



Legislation Text

File #: 2021-1312, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma
Staff Name and Phone Number: John Mack, (707) 565-1233
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Acceptance of Award from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and allocate of \$348,591.25 from the General Fund Resiliency Set Aside

Recommended Action:

- A) Adopt a resolution authorizing Permit Sonoma to accept a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), administered by the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES). The FEMA grant is titled the Sonoma County Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project and the total project cost is, \$5,999,733. The project funding is broken into two phases, planning/outreach/environmental review and implementation. The project is designed to reduce wildfire risk by removing hazardous fuels on private parcels and road systems in pre-selected geographies with high fire risks. Permit Sonoma has received a notice to proceed with Phase 1 (total project \$1,394, 364) and FEMA has obligated \$1,045,773.75 for this work (75% federal share). Phase 1 will consist of initial public outreach and coordination, site inspections and eligibility verification, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance and permitting, and program design development. Phase 2, the implementation component of the grant, will commence when Phase 1 is complete, then FEMA will provide CalOES and the County with approval to begin Phase 2, or the on-the-ground work component of the project.
- B) Adopt a resolution that will allocate \$348,591.25 from the Sonoma County General Fund Resiliency Set Aside which will be the local cost share for this project. The total project cost is \$1,394,365, with a federal share of \$1,045.773.75.

Executive Summary:

In February 2018, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors directed Permit Sonoma to seek grant funding through FEMA to improve wildfire, seismic, flood, and other hazards and increase resiliency in the County. Permit Sonoma, in collaboration with the County Administrator's Office, applied for a number of grants as part of a hazard mitigation program. On May 18, 2021 FEMA notified Permit Sonoma that the County was selected to receive funding for Phase 1 of the grant award titled the Sonoma County Hazardous Fuels Reduction (Attachment 1). The total project cost for Phase 1 is \$1,394,365. Total project cost for Phase 2 is \$4,605,636 (which will be allocated later by FEMA upon successful completion of Phase 1).

This grant would allow the use of federal funds to provide property owners in specific areas in the County with a vegetation management inspection. Those who receive that inspection service would then be placed on a higher priority to receive federal funds to perform vegetation management on their private parcels. The

Department will return to the Board with the proposed public outreach efforts, including to underrepresented communities, to ensure all members of the public in the project areas have an opportunity to apply. A map of the project areas is attached to this Board item. The Department will also return to the Board with recommended selection criteria and procurement procedures to receive your Board's input to select to which property owners would ultimately be chosen to receive this benefit.

The performance period for Phase 1 is 18-months and will commence upon execution of the agreement. Permit Sonoma is seeking Board approval to accept the FEMA grant.

Permit Sonoma will bring a separate board item for several time limited positions that will be required to manage and administer this and other awarded FEMA grants.

Discussion:

Source of Funding.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides funding to state and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a Major Disaster declaration. As a result of the declaration of major federal disaster DR-4344 due to the fall 2017 wildfires in Northern and Southern California, the State of California and Sonoma County became eligible for HMGP funding. Authorized under Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act and administered by FEMA, HMGP was created to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters. The HMGP program is administered by the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES). The goal of the HMGP is to develop mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. Proposals submitted under the HMGP must involve projects that reduce or eliminate losses from future disasters and provide a long-term solution.

Permit Sonoma requests adoption of the attached resolution authorizing the County Administrator's Office to execute a grant award agreement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program administered by the County of Sonoma.

Background.

The Sonoma County Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project aims to reduce wildfire risk by removing hazardous fuels on road systems and private parcels in the county. The project will use four key selection criteria to identify areas for fuels reduction activities: 1) burn history of fires exceeding 5,000 acres in size; 2) excessive ladder fuel loads; 3) high population density; and 4) road network capacity limitations. The project focuses on three primary hazardous fuels reductions techniques to reduce the wildfire risk in Sonoma County: targeted grazing, removal of hazard trees near structures or roadways, and other mechanical vegetation management techniques at the community or large area scale that reduce the threat to life and structures from wildfire and do not pose a risk of fire ignition (Note: FEMA does not fund the use of prescribed fire at this time). All hazardous fuels activities will take place within two miles from structures and will not go beyond the two-mile limit. The project will utilize FEMA funding to remove hazardous fuels on up to 2,845 acres.

The expected outcome of the proposed fuel treatments is a reduced risk of catastrophic wildfires. The goal of fuel treatment projects is to modify fire behavior to reduce environmental damage and aid in suppressing wildfires. The benefits of fuel treatment include prevention of loss of life, reduction of fire suppression costs, reduction of private property losses, and protection of natural resources from devastating wildfire.

