



Legislation Text

File #: 2022-0301, **Version:** 1

To: Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Department or Agency Name(s): Permit Sonoma

Staff Name and Phone Number: John J. Mack, (707) 565-1233

Vote Requirement: Majority

Supervisory District(s): Countywide

Title:

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the grant titled-
"Wildfire Adapted Part 2"

Recommended Action:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the Permit Sonoma Director to accept the "Wildfire Adapted Part 2 Phase 1" sub-grant award from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP); which includes acting as the County's agent to conduct all negotiations and to execute and submit all documents, including but not limited to applications, agreements, and payment requests that may be necessary to complete the grant; and

Executive Summary:

Staff recommends accepting the \$ \$276,817.35 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Post-fire Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) sub- award FM-5293-057-02R, Wildfire Adapted Part 2, Phase 1. The available grant will allow us to expand vegetation treatment areas with the goal mitigating wildfire risks to homes, lives and property in Sonoma County.

Discussion:

Background

In February 2018 after the Tubbs-Nuns Fire, 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 several HMGP grants in August 2018 including the grant titled "Wildfire Adapted Sonoma County" (Wildfire Adapted Part 1), which proposed a program of defensible space and structure hardening assessments followed by an owner cost-share incentive program in 10 project areas located throughout the County. Subsequently, in November 2020, Permit Sonoma applied for another HMGP grant (Wildfire Adapted Part 2) to expand the scope of the first grant.

On November 8, 2021, Permit Sonoma was notified by Cal OES that FEMA had selected Sonoma County's Wildfire Adapted Part 2 proposal for funding for Phase 1 of the grant (Attachment 1). Wildfire Adapted Part 2 expands on the already in progress Wildfire Adapted Part 1 grant, by adding new treatment areas and will utilize materials, systems and procedures developed in Wildfire Adapted Part 1

The goal of Wildfire Adapted grants (Part 1 and Part 2) is to mitigate wildfire risks to homes, lives and property

in Sonoma County. Permit Sonoma Fire Prevention Division will implement a “house-outward” mitigation approach that addresses the vegetation within 100 feet of structures through Defensible Space assessments, and provide structure hardening assessments that will inform property owners of high benefit defensible space and/or structural retrofit activities that could reduce the ignitability of structures. Wildfire Adapted Part 2 (5293-0057) expands on Wildfire Adapted Part 1 (4344-0701), by adding new treatment areas (Attachment 2) and will utilize materials, systems and procedures developed in Wildfire Adapted Part 1, increasing the investment-to-acres-treated ratio. FEMA has required that the Wildfire Adapted projects (both Part 1 and Part 2) be divided into two phases, a planning/assessment phase and an implementation phase, with the release of funds by FEMA for the second phase contingent on successful completion of the first phase.

The project cost for Wildfire Adapted Part 2 Phase 1 is \$369,089.80, with a federal share of \$276,817.35 and a local cost share of \$92,272.50, and unless an extension is duly granted, must be completed on or before July 26, 2023. The project cost for the subsequent implementation phase (Phase 2) of Wildfire Adapted Part 2 is expected to be approximately \$2,500,000 with the final amount determined in a revised Benefit-Cost Analysis submitted at the end of Phase 1.

FEMA has stated that its election to fund Phase 1 is in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as an action that is categorically excluded (CE) from the need to prepare either an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. It is expected that Categorical Exemptions under the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines are applicable to the defensible space and structure hardening work proposed in this grant (15301 Maintenance of Existing Facilities and 15304 Minor Alterations to Land).

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. The goal of the HMGP is to develop mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster. The project cost for Wildfire Adapted Part 2 Phase 1 is \$369,089.80, with a federal share of \$276,817.35 and a local cost share of \$92,272.50, and unless an extension is duly granted, must be completed on or before July 26, 2023. The project cost for the subsequent implementation phase (Phase 2) of Wildfire Adapted Part 2 is expected to be approximately \$2.1 million with the final amount determined in a revised Benefit-Cost Analysis submitted at the end of Phase 1.

FEMA has stated that its election to fund Phase 1 is in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as an action that is categorically excluded (CE) from the need to prepare either an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. It is expected that Categorical Exemptions under the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines are applicable to the defensible space and structure hardening work proposed in this grant (15301 Maintenance of Existing Facilities and 15304 Minor Alterations to Land).

Public Outreach

Permit Sonoma will conduct public outreach meetings, including in low income and underserved communities. Permit Sonoma will conduct meetings in English and Spanish and produce written materials in English and Spanish to ensure information about these grant opportunities are shared with low income and minority populations in the project areas. The Public Outreach component of the grant requires a minimum of meetings and that other outreach, like mailings, web pages, etc. should occur but the grant does not specify how much and of what kind this needs to be done.

To ensure all members of our community in the project areas have access to these grant opportunities to improve the fire safety of their residences, Permit Sonoma will send bilingual direct mailings to all residences, including property owners, mobile home owners and tenants, in the project areas. The mailing will explain the following:

- A. Every residence in the project area will at least get a defensible space assessment, with no requirement

or need to request one.

- B. In addition, any resident in the project area t can sign-up for a voluntary structural hardening assessment.
- C. The residents who sign up for the home hardening assessment will be placed on an eligibility list for grant funds from the cost-share program to improve fire safety of their residences (tenants would need to obtain permission from the property owner).
- D. Contact information to register for an assessment and to sign up for bilingual email notices and updates about this grant opportunity.

The grant also requires at least one public meeting in each project area (minimum 4 total). In already awarded Wildfire Adapt Part 1 grant, Permit Sonoma has been able to supplement this minimum by numerous other more presentations to various organizations and community groups in the project areas, and this would be continued in WA Part 2. Permit Sonoma will also conduct meetings in Spanish, and Permit Sonoma will host community meetings throughout the project areas, including in low income and underserved communities in those areas. Finally, Permit Sonoma has already established a strong web presence on the SoCo Adapts landing page (<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/PRMD/Fire-Prevention/SoCoAdapts>) and the Community Wildfire Prevention Plan hub (<https://sonoma-county-cwpp-hub-site-sonomacounty.hub.arcgis.com>).

Phase 2 Cost-Share Program

Once FEMA releases the Phase 2 funds, basically all of the above will repeat, with another direct mail reach out (but at that pointed limited to residences who have received a home hardening assessment), additional in-person meetings, e-mail and web-based communications. Once the eligibility list has been created through Phase 1, Permit Sonoma will provide notice to everyone on the eligibility list that they can apply for a cost share program and grant assistance for fire safety improvements. The grants will be issued to qualified eligible applicants on a first come, first serve basis. Phase 2 funds will be allocated proportionally based on the number of parcels in each project area. Before Phase 2 begins, Permit Sonoma staff will develop the application procedures for a cost share program and grant fund distribution for fire safety improvements for eligible residents in the project areas. Early in Phase 2, an application window will be opened and all eligible residents will be notified of the date by which they can submit an application. Permit Sonoma expects to provide a considerable amount of technical assistance to prospective applicants to ensure approvable applications are prepared and submitted as early as possible.

Prior Board Actions:

February 2, 2018 authorization by the Board of Supervisors for multiple departments, including Permit Sonoma, 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: Acceptance of Award from the Federal Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for Advance Assistance: Wildfire Adapted Sonoma County Part 1 Phase 1.

December 14, 2021: Acceptance of Award from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 2021-1312 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the Sonoma County Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	FY 21-22 Adopted	FY22-23 Projected	FY 23-24 Projected
Budgeted Expenses	\$34,390	\$327,624	\$7,076
Total Expenditures	\$34,570	\$327,644	\$7,076
Funding Sources			
General Fund			
Federal	\$25,793	\$245,718	\$5,307
Fees/Other			
Use of Fund Balance	\$8,597	\$81,926	\$1,769
Contingencies			
Total Sources	\$34,570	\$327,644	\$7,076

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

The County match for HMGP projects is 25% of total project costs, plus an additional 9% for the "gap hours" described in Sources of Funding, above. A summary of costs for Phase 1 of the awarded project is shown above. The Source of Funding for the County's \$92,272.50 local match is the Recovery and Resiliency Set Aside Fund, approved as part of the FY 2021-22 budget adoption process. The accrued Set Aside funds will be transferred to Permit Sonoma as part of the FY 2021-22 close of books, as needed.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

N/A

Attachments:

- Attachment 1. Approval Letter from Cal OES and FEMA
- Attachment 2. Map of Project Areas
- Attachment 3. Board of Supervisors Resolution

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

Grant Application to the California Office of Emergency Services for the "Wildfire Adapted Part 2" Project.