



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-0071, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Directors, Sonoma County Water Agency
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Water Agency
Staff Name and Phone Number: Brad Sherwood Phone 547-1927
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisory District(s): All

Title:

State and Federal Affairs Advocacy Representation

Recommended Action:

Approve Sonoma County Water Agency's Legislative Platform 2021/2022:

A) State Advocacy

- i. Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with Conservation Strategy Group, LLC, for state legislative affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$114,000.
- ii. Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with Pacific Policy Group, LLC, for state legislative affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$186,000.

B) Federal Advocacy

- i. Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with 9b Group, Inc., for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$104,000.
- ii. Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with Alcalde & Fay for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$216,800.
- iii. Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with Natural Resource Results, LLC, for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$210,000.
- iv. Authorize Sonoma County Water Agency's General Manager to execute an agreement with Van Ness Feldman, LLP, for federal affairs advocacy representation through December 31, 2022, in the not-to-exceed amount of \$203,328.

Executive Summary:

This item requests approval of Sonoma County Water Agency's (Sonoma Water) 2020/2021 Legislative Platform, as well as authorization to enter into agreements with state and federal affairs advocates to implement the platform. Legislative advocacy on the federal level leverages funding opportunities for Sonoma Water projects, such as climate resiliency, the Russian River Biological Opinion, reservoir re-operations, and extreme weather forecasting. State-level legislative advocacy leverages funding opportunities to research, develop, and implement a coalition to support statewide funding resources for Sonoma Water's service area and the North Coast, and will provide outreach services for projects, programs, regulations, and legislation in

Sonoma Water's areas of interest. State and federal legislative tracking, legislative development, and pursuit of funding to offset costs are essential for success in fulfilling Sonoma Water's responsibilities and strategic plan.

Discussion:

HISTORY OF ITEM/BACKGROUND

Since 1999, Sonoma Water's Board of Directors has provided direction regarding future state and federal funding authorizations, funding requests, and legislative and regulatory issues of importance to Sonoma Water. Sonoma Water's state and federal legislative programs have been submitted for inclusion in the County of Sonoma's overall legislative program. The two-year agreements align with the Congressional calendar year. The current list of state and federal advocacy priorities for Sonoma Water include support and often funding for:

1. Climate resiliency and planning;
2. Source water protection and wildfire risk reduction;
3. Hazard mitigation programming and funding;
4. Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information system;
5. Weather-related initiatives: Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations at Lake Mendocino, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Hydrometeorology Testbed Project Implementation, atmospheric rivers research, flood modeling and drought;
6. The Russian River Biological Opinion;
7. The Corps of Engineers' operations and maintenance activities at Warm Springs and Coyote Valley dams and related fish facilities;
8. Central Sonoma Watershed Project comprehensive planning and rehabilitation;
9. The Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund;
10. Quagga/zebra mussel prevention;
11. San Francisco Bay Restoration;
12. Technical collaboration with United States Geological Survey and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration;
13. Agricultural Water Enhancement program; and
14. Wastewater treatment and collection funding opportunities

Full 2020/2021 Sonoma County Water Agency Legislative Platform is provided as Attachment 1.

Major Legislative Accomplishments

1. Russian River Biological Opinion:
 - a. Authorization language in 2014 Water Resources Development Act
 - b. \$28M in appropriations for Dry Creek restoration (2020)
 - c. U.S. Army Corps ongoing cooperation and collaboration with implementation
2. Invasive Species:
 - a. Development of North Coast consortium for prevention of quagga/zebra mussels
 - b. \$20M state grant funding program development (2014)
 - c. \$30M annual federal authorization for Russian River basin in 2020 Water Resources Development Act (2020)
3. Salmon restoration:
 - a. \$65M annual appropriation for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Restoration Fund (2000)
4. Integrated Regional Water Management:
 - a. \$20M allocation from the California Department of Water Resources for the Advanced Quantitative Precipitation

Information program (2015)

SELECTION PROCESS

State Advocacy

In November 2018, Sonoma Water issued a Request for Statements of Qualifications to the following three firms:

