



COUNTY OF SONOMA

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

SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 4/30/2024

To: Board of Directors, 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 565-7358

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): All

Title:

Procedures to Implement the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

Recommended Action:

Adopt a Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space), adopting the State of California's California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines by reference, as they may be amended, and delegating authority for compliance procedures under CEQA to the Ag + Open Space General Manager.

Executive Summary:

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their discretionary actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) staff prepares, as a lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act, environmental analyses and documents pursuant to the requirements of CEQA. Ag + Open Space staff recommend formal adoption of the State's CEQA Guidelines, as well as clarifying Ag + Open Space General Manager's authority related to CEQA compliance.

Discussion:

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is a statute that requires state and local agencies to identify the significant environmental impacts of their actions and to avoid or mitigate those impacts, if feasible. Ag + Open Space staff prepares as a lead agency under CEQA, environmental analyses and documents pursuant to the requirements of the CEQA (California Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3).

CEQA requires local agencies to have their own CEQA procedures, but it simultaneously allows local agencies to incorporate the State's CEQA guidelines by reference. While the adoption of CEQA procedures by a public agency can be beneficial, particularly where an agency has multiple decision making authorities over a project,

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the State CEQA Guidelines already provide detailed procedural guidance addressing issues such as notices and comment periods. In Ag + Open Space's case, the provisions recommended in addition to this incorporation by reference are minimal and focus on outlining the General Manager's delegated authority.

The proposed CEQA procedures incorporate by reference the State's CEQA Guidelines (Cal. Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3), and would delegate authority to Ag + Open Space's General Manager initial procedural determinations about how to comply with CEQA. The proposed CEQA procedures authorize the General Manager to hold hearings, public workshops, or other meetings that may be either necessary under CEQA or, if not required, helpful to convey information to the public. This approach allows for diverse types of public outreach and engagement prior to Board consideration of whether to approve a project. The proposed CEQA Procedures would also authorize the General Manager to issue standard notices that may be required under CEQA. Technical questions frequently arise about what kind of study is required for Ag + Open Space projects, and the proposed CEQA Procedures would authorize the General Manager to rely on Ag + Open Space staff's scientific and technical expertise in order to determine how best to comply with CEQA. The General Manager would be authorized to adopt additional CEQA procedures if appropriate.

The proposed CEQA procedures would also authorize the General Manager to comment on other agencies' CEQA documents, as contemplated by CEQA, where Ag + Open Space is a responsible or trustee agency under CEQA, or where the General Manager determines that the interests of the agency are impacted.

These procedures would not change what projects come to the Board for approval.

Prior Board Actions:

N/A

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

No fiscal impacts are anticipated.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

No staffing impacts are anticipated.

Attachments:

1. Resolution

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