



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 5/24/2022

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: Monica Delmartini, 565-7260
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): First District

Title:

Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve Services Agreement for Vegetative Fuels Management

Recommended Action:

Authorize the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to execute a one-year agreement ending on June 1, 2023 with WRA Landscape Restoration, Inc. for wildland ladder fuel reduction services in an amount not to exceed \$297,023.

Executive Summary:

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) owns the 960-acre Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve near northeast Santa Rosa (the "Preserve"). Prior to the 2020 Glass Fire, the Preserve's forest habitats had become encroached by Douglas-fir and understory fuel buildup. The Glass Fire left most of this understory material dead, dry, and available to burn at a higher intensity in a future fire. Ag + Open Space has worked with a team of expert consultants to develop a thinning plan for these at-risk stands and a shaded fuel break plan to strengthen defensibility along two Preserve roads.

A grant from the State Coastal Conservancy in 2021 funded approximately 65 acres of understory thinning and shaded fuel break implementation on the Preserve, which will be completed in May 2022. Grant funds remain to complete another 66 acres of priority understory fuels treatment on the Preserve. Ag + Open Space has undertaken a competitive selection process and recommends award of a services agreement to the highest-ranking proposer, WRA Landscape Restoration, Inc., to perform the proposed fuel reduction services. This work will be entirely funded by the grant.

Discussion:

Ag + Open Space is committed to implementing fuel reduction measures on Ag + Open Space-owned properties in an efficient and timely manner. In 2019, Ag + Open Space completed the Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve Management Plan and associated Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration, which identified fuel reduction as a key priority for the stewardship of the preserve. In 2020, Ag + Open Space worked with Registered Professional Foresters, Cal Fire, a prescribed fire specialist, and a Wappo Tribal representative to develop prescriptions for shaded fuel breaks and targeted understory thinning as well as a prescribed fire plan for a portion of the preserve's forests.

Shaded fuel break and initial forest thinning work was intended to begin in 2020 but was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic and the September 2020 Glass Fire, which burned the majority of the preserve at varying levels

of severity. The patchy nature of these fire effects left extensive standing dead material in the forest understory, which could contribute to more severe fire behavior and fire effects in both future prescribed burn and wildfire scenarios.

In 2021, Ag + Open Space was awarded a \$661,250 grant from the State Coastal Conservancy to implement approximately 60 acres of understory thinning plus the shaded fuel breaks along Plum Ranch Road and the Erland-Cleland Tie Road. This work, which was performed by Hanford Applied Restoration Concepts, used approximately half of the grant funds, leaving enough remaining grant funds to treat an additional 66 acres of understory fuels.

Under a services agreement with WRA Landscape Restoration, Inc. (WRA), Ag + Open Space will implement this additional work, which will further strengthen the defensibility of the Preserve's internal roads and fuel breaks and improve forest health and resilience in support of Cal Fire's regional goals as well as Ag + Open Space's and the Wappo Tribe's forest health and prescribed and cultural burning objectives.

Ag + Open Space proposes a one-year services agreement through June 1, 2023 (on file with the Clerk of the Board) with WRA for forest thinning services in an amount not to exceed \$297,023, with an option to extend the agreement for up to two additional years at the discretion of the General Manager.

WRA was selected based on their ability to provide forest thinning and shaded fuel break creation services. □ WRA performed invasive plant mapping and control at various grassland sites within Marin Municipal Water District-owned lands from 2019-2020. WRA performed defensible space and fuel load reduction services for a 61-home residential community in 2021. The community is adjacent to Wildcat Canyon Regional Park, which is managed by the East Bay Regional Park District. The location is composed of wildland open space areas which contain habitats consisting of native flora and fauna. In both of these cases, WRA demonstrated ability to recognize plant species, operate in sensitive habitats, and manage fuel loads.

Competitive Selection Process

Ag + Open Space conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify and screen qualified contractors for the fuel reduction services. The RFP was sent to approximately 10 firms and advertised on the Ag + Open Space website and the County Purchasing website. A total of 7 entities submitted proposals for this RFP. Using a set of selection criteria, an evaluation committee comprised of internal staff and Ag + Open Space's consulting Registered Professional Forester independently reviewed the proposals, scored each according to the pre-established criteria, and selected the contractor most capable of providing the identified services. WRA submitted a responsive proposal that clearly addressed the needs of Ag + Open Space and thoughtfully responded to the elements described in the RFP. Their detailed proposal dealt at length with resource considerations and measures that would be undertaken to prevent impacts to sensitive areas and habitats. WRA has experience implementing similar projects in our region, such as the two projects stated above. Additionally, all members of WRA's crew are trained on plant identification and their proposal spoke specifically to the crew's ability to recognize and avoid Napa false indigo, a rare plant species that is found on the Preserve and within the project area. □

Local Preference, Local Experience

The selected firm is located in Sonoma County, and has significant experience working in the Sonoma County community.

Prior Board Actions:

September 28, 2021: Summary #1 Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve Services Agreement for Vegetative Fuels Management

August 17, 2021: Reso 21-0317 Authorize District General Manager to execute grant from State Coastal Conservancy Forest Health and Wildfire Resilience Program

September 24, 2019: Reso 19-0406 Adoption of Saddle Mountain Management Plan, Initial Study, and Mitigated Negative Declaration

January 10, 2006: Reso 06-0041 Approve fee title acquisition of 960-acre Saddle Mountain property for a total price of \$9,213,000.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 21-22 Adopted	FY 22-23 Projected	FY 23-24 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$100,000	\$197,023	\$0
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$100,000	\$197,023	\$0
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal	\$100,000	\$197,023	\$0
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$100,000	\$197,023	\$0

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

A grant from the State Coastal Conservancy, approved by the Board on August 17, 2021, will fund this project.

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Attachments:

Agenda Date: 5/24/2022

Related Items “On File” with the Clerk of the Board:

1. Professional Service Agreement with WRA Landscape Restoration, Inc.
2. Project Area Map