



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-17-85
Meeting 17-15
June 28, 2017

AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Agreement with Oregon State University to Test Revegetation Sites for Soil Diseases

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authorize the General Manager to approve an agreement with Oregon State University for an amount not-to-exceed \$90,000 to test revegetation sites in District preserves for soil diseases and develop any recommended remedial actions.
2. Determine that the recommended action is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act.

SUMMARY

In recent years, several species of *Phytophthora* (water mold diseases) have been identified in native plant nurseries and revegetation areas of California. Because of the emerging nature of this pathogen's spread within nurseries and the long time period over which the District has been using nursery plants in revegetation sites, staff does not know the extent to which this pathogen may be present in wildland areas. This agreement will authorize researchers with Oregon State University to sample representative revegetation sites in District preserves to determine if they are contaminated with *Phytophthora* soil diseases, to assess patterns and species, and to develop recommended remedial actions to manage contaminated sites, if determined to be necessary. This work is anticipated to be completed from 2017 through 2019 for an amount not-to-exceed \$90,000. Sufficient funds are included in the Fiscal Year 2017-18 Budget for the first year of work. Additional funds in the amount of \$35,000 would be requested for the following fiscal year (FY 2018-19) to complete the work.

DISCUSSION

In recent years, several species of *Phytophthora* (water mold diseases) have been identified in native plant nurseries and revegetation areas of California. Inadvertent planting of *Phytophthora*-infected nursery stock into native habitats has the potential to impact native ecosystems and revegetation goals, and to spread into adjacent wildlands where control is impossible. Many *Phytophthora* species appear to have a wide range of host plants species and can occur in many different types of vegetation communities. For example, *Phytophthora ramorum* is the exotic pathogen that causes Sudden Oak Death and has killed millions of oak trees since escaping from commercial nurseries into the forests of California.

For three years, the District has been working closely with its native plant suppliers to make sure nursery stock received is free of diseases. However, some of the 14 revegetation sites planted

from 1993 to 2014 are likely to be contaminated and require testing to determine what remedial actions might be necessary.

A Request for Proposals and Qualifications (RFP&Q) was sent to twelve researchers and consultants and posted on the District website on March 15, 2017. Proposals were received from Oregon State University and University of California, Berkeley. The Oregon State University team of Drs. