Legislation Text

File #: 2026-0716, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Department or Agency Name(s): Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
Staff Name and Phone Number: Misti Arias, General Manager, 707-565-7264;
Jennifer Kuszmar, Acquisition Manager, 707-565-7266
Vote Requirement: Majority
Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:
Third Amendment to Agreement O-1465 Singing Stream Conservation Consultants - Acquisition Strategy, Policy, and Transactions

Recommended Action:
Authorize the General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District or Designee to execute a third amendment to an agreement with Singing Stream Conservation Consultants, adding $150,000 to the total contract amount for a new total not to exceed total of $600,000 and extending the maximum term to June 30, 2029 including the option to extend the initial three year term for two additional one year periods (five years total).

Executive Summary:
In July 2023, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) entered into a professional services agreement in the amount of $150,000 over three years for land acquisition strategy, policy and transaction services related to acquisition of District conservation easements, transfer of fee lands to recreational partners, and completion of Community Spaces Matching Grant Projects. Contract tasks include negotiating with landowners; drafting acquisition, transfer, and grant agreements; conducting due diligence; coordinating appraisal work; and preparing grant applications for acquisition funding. Additional tasks include supporting Ag + Open Space staff in developing strategies associated with proactive solicitation of conservation projects. This agreement was amended in July 2024 and August 2025 to add additional funding for high-priority conservation easement work and to extend the contract through 2028. The Scope of Work and contract term were not modified. However, the additional funds allowed Singing Stream Conservation Consultants to take on additional high priority projects. In June 2025, Ag + Open Space extended the contract term to June 30, 2028. To address the need to provide progress and continuity on several acquisition projects, Ag + Open Space proposes to amend this agreement for a fourth and final time to add $150,000 for a total contract amount not to exceed $600,000 and extend the maximum term to June 30, 2029, including two additional one-year extension options.

Discussion:
Ag + Open Space is committed to protecting the highest priority working and natural lands through the acquisition and long-term stewardship of existing and future conservation easements and/or fee title properties.

The need for consultant assistance with land acquisition projects is due to the variable nature of the

Acquisition Program workload. Further, as Ag + Open Space has accelerated acquisition of the highest priority projects it is often difficult to predict or control the workload of the Acquisition Program as critical opportunities often present themselves at unexpected times. Multiple projects may require simultaneous time -sensitive work. Therefore, a professional services agreement provides support when Acquisition Program staff do not have the capacity to react to these opportunities in a timely manner due to existing project workload. At present, Singing Stream is working on six conservation easement acquisitions, including negotiating with landowners, providing support to Acquisition Specialists, and aiding in developing grant applications to leverage Ag + Open Space sales tax revenue. The consultant's efforts have resulted in the recommended award of of 7 million dollars of grant funding. Ag + Open Space is at a critical juncture with several projects, and continuity of work is key to having a successful conservation outcome. Further, there are conservation opportunities on the horizon where action may be needed.

Staff at Singing Stream Conservation Consultants bring vast expertise in conservation easement transactions and land conservation strategy and policy. The principal is the former Vice President of Land Protection for the Trust for Public Land (TPL), a national nonprofit organization. During her tenure at TPL, the organization completed 1700 land and water protection projects in 44 states. These projects protected 1.5 million acres valued at over $4 billion and included partnerships with foundations, local, state, and federal agencies. For these reasons, Ag + Open Space selected Singing Stream in 2023 as a single source consultant for services as needed. Ag + Open Space requires this amendment with Singing Stream Conservation Consultants because the firm provides specialized expertise in conservation acquisitions, land use policy, and transaction strategy, and is uniquely qualified due to its ongoing work on six active conservation easement projects. Due diligence included evaluating the consultant's qualifications, successful performance under the existing agreement, and ability to continue providing uninterrupted services. Singing Stream is the only consultant that can meet the County's immediate needs without jeopardizing time-sensitive acquisitions, as the firm has established relationships with landowners and project partners, extensive knowledge of active projects, and familiarity with Ag + Open Space's mission and acquisition program. Ag + Open Space determined that transitioning these projects to another consultant would create unnecessary delays, increase costs, and risk successful conservation outcomes. The proposed amendment also represents the best value by maintaining continuity of services, avoiding onboarding costs, and leveraging the consultant's proven performance and specialized expertise. Finally, Ag + Open Space has completed and received an approved single source waiver from the Purchasing Department as required by the County's procurement policy.

Strategic Plan:
N/A

Racial Equity:

N/A

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

August 26, 2025: Approval of second amendment to Agreement with Singing Stream Conservation Consulting for Acquisition Strategy, Policy, and Transactions.

July 16, 2024: Approval of first amendment to Agreement with Singing Stream Conservation Consulting for Acquisition Strategy, Policy, and Transactions.
July 18, 2023: Approval of Agreement with Singing Stream Conservation Consulting for Acquisition Strategy, Policy, and Transactions.

FISCAL SUMMARY

Expenditures	**FY 26-27 Adopted**	**FY 27-28 Projected**	**FY 28-29 Projected**
Budgeted Expenses	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000
Additional Appropriation Requested			
Total Expenditures	**$50,000**	**$50,000**	**$50,000**
Funding Sources			
General Fund/WA GF			
State/Federal			
Fees/Other	$50,000	$50,000	$50,000
Use of Fund Balance			
Contingencies			
Total Sources	**$50,000**	**$50,000**	**$50,000**

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:
Adequate appropriations exist in the FY 26-27 recommended budget and will be included in the FY 27-28 and FY 28-29 budgets.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):
N/A

Attachments:
1. Third Amendment to Agreement with Singing Stream Conservation Consultants

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:
1. O-1465 As-Needed Acquisition Strategy, Policy, and Transactions Services
2. First Amendment to O-1465 As-Needed Acquisition Strategy, Policy, and Transactions Services
3. Second Amendment to O-1465 As-Needed Acquisition Strategy, Policy, and Transactions Services
4. Approved Single Source Waiver