Project. On February 2, 2018, the Board directed Permit Sonoma to submit funding applications for projects that are included in the County's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, adopted by Resolution No. 17-0168 of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors on April 25, 2017, and subsequently approved by the FEMA on May 4, 2017. Permit Sonoma applied for several grants in support of a hazard mitigation program. On May 18, 2021 FEMA notified Permit Sonoma that FEMA awarded the following grant to the County:

HMGP DR-4407-335-077R, Sonoma County Hazardous Fuels Reduction, Phase 1. The goal of the phased Sonoma County Fuels Reduction Project (Project) is to protect the lives and property of Sonoma County residents while improving forest health and wildfire resilience in the county's forested areas. Based on the devastating impacts of the 2017 Sonoma Complex Fires, it is clear that the buildup of flammable vegetative material ("fuel loading") in the county's wildlands combined with severe weather events can result in fires that move rapidly from wildlands and Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas into urban centers.

The Project will collaborate with existing and continuing efforts on publicly owned and management lands in Sonoma County to lower the risk of future catastrophic wildfire by managing vegetation to modify or reduce hazardous fuels. Benefits from fuel treatments include: prevention of loss of life, reduction of fire suppression cost, reduction of the loss or critical infrastructure, reduction of private property losses, and protection of natural resources from devastating wildfire.

The Sonoma County Fuels Reduction Project aims to reduce the county's wildfire risk by removing hazardous fuels on private parcels and road systems in the county. The project will use four key selection criteria to identify areas for this initial phase of fuels reduction activities: 1) burn history of fires exceeding 5,000 acres in size, 2) excessive ladder fuel loads, 3) high population density, and 4) road network capacity limitations. Project activity areas (see attached map) will be the target for public outreach, education, and participation in the program.

Strategic Plan:

This item directly supports the County's Five-year Strategic Plan and is aligned with the following pillar, goal, and objective.

Pillar: Resilient Infrastructure

Goal: Goal 1: Continue to invest in wildfire preparedness and resiliency strategies

Objective: Objective 3: Leverage grant funding to support sustainable vegetation management program.

Prior Board Actions:

February 2, 2018 authorization by the Board of Supervisors to apply for Hazard Mitigation Grant Funds.

January 29, 2019: Adopted Resolution 19-0028, authorizing the Director of Emergency Management or County Administrator to be the authorized agent signature authority for the County for federal financial assistance provided by and/or sub-granted through the State of California and/or the federal Department of Homeland Security.

September 24, 2019: Adopted Resolution 19-0395 authorizing the County Administrator's Office to execute two grant agreements with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program,

administered by the California Office of Emergency Services.

April 21, 2020: Adopted Resolution 20-0133 authorizing the County Administrator and/or the Assistant County Administrator, the Director and/or the Deputy Director of the Department of Emergency Management, the Director and/or the Deputy Director of the Information Systems Department, the Director and/or the Deputy Director of Permit Sonoma, and the Director and/or the Deputy Director of Transportation and Public Works to be the authorized agent signatory for the County financial assistance provide by and/or sub-granted through the State of California and/or the Department of Homeland Security.

FISCAL SUMMARY

| Expenditures | FY 21-22 Adopted | FY22-23 Projected | FY 23-24 Projected |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Budgeted Expenses | | | |
| Additional Appropriation Requested | \$464,788 | \$929,577 | |
| Total Expenditures | \$464,788 | \$929,577 | |
| Funding Sources | | | |
| General Fund/WA GF | \$116,197 | \$232,394 | |
| State/Federal | \$348,591 | \$697,183 | |
| Fees/Other | | | |
| Use of Fund Balance | | | |
| Contingencies | | | |
| Total Sources | \$464,788 | \$929,577 | |

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The County match for HMGP projects is 25% of total project costs. A summary of costs for the awarded project is shown below. The source of funding for the County's \$348,591.25 match is the General Fund Reserve Recovery and Resiliency set aside fund, which your Board approved as part of the FY 2021-22 budget adoption process. General Fund Reserve Recovery and Resiliency set aside funds will be transferred, and offsetting revenue and expenditure appropriations for these grant projects will be appropriated as part of the FY 2021-22 second quarter consolidated budget adjustment process.

If granted, these funds would provide Permit Sonoma with up to as outlined in the grant application (on file with the Clerk of the Board), a portion of which may be used to fund consultant services for analysis. The grants have a 25% cost share requirement. Cost share is provided from the Recovery and Resiliency Set Aside Fund approved by your Board.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

The project will not reduce or affect current staff positions. The project will fund new time-limited positions. A subsequent Board item is being prepared to adjust Permit Sonoma's grant funded time limited position allocations.

Attachments:

Att 1 Draft Board of Supervisors Resolution

Att 2 Project Area Map

Att 3 Grant Application to the California Office of Emergency Services for the Sonoma County Fuels Management Project

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

N/A