1. Pacific Policy Group, LLC, Sacramento, CA
2. Conservation Strategy Group, LLC, Sacramento, CA
3. Onate Group, Sacramento, CA

The Request for Statements of Qualifications was also posted on the Sonoma Water and County of Sonoma Purchasing Department websites. The following six firms submitted Statements of Qualifications:

1. A. Bright Idea Advertising and Public Relations, Glen Ellen, CA
2. Conservation and Natural Resources Group, LLC, Healdsburg, CA
3. Conservation Strategy Group, LLC, Sacramento, CA
4. Environmental & energy Consulting, Sacramento, CA
5. Pacific Policy Group, LLC, Sacramento, CA
6. Quintana, Watts, & Hartmann, LLC, Sacramento, CA

The following criteria were used to evaluate each firm:

1. Thoroughness of Statements of Qualifications
2. Professional qualifications and demonstrated ability to perform the work
3. Exceptions to standard terms in the sample agreement

Based on the evaluations, the following respondents were selected for the list of qualified consultants:

1. Conservation Strategy Group, LLC
2. Pacific Policy Group, LLC

Both Conservation Strategy Group, and Pacific Policy Group, were selected because of the quality of their submittals in the areas of expertise. In addition, both firms have unique knowledge of Sonoma Water's issues and of state legislative concerns.

Federal Advocacy

In October 2018, Sonoma Water issued a Request for Statements of Qualifications to the following four firms:

1. 9b Group, Inc., Washington, DC
2. Alcalde & Faye, Arlington, Virginia
3. Natural Resource Results, LLP, Washington, DC
4. Van Ness Feldman, LLP, Washington, DC

The Request for Statements of Qualifications was also posted on the Sonoma Water and County of Sonoma Purchasing Department

websites. The following seven firms submitted Statements of Qualifications:

1. 9b Group, Inc., Washington, DC
2. Alcalde & Faye, Arlington, VA
3. Duncan, Weinberg, Genzer & Pembroke, P.C., Washington, DC
4. Natural Resource Results, LLP, Washington, DC
5. Smith Dawson & Andrews, Washington, DC
6. Van Ness Feldman, LLP Washington, DC
7. Van Scoyoc Associates, Washington, DC

The following criteria were used to evaluate each firm:

1. Thoroughness of Statements of Qualifications
2. Professional qualifications and demonstrated ability to perform the work
3. Exceptions to standard terms in the sample agreement

Based on the evaluations, the following respondents were selected for the list of qualified consultants:

1. 9b Group, Inc.
2. Alcalde & Faye
3. Natural Resource Results, LLP
4. Van Ness Feldman, LLP

9b Group, Alcalde & Fay, Natural Resource Results, and Van Ness Feldman were selected because of the quality of their submittals in the areas of expertise, Congressional and Administration contacts, and success in obtaining passage of funding legislation.

Sonoma Water may seek to amend or enter into subsequent state or federal advocacy agreement(s) with Board approval if required, relying upon this competitive selection process.

SERVICES TO BE PERFORMED

Under the proposed state and federal advocacy agreements, Conservation Strategy Group, Pacific Policy Group, 9b Group, Alcalde & Fay, Natural Resource Results, and Van Ness Feldman (Consultants) will provide advocacy and consulting services with each consultant focusing on specific areas on behalf of Sonoma Water to obtain state or federal funding to facilitate the enactment of favorable legislation and regulations.

The agreements include two options for Sonoma Water to extend this agreement for a period of one year each by providing written notice to Consultant thirty days in advance of the expiration date of the agreement and of the first extension option.

Conservation Strategy Group, LLC:

This firm will provide strategic Water Bond Coalition development, research, and implementation; support North Coast resilience bond planning efforts and the development of a diverse coalition of entities supporting water bond funding; develop stakeholder and coalition meetings to support North Coast Resource Partnership and Water Bond Coalition messaging; and coordinate with Sonoma Water's legislative representatives in water bond funding development and implementation.

Pacific Policy Group:

This firm will serve as Sonoma Water's legislative advocate on record in Sacramento, implement Sonoma Water's state legislative strategic plan, coordinate state legislative outreach meetings, provide legislative updates, and support atmospheric river research funding and North Coast resiliency bond efforts.

