Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Memorandum

DATE: October 9, 2015

MEMO TO: MROSD Board of Directors

FROM: Kevin Woodhouse, Assistant General Manager
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager
David DeLong, Management Talent Exchange Program

THROUGH: Stephen E. Abbors, General Manager

SUBJECT: District Workplan Concerning Climate Change

One of the Key Projects on the Action Plan for FY2015-16 is work to evaluate opportunities for carbon sequestration on District Preserves and calculate potential carbon credits, including evaluation of future climate change models. This memorandum describes the scope of work the District will be undertaking for this project this fiscal year and, depending on future staff capacity and project priorities, projected tasks in future years.

In 2006, the California State Legislature passed the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32). AB 32 created a comprehensive, multi-year program to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in California to 1990 levels by 2020. Recently, Governor Jerry Brown directed a new goal to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, as directed in Executive Order B-30-15. These ambitious programs have placed California at the forefront of GHG reductions and have spurred new innovations and programs, such as California's Cap and Trade carbon credit/allowance market.

The Natural Resources Department is leading the carbon sequestration and climate change work items for the District (with added staff resource through a three-month exchange employee from the Management Talent Exchange Program). This Action Plan item was scheduled to begin in Quarter 3 (October-December), and has begun on schedule. A summary of the work plan is presented below.

1. Carbon Sequestration Research – Research the organization's compliance requirements with respect to California's Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) and determine how voluntary activities might qualify for sequestration investment opportunities funded by California's growing Cap-and-Trade market revenues. This research will consider the costs/benefits of several existing and potential opportunities, including: 1) participating in the state's very stringent Cap-and-Trade carbon offset credit market; 2) parlaying MROSD sequestration activities into investment revenues that may require less stringent performance tracking and long-term commitments (such as grant application opportunities); and, 3) partnering with other public and private landowners in the future

to aggregate carbon offset projects into "offset banks" that can be used to secure Cap-and-Trade credit revenues under a centrally administered collective.

Additionally, California's Cap-and-Trade Fund now contains over $2 Billion in revenues from state sales of carbon credits. By statute, Cap-and-Trade Fund expenditures must be used to fund programs that directly result in a reduction in GHG. Several proposals have recently been introduced that would establish competitive grant programs for the use of these funds.

2. MROSD Carbon Footprint Assessment – Research MROSD's compliance requirements regarding the Sustainable Communities and Environmental Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375) and draft an RFP to secure consultant services to 1) conduct a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions inventory for MROSD operations; and, 2) facilitate the development of an MROSD Climate Action Plan (CAP) to reduce future organizational emissions and address any current or future compliance requirements.

In addition to these efforts, a third aspect of the District's work in addressing its impacts on climate change is the analysis of how climate change will result in changes to the distribution and health of habitats within the Santa Cruz Mountains region. Many universities have research programs modeling how climate change scenarios could affect natural communities, species distributions, and other important abiotic factors such as rainfall, fog distribution, and average temperature. These models often produce maps at a larger regional scale (statewide, western United States), and have many different predicted outcomes. Generally, most scientists agree that the most likely outcome for the San Francisco Bay Area is a warmer, drier climate. During the Vision Plan process, the District prepared a map of Areas of Climate Resiliency to better inform habitats where conservation efforts may wish to focus to address climate change. Further work can be done to address this and other climate change impacts and future science should provide better tools with which to make these types of decisions.

Finally, on an international scale, France will be hosting and presiding over the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21), from November 30 to December 11, 2015. COP21 will be a crucial conference, as it has a goal to achieve a new international agreement on the climate, applicable to all countries, with the aim of keeping global warming below 2°C. If successful, this international agreement may result in national initiatives that may require District participation.