

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

TO: BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES
FROM: SEAN MCNEIL, DEPUTY DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENTAL
SERVICES
WATER DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE
CITY OF SANTA ROSA, THE SONOMA RESOURCE
CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO INSTALL A
RIPARIAN PLANTING ON GRAVENSTEIN CREEK, SERVING AS
MITIGATION FOR IMPACTS DUE TO THE REPLACEMENT OF
THE LAGUNA DE SANTA ROSA BRIDGE

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by Board of Public Utilities Contract Subcommittee and Santa Rosa Water that the Board, by motion, approve and authorize the Chair of the Board to sign the Cooperative Agreement with the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS), the Sonoma Resource Conservation District (SRCD), and the City of Santa Rosa granting CALTRANS permission to contract with the SRCD to carry out the Gravenstein Creek Riparian Restoration project on City owned property known as Brown Farm.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approval of a Cooperative Agreement with State of California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS), the Sonoma Resource Conservation District (SRCD), and the City of Santa Rosa (City) will allow access to Gravenstein Creek on Brown Farm to reestablish riparian vegetation on 1.7 acres, mitigating for environmental impacts resulting from the CALTRANS Highway 12 Bridge Replacement Project on the Laguna de Santa Rosa.

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BACKGROUND

Water Department Subregional System staff manages four City owned farms: Alpha Farm, Brown Farm, Kelly Farm and Stone Farm, and other small properties totaling approximately 1,500 acres. The four farms are commonly referred to as the City Reclamation Farms. These properties are used for the recycled water and biosolids land application programs.

Staff has developed Ranch Plans for the City Reclamation Farms, outlining Best Management Practices (BMPs) for managing the City Reclamation Farms. One of the BMPs is to create vegetated buffer areas between the City's farming operations and the creeks. The Ranch Plans target a one-hundred foot setback from creek banks as an appropriate buffer on all City Reclamation Farms. Restoring setbacks with native flora has been ongoing as time and funds allow, with much of the work accomplished through grant funding.

CALTRANS replaced the Laguna de Santa Rosa Bridge on State Route 12 in Sebastopol, County of Sonoma, postmile 9.63 and requires access to riparian habitat to fulfill environmental permit requirements imposed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

This agreement includes a contract between CALTRANS and SRCD for payment of \$355,000 to perform and maintain native plant restoration work on Gravenstein Creek (Brown Farm Riparian Project). The City is agreeing to provide access to the contractor and their subcontractors to construct, monitor, and maintain the restoration project for ten years post-installation. This agreement will obligate CALTRANS to provide the City with \$25,000 for costs associated with the project, including staff time coordinating the effort and responding to contractor access needs throughout the project timeframe. The City agrees not to remove or intentionally damage the restoration project.

PRIOR BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES REVIEW

None

ANALYSIS

The Brown Farm Riparian Project will revegetate 1.68 acres of riparian habitat along 930 linear feet of Gravenstein Creek. This achieves the Ranch Plan goal for 100-foot

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setbacks from creek banks and revegetation with appropriate plant species within this creek corridor.

CALTRANS will incur an estimated \$355,000 in costs for the necessary biological studies and documentation, permitting, mitigation plan implementation (e.g. grading work, planting, infrastructure), minimum of 10 years of monitoring, and short and long-term maintenance. (See Exhibit C to the Cooperative Agreement.)

The Brown Farm Riparian Restoration Project would be maintained by the SRCD or their subcontractors as riparian habitat for ten years, guaranteeing that 75% of the installed plants will survive. Once the ten-year monitoring and maintenance time has lapsed, the project will be part of the existing self-sufficient riparian habitat along Gravenstein Creek. This project area constitutes little or no loss of farming acreage because current regulations restrict application of biosolids within 100 feet of creeks and irrigation risers are installed to be set back far enough to prevent runoff to creeks.

The Brown Farm Riparian Project would remove 1.7 acres from use by the City for potential future mitigation needs. Per the Cooperative Agreement, CALTRANS will pay the City \$25,000 for the use of a portion of the Brown Farm property for this project. The average cost of buying built riparian woodland mitigation bank credits ranges in cost from \$75,000 to \$125,000/acre. The average of \$100,000/acre x 1.7 acres = \$170,000. Based on the estimated \$325,000 cost to CALTRANS for project implementation and long-term maintenance, staff believes that the \$25,000 payment is fair compensation for use of the land for mitigation. In the event that the City may need to install a future riparian woodland mitigation project, there will remain over 5,000 linear feet of creek frontage on the City-owned farms that may be suitable for such a project. Staff will recommend that the \$25,000 payment be budgeted into a Riparian Restoration account to be used for future projects on City Reclamation Farms or to provide matching funds for potential grant applications involving City Reclamation Farms, or alternatively, into a City Farm Ranch Plan update account.

FISCAL IMPACT

No funds from the City of Santa Rosa will be used on this project, except for staff time to negotiate the terms of the Cooperative Agreement and the Landowner implementation agreement and possible communication with the SRCD throughout the installation and maintenance period.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15096(g)(1), when considering mitigation measures a responsible agency is more limited than the lead agency (CALTRANS) and

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has responsibility for mitigating only the direct and indirect environmental effects of those parts of the project it is approving. In this case, the project that the City is undertaking is to allow access to Gravenstein Creek on Brown Farm to reestablish riparian vegetation, enhancing the habitat value of the property. The project will not have a significant adverse effect on the environment, and the City role in the project is to allow access to CALTRANS and SRCD to facilitate mitigation measures to ensure that there are no significant impacts. Access to the property will be contingent on CALTRANS, SRCD, and their Contractors completing all required mitigation measures and receiving all necessary permits, including completing, as necessary, a separate CEQA analysis for the mitigation project before beginning work. To the extent that the City's action allowing access for the mitigation project has any potential for significant impacts, the City will put in place measures to ensure that the entities undertaking the mitigation project avoid or mitigate those impacts. No further environmental review is necessary for this action.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On May 10, 2021 the Board of Public Utilities Contract Subcommittee reviewed the Cooperative Agreement and recommended approval.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Cooperative Agreement, including:
 - Exhibit A: Streambed Alteration Agreement
 - Exhibit B: Water Quality Certificate
 - Exhibit C: Laguna de Santa Rosa Off-site Mitigation Project Proposal
 - Exhibit D: Location Maps

CONTACT

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