9b Group, Inc:

This firm will focus on funding strategies related to Sonoma Water's role as local sponsor with federal partner USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and funding opportunities related to watershed health, flood management, flooding and fire disasters, emergency watershed protection, natural resources and integrated regional water management, and conservation activities.

Alcalde & Fay:

This firm will focus on working with the Corps of Engineers' and Congressional and subcommittee offices on implementation of the Russian River Biological Opinion and assisting Sonoma Water in obtaining federal funding and legislation to support flood control, sanitation, water supply reliability and emergency response, water quality protection, water recycling, and related projects.

National Resource Results, LLP:

This firm will focus on government consultation and advocacy services for Sonoma Water's climate resilience and weather-related initiatives, including legislative efforts responding to drought and floods, implementation of Advanced Quantitative Precipitation Information in coordination with the Bay Planning Coalition, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Hydrometeorology Testbed Project, atmospheric river research, and reservoir re-operation initiatives. This firm will also work to secure as-needed funding for Dry Creek habitat restoration and enhancement projects, planning and related outreach activities, and coordination with state advocacy initiatives.

Van Ness Feldman, LLP:

This firm will focus on working with state, local agencies, and other interested parties to maintain and increase federal funding for habitat and fisheries restoration, planning, research, monitoring, and related programs such as the Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund, and prevention of invasive species. This firm will also review environmental regulations, legal analysis, sustainability, and alternative energy sources.

Prior Board Actions:

02/26/2019: Approved agreements between Sonoma Water and Conservation Strategy Group, LLC, and Pacific Policy Group for state legislative advocacy. Cost \$114,000, and \$186,000 respectively; term end December 31, 2020.

02/26/2019: Approved agreements between Sonoma Water and Alcalde & Fay, Natural Resource Results, LLC, and Van Ness Feldman for federal legislative advocacy. Cost \$216,800, \$210,000, and \$203,328 respectively; term end December 31, 2020.

12/13/2016: Approved third amended agreement between Sonoma Water and Conservation Strategy Group for state legislative advocacy services. Added \$226,800, and adding 24 months to term end.

12/13/2016: Approved first amended agreements between Sonoma Water and Alcalde & Fay, Van Ness Feldman, and Natural Resource Results for legislative and advocacy services. Added \$212,160, \$185,760, and \$201,600 respectively; and adding 24 months to term end.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 20-21 Adopted	FY21-22 Projected	FY 22-23 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$499,064	\$535,064	
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	\$499,064	\$535,064	
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	\$499,064	\$535,064	
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$499,064	\$535,064	

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

Budget amounts of \$109,139, \$247,119, \$108,806, and \$34,000, are available from FY 2020/2021

appropriations for the Water Transmission, Warm Springs Dam, Recycled Water, and Flood Control Zone 1A Funds, respectively. No additional appropriation is required. FY 2021/2022 appropriations will be budgeted in that fiscal year.

STATE	Water Transmission	Warm Springs Dam	Recycled Water	Flood Zone 1A	FY 20-21 Total
Conservation Strategy Group, LLC	13,680	29,640	13,680	0	57,000
Pacific Policy Group, LLC	22,320	48,360	22,320	0	93,000
FEDERAL				0	
9b Group, Inc.	0	0	0	34,000	34,000
Alcalde & Fay	37,940	59,620	10,840	0	108,400
Natural Resource Results, LLC	19,950	54,600	30,450	0	105,000
Van Ness Feldman, LLP	15,249	54,899	31,516	0	101,664
TOTAL	\$109,139	\$247,119	\$108,806	\$34,000	\$499,064

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

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Sonoma County Water Agency's Legislative Platform 2021/2022

Attachment 2: Agreement with Conservation Strategy Group, LLC

Attachment 3: Agreement with Pacific Policy Group, LLC

Attachment 4: Agreement with 9b Group, Inc.

Attachment 5: Agreement with Alcalde & Fay

Attachment 6: Agreement with Natural Resource Results, LLC

Attachment 7: Agreement with Van Ness Feldman, LLP

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

None