



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 12/10/2024

To: Board of Directors, Sonoma County Water Agency
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Water Agency
Staff Name and Phone Number: Chase Takajo 707 521-1872
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

As-Needed Grazing and Vegetation Management Services

Recommended Action:

Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with Chasin Goat Grazing, LLC, in substantially the form as the draft presented to this Board, for as-needed grazing and vegetation management services through June 30, 2027, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$489,000.

Executive Summary:

Sonoma County Water Agency (Sonoma Water) facilities have open space areas that require vegetation management on an as-needed basis. Use of grazing livestock for vegetation management is cost effective, quiet, and does not involve the use of toxic chemicals. In addition, livestock can often reach locations inaccessible to other methods of vegetation management.

Discussion:

HISTORY OF ITEM/BACKGROUND

Sonoma Water facilities have substantial open space areas that require vegetation management on an as-needed basis for natural resource management, reduction of fire fuels, and control of nuisance plants in specific locations (Project). By utilizing livestock grazing services, Sonoma Water is collaborating with local agriculture in an effort to better manage vegetation growing on its facilities. Use of livestock provides a more eco-friendly method for vegetation management than mechanical and manual vegetation control. Also, grazing does not involve the use of toxic chemicals, increases vegetation biodiversity, and encourages the growth of native species.

Livestock also provides a cost-effective way to manage different types of vegetation that may be growing on difficult terrain and are inaccessible to other methods of vegetation management.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager has determined that the Project is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 (Existing facilities) and 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land). The Project includes minor alterations to vegetation through livestock grazing and mowing activities for the purpose of vegetation management necessary to maintain existing public facilities and mitigate wildfire risk. Sonoma Water's facilities are already subject to similar vegetation management practices. The Project does not involve the removal of healthy mature, scenic trees and there would be no expansion of existing facilities use. No work would take place within sensitive habitat,

including wetlands or within 100 feet of a creek, and no ground disturbance, such as excavation, would take place.

SELECTION PROCESS

On August 29, 2023, the County of Sonoma’s Purchasing Department completed a competitive selection process to create a list of qualified targeted grazing service providers. In the interest of efficient use of County resources, Sonoma Water selected Chasin Goat Grazing (Service Provider) from the following list provided by Purchasing:

1. Chasin Goat Grazing
2. Kaos Sheep Outfit
3. Perennial Grazing, LLC
4. Coastal Land and Livestock

Sonoma Water may seek to amend or enter into subsequent agreement(s) with Board approval if required, relying upon this competitive selection process, after the preliminary or initial work is completed.

SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED

Under the proposed agreement, Service Provider will provide as-needed grazing vegetation management services.

The cost of services will not exceed \$489,000; the term end date is June 30, 2027.

Under the agreement, the General Manager shall have the ability to extend the term of the agreement for two additional years by providing written notice to the other party thirty days in advance of the expiration date. The extension shall be formalized in an amended agreement or amendment signed by the parties.

County of Sonoma Strategic Plan Alignment:

This item directly supports Sonoma 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: Expand outreach and education on vegetation management and provide additional resources to landowners to help mitigate fire risk.

By utilizing goat grazing services, Sonoma Water is working with local agriculture to better manage vegetation growing on its facilities and thus mitigate fire risk by reducing fire fuels. Use of grazing livestock for vegetation management is a climate-friendly option because, unlike mechanical and manual vegetation control methods, it does not use toxic chemicals or emissions-producing machinery.

Sonoma Water Strategic Plan Alignment

Goal: Environmental Stewardship.

Strategy: Protect, enhance, and monitor natural resources, watershed conditions, and ecosystem health that

are vital to the Russian River, Petaluma River, and Sonoma Creek watersheds.
Action: Identify options to meet vegetation mitigation and restoration needs.

Sonoma Water is employing a more eco-friendly method for vegetation management than mechanical and manual vegetation control. Livestock grazing increases vegetation biodiversity, encourages the growth of native species, and does not involve the use of toxic chemicals or emissions-producing machinery.

Racial Equity:

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

No

Prior Board Actions:

- 02/08/2022: Approved agreement between Sonoma Water and Chasin Goat Grazing, LLC for goat grazing vegetation management services. Cost \$405,023; term end December 31, 2024.
- 04/19/2019: Approved agreement between Sonoma Water and Chasin Goat Grazing for goat grazing vegetation management services. Cost \$300,000; term end December 31, 2021.
- 08/17/2021: Approved a concurrent resolution authorizing Sonoma Water’s General Manager to take all necessary steps to obtain grant funding from the State of California’s State Coastal Conservancy Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Program, including entering into required funding agreements and related instruments in form approved by County Counsel. Also authorized the General Manager to negotiate and execute sub-agreements to implement the grant.

FISCAL SUMMARY

| Expenditures | FY24-25 Adopted | FY25-26 Projected | FY26-27 Projected |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses | \$163,000 | \$163,000 | \$163,000 |
| Additional Appropriation Requested | | | |
| Total Expenditures | \$163,000 | \$163,000 | \$163,000 |
| Funding Sources | | | |
| General Fund/WA GF | | | |
| State/Federal | | | |
| Fees/Other | \$163,000 | \$163,000 | \$163,000 |
| Use of Fund Balance | | | |
| General Fund Contingencies | | | |
| Total Sources | \$163,000 | \$163,000 | \$163,000 |

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Budgeted amount of \$163,000 is available from FY 2024-2025 appropriations for the Water Transmission Fund and Flood Control Zone Funds, for the Occidental Sanitation District (District) Operations Fund, and for the Sustainability Fund. The actual expenditures will vary per fund based on the need for vegetation management. The revenue source for the Water Transmission Fund is water rates, for the Flood Control Zones the revenue source is rate payer taxes, and for District the revenue source is rate-payer annual sewer service

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charges. Future fiscal year appropriations will be budgeted in those fiscal years.

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Agreement with Chasin Goat Grazing, LLC.

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

None.