1149.44 acre parcel within the existing Agricultural Preserve have been met.

Strategic Plan:

N/A

Racial Equity:

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

No

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Prior Board Actions:

- A. 12/13/2011: Board approves the Sonoma County Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones (Resolution No. 11-0678)
- B. 07/31/2012: Board amends the Sonoma County Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones (Resolution No. 12-0379)
- C. 05/07/2013: Board amends the Sonoma County Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones (Resolution No. 13-0186)
- D. 12/20/2016: Board amends the Sonoma County Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones (Resolution No. 16-0485)
- E. 10/31/2017: Board amends the Sonoma County Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones (Resolution No. 17-0426)
- F. 11/07/2017: Board amends the Sonoma County Uniform Rules for Agricultural Preserves and Farmland Security Zones (Resolution No. 17-0438)

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Approval of the Land Conservation Act Contract means that the owner will pay reduced property taxes based upon the value of the agricultural uses rather than the land value under Proposition 13. This reduces the County's share of property tax revenue for the subject parcel. Because the property is currently under a Land Conservation Act contract and is therefore already subject to reduced property tax assessment, the County of Sonoma Assessor estimates there will be no change in property assessment value, and therefore no fiscal impact associated with the application.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: AGP24-0013 Board of Supervisors Resolution

Attachment 2: AGP24-0013 Proposal Statement prepared by applicant

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Attachment 3: AGP24-0013 Site Plan

Attachment 4: AGP24-0013 Wildlife Habitat Assessment, dated 12/4/2024, WRA, Inc.

Attachment 5 AGP24-0013 Assessor's Parcel Map

Attachment 6: AGP24-0013 Land Conservation Act Contract with attached Exhibit A (legal description) and Exhibit B (Land Conservation Plan with attached Site Plan)

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

N/A