



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-1385, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

Department or Agency Name(s): Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

Staff Name and Phone Number: Louisa Morris, (707) 565-1537

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Fifth District

Title:

Estero Americano Coast Preserve, Initial Public Access Operations & Maintenance Funding Agreement

Recommended Action:

Authorize the General Manager of the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to enter into a funding agreement to provide \$299,500 to The Wildlands Conservancy for initial public access and operation and maintenance of the District-protected Estero Americano Coast Preserve property. (Fifth District)

Executive Summary:

The Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) acquired a conservation easement and recreation covenant over the 547-acre Estero Americano Coast Preserve property on December 24, 2015. This acquisition was simultaneous with The Wildlands Conservancy's fee acquisition of the property. Ag + Open Space's funding of \$1.95 million was used as a contribution towards the \$3.8 million purchase price of the property, which was also funded by the State Coastal Conservancy and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. The Wildlands Conservancy owns and operates the Estero Americano Coast Preserve, which is not far from its nearby Jenner Headlands Preserve.

The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) is requesting \$299,500 for specific initial public access and operation and maintenance (IPAOM) activities, as detailed below and in the attached budget. The funds would be expended within three years of execution of the funding agreement. Consistent with Ag + Open Space's Expenditure Plan and its Initial Public Access and Operation and Maintenance Policy, Ag + Open Space may provide funding, on a reimbursement basis, to assist in providing initial public access and with operations and maintenance on recreational properties purchased with the open space sales tax revenue.

Discussion:

The Estero Americano Coast Preserve (Preserve) is located at the west end of Estero Lane and just north of the mouth of the Estero Americano. West of this Preserve is the Bodega Harbour Homeowners Association (HOA). TWC intends that the Preserve access will consist of low-intensity public outdoor recreational uses, consistent with the conservation easement and recreation covenant currently held by Ag + Open Space.

The Preserve is intended to be a recreational destination point from several potential public access points,

offering the public the ability to access and experience multiple habitat types along the Pacific Ocean coastline south to the mouth of the Estero Americano. Pursuant to the recreation covenant, the Preserve will be open to the general public daily. Until such time that the property becomes open to the general public, TWC will provide pedestrian access to the Preserve via regularly scheduled organized guided hikes. This funding will facilitate both the guided hikes and eventual general public access.

TWC experienced extraordinary circumstances, which made it difficult to open the Estero Americano Coast Preserve to the public within three years of acquisition. TWC is now ready to move ahead with planning, permitting, and construction for public access at the Preserve.

Initial Public Access and Operations and Maintenance Fund Status

Per the Expenditure Plan, Ag + Open Space may expend up to 10% of its Measure F sales tax revenue on IPAO&M. It is anticipated that Ag + Open Space will receive sufficient sales tax revenue in this fiscal year towards eligible IPAO&M costs for FY 20-21.

Ag + Open Space has seven existing IPAO&M agreements with recreational partners. Ag + Open Space is in the process of developing IPAO&M contract work plans with Regional Parks for the Carrington and Torr properties. Ag + Open Space anticipates additional requests for IPAO&M funds for at least two additional properties this fiscal year --Wright Hill Ranch and Calabazas Creek. There are sufficient funds available in the IPAO&M fund for the \$299,500 Estero Americano request as well as other anticipated future FY20-21 requests.

Funding Agreement

Ag + Open Space and TWC are proposing to enter into an Initial Public Access Funding Agreement in which Ag + Open Space will provide \$299,500 for specific initial public access studies of the TWC-owned Estero Americano Coast Preserve property. Studies funded by the funding agreement include botanical, wetlands, wildlife, traffic, geo-technical, archaeological/cultural reports that will guide and inform initial trail development on the Preserve. The agreement will also fund community engagement, public outings, and to-be-identified recreational improvements, such as public access gates, fencing, and related amenities, road and trail upgrades, and certain operations and maintenance efforts, including guided outings, visitor safety, and patrolling. Reimbursement will only occur after TWC submits, and Ag + Open Space approves, a Work Plan that more specifically describes the work and costs associated with these activities.

California Environmental Quality Act

Funding committed by the agreement is for trail design, resource surveys, coastal permit application preparation, fees, tracking, public hearings, community engagement and initial public outings. Funding may also be available under the agreement for implementation of public access amenities (including gates, fencing, signs, kiosks, portable restroom rental, and picnic tables), road and trail repairs, upgrades, and erosion control, once the location and extent of such improvements have been determined and the potential environmental impacts have been analyzed. Once feasibility and resources studies have been completed, all aspects of the ultimate trail design and related public access improvements will be reviewed pursuant to CEQA by Permit Sonoma's Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD), acting as the lead agency. All funding for

such alterations and improvements is conditioned on a determination by the Ag + Open Space General Manager that there has been full compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

Prior Board Actions:

On November 17, 2015 by Reso. No. 15-0465, the Board approved the acquisition of a conservation easement and recreation covenant over the Estero Americano Coast Preserve property.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY 21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	59,500	120,000	120,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	59,500	120,000	120,000
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	59,500	120,000	120,000
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	59,500	120,000	120,000

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This amount is appropriated in the FY20-21 budget, and will be incorporated in the projected years' budgets.

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

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

1. Budget Summary

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

1. Funding Agreement

