



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2019-1049, **Version:** 1

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**To:** Board of Supervisors

**Department or Agency Name(s):** Permit Sonoma

**Staff Name and Phone Number:** Tennis Wick, Director / Milan Nevajda, Deputy Director

**Vote Requirement:** Majority

**Supervisory District(s):** County Wide

**Title:**

Habitat Conservation Plan Time-Limited Staff Allocation

**Recommended Action:**

Authorize a Time-Limited Senior Environmental Specialist position through June 30, 2023 to serve as project manager for preparation of a Habitat Conservation Plan using \$300,000 allocated in the FY 2019-2020 budget as initial funding.

**Executive Summary:**

Authorize a Time-Limited Senior Environmental Specialist position to Permit Sonoma to scope and manage the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for which the Board of Supervisors has appropriated \$300,000 in the County's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-2020 budget.

**Discussion:**

Local land use regulation can better protect endangered species and their habitats if there is coordination among local, state, and federal governments, and if there is coordination with stakeholders such as development interests, non-profit organizations, environmental groups, and farmers. Over the long run, piecemeal mitigation is neither efficient nor effective. There is significant room for improvement in mitigation planning in Sonoma County.

In addition, revisiting conservation goals also has the potential to help address our housing crisis. Despite sub-regional implementation of city centered growth policies through general plans, urban growth boundaries, and community separators, housing projects in many areas designated for housing face potentially insurmountable mitigation obstacles. Mitigation fees can dramatically increase construction costs for highly desirable projects.

Creation and implementation of a comprehensive HCP can reconcile environmental protection and sustainable development goals. Between 1995 and 2006, County staff participated in a strategic planning process with multiple stakeholders to address habitat conservation for the California Tiger Salamander and endangered flora on the Santa Rosa Plain. The result was a "conservation strategy" that fell short of a HCP. The result was an expensive and cumbersome process. An HCP would help the County address environmental conservation holistically while enabling desirable and sustainable development.

**Analysis:**

In light of continuing pressures on habitat and housing, the Board has decided to fund a review of the potential development of a HCP. In particular, the Board is interested in establishing a working group consisting of representatives and stakeholders from County, City, and resource agency representatives to complete a rough estimated mitigation need, draft scope, and budget for revised conservation, mitigation, and permitting strategies. To implement this initial review, a position within Permit Sonoma is needed to assess current conditions and establish a scope of services for different approaches to a HCP, including which species will be addressed, geographic areas to be covered, stakeholders to be involved, structures for intergovernmental cooperation, and other policy considerations. The assessment would involve evaluating the science and whether prior planning approaches are viable. The assessment would also likely involve hiring a consultant to support the effort and bring experience from other regions where HCP's have been successful.

Creating this position in Permit Sonoma makes sense because it involves land use authority, and because the effort aligns closely with the agency's mission of balancing environmental protection with sustainable development. Permit Sonoma also has established relationships with other local, state and federal agencies addressing issues such as environmental quality, housing, transportation, flood control, and climate action.

An HCP effort spans environmental science, public policy, and planning disciplines. Permit Sonoma's Planning Division contains three relevant sections - Natural Resources, Comprehensive Planning, and Project Review - and the Planning Division has the expertise to lead this effort. It would be most appropriate to recruit a HCP project manager as Senior Environmental Specialist so the County can capture a broad set of candidates with the requisite experience.

The initial General Fund contribution of \$300,000 supports the first year of the position at approximately \$170,000, leaving \$130,000 for consultant studies. It is envisioned that the initial HCP review phase would culminate in a report that would come back to the Board within 12 months with information about different options for developing an HCP and identifying funding options and grant opportunities. Assuming the Board decides to pursue one of the HCP options, additional funding would need to be identified to continue to support the on-going staffing resources.

**Prior Board Actions:**

June 14, 2019 the Board authorized funding to study options for an HCP

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

| <b>Expenditures</b>                | <b>FY 19-20<br/>Adopted</b> | <b>FY20-21<br/>Projected</b> | <b>FY 21-22<br/>Projected</b> |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses                  | \$168,772                   | \$171,116                    | \$176,249                     |
| Additional Appropriation Requested |                             |                              |                               |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>          | <b>\$168,772</b>            | <b>\$171,116</b>             | <b>\$176,249</b>              |

| Funding Sources      |                  |                  |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| General Fund/WA GF   | \$168,772        | \$171,116        | \$176,249        |
| State/Federal        |                  |                  |                  |
| Fees/Other           |                  |                  |                  |
| Use of Fund Balance  |                  |                  |                  |
| Contingencies        |                  |                  |                  |
| <b>Total Sources</b> | <b>\$168,772</b> | <b>\$171,116</b> | <b>\$176,249</b> |

**Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:**

This position will be funded through the General Fund as part of the \$300,000 appropriated to the Habitat Conservation Plan by the Board of Supervisors for FY 19-20.

| Staffing Impacts:                            |                                 |                    |                    |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Position Title (Payroll Classification)      | Monthly Salary Range (A-I Step) | Additions (Number) | Deletions (Number) |
| Time-Limited Senior Environmental Specialist | \$6,456 - \$7, 849              | 1.0                |                    |
|  |                                 |                    |                    |
|  |                                 |                    |                    |

**Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):**

Addition of 1.0 Time-Limited *SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST* TO Natural Resources to oversee and manage the HCP (Habitat Conservation Plan)

**Attachments:**

Habitat Conservation Plan Staff Allocation Resolution

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

n/a