



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-11-98
Meeting 11-26
September 28, 2011

AGENDA ITEM 5

AGENDA ITEM

Authorization to Apply for a Habitat Conservation Fund Program (HCF) Grant for the Alpine Pond Habitat Restoration and Interpretive Boardwalk Project

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the attached Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District approving a grant application for funds from the Habitat Conservation Fund Program for the proposed Alpine Pond Habitat and Interpretive Enhancement Project.

SUMMARY

This Board Report seeks authorization for staff to apply for a matching grant in the amount of \$257,000 from the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Habitat Conservation Fund Program (HCF) to fund the first phase of the Alpine Pond project. The purpose of the proposed Alpine Pond Habitat and Interpretive Enhancement Project is to promote the conservation and recovery of California red-legged frog, San Francisco garter snake, western pond turtle, and other native aquatic wildlife species at Alpine Pond, while at the same time improving the visitor experience and educational value of the pond. Currently, the educational, aesthetic, and ecological functions served by Alpine Pond are impaired by the dense growth of cattails ringing the pond and the presence of non-native predatory fish. The project goals are to improve habitat for native wildlife by eradicating predatory fish, and improve public access and educational opportunities through construction of a boardwalk and associated interpretive exhibits.

DISCUSSION

In April 2008, the Board retained Wetlands and Water Resources (WWR) to develop management alternatives for Alpine Pond (Report R-08-62). In August 2008, the Board directed staff to develop an implementation plan for WWR's recommended management options, which include a one-time pond draining to extirpate non-native fish, localized control of cattails in select areas, and installation of a boardwalk and blind system to enhance interpretive opportunities while protecting wildlife refuge areas (Report R-08-96). The landscape architecture firm Restoration Design Group (RDG) was retained in January 2010 to design the boardwalk and interpretive improvements (Report R-10-10). Preliminary design concepts were vetted in March 2010 by the Use and Management Committee and the preferred design was fully

developed into plans and specifications. During this process, District staff, with the assistance of the Project Committee, developed a pond drainage plan. Both aspects of the project are fully described in the *Alpine Pond Habitat and Interpretive Enhancement Plan*. The anticipated cost of the entire project (implementation of all phases), if approved by the Board, excluding environmental review (to be performed by District staff), is estimated to be approximately \$750,000.

The HCF Program allocates approximately \$2 million per year to the California Department of Parks and Recreation for grants to cities, counties, and districts to fund projects that: provide nature interpretation and other non-capital outlay programs to bring urban residents into park and wildlife areas; protect fish, wildlife and native plant resources; and acquire or develop wildlife corridors and trails. Projects, including land acquisition, trail rehabilitation, and new trail construction, are eligible for funding. The grant program requires a non-state, dollar-for-dollar match. Eligible match sources include local, federal, or private funds, or donated materials and services. The total project cost for Phase I is estimated at \$514,000 and staff is requesting \$257,000 (50% contribution) through the HCF Grant Program.

If awarded, the grant would fund the following specific actions at Alpine Pond:

- Pond dewatering and associated biological mitigation and monitoring
- Restoring, resurfacing, and improving drainage along portions of the existing perimeter trail, removing a maintenance-prone trail segment, and restoring natural drainage patterns and native habitat
- Constructing up to 400 linear feet of an Americans with Disability Act compliant boardwalk (including replacing existing decking at the Daniels Nature Center), a covered viewing platform, a picnic area, and an informal outdoor classroom

FISCAL IMPACT

A proposed adjustment to the Midyear Budget for FY2011-12 will include \$20,000 (a decrease from the original \$100,000 budget) to fund work through the end of this fiscal year (CEQA process, grant application submittals). The original budget amount would have funded the preparation of a bid package, which has been delayed due to an unfunded, separate and prior grant application. The HCF grant program is expected to announce its grant recipients in July 2012. If HCF grant funds are awarded to the Project, District staff will proceed with obtaining Board approval of the project, and preparing a bid package next fiscal year that incorporates the entire project scope; if grant funds are not awarded, the proposed project and bid package would be much reduced to include only basic, primary elements to keep project costs manageable. HCF grant monies must be disbursed by 2019 and would reimburse project expenses incurred beyond FY2010-11.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice of this Agenda Item was provided per the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance is required at the time of grant application. Staff completed a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project (see attached), which is currently in circulation and is anticipated to be brought to the Board for certification in October, 2011.

NEXT STEPS

If funding is secured, District staff would prepare an amendment, with guidance from the Use and Management Committee, to the Skyline Ridge Master Plan to include the proposed Project. If approved, Project permitting would commence next Fiscal Year, with Project implementation anticipated to begin in summer 2013. In the event the grant is not awarded, staff would modify the proposed Project to include, at this time, only primary elements of the project to keep costs manageable. The District would reserve the right to implement secondary elements of the project in the future as additional funding is secured.

Attachment:

- A. Resolution
- B. Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

Prepared by:

Lisa Bankosh, Open Space Planner II

Contact person:

Same as above

RESOLUTION NO 11-XX

RESOLUTION OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT APPROVING THE APPLICATION FOR GRANT FUNDS FROM THE HABITAT CONSERVATION FUND PROGRAM

WHEREAS, the people of the State of California have enacted the California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990, which provides funds to the State of California for grants to local agencies to acquire, enhance, restore or develop facilities for public recreation and fish and wildlife habitat protection purposes; and

WHEREAS, the State Department of Parks and Recreation has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of the Habitat Conservation Fund Program, setting up necessary procedures governing project application under the Habitat Conservation Fund Program; and

WHEREAS, said procedures established by the State Department of Parks and Recreation require the applicant to certify by resolution the approval of application(s) before submission of said application(s) to the State; and

WHEREAS, the applicant will enter into a contract with the State of California to complete the project(s);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Board of Directors hereby:

1. Approves the filing of an application for the Habitat Conservation Fund Program; and
2. Certifies that said applicant has or will have available, prior to commencement of any work on the project included in this application, the required match and sufficient funds to complete the project; and
3. Certifies that the applicant has or will have sufficient funds to operate and maintain the project(s), and
4. Certifies that the applicant has reviewed, understands, and agrees to the provisions contained in the contract shown in the grant administration guide; and

5. Delegates the authority to the General Manager to conduct all negotiations, execute and submit all documents, including, but not limited to applications, agreements, amendments, payment requests and so on, which may be necessary for the completion of the project.

6. Agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, ordinances, rules, regulations and guidelines.

**To obtain a copy of the
Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration,
please contact Michelle Radcliffe, District Clerk
at 650-691-1200 or via e-mail at
mradcliffe@openspace.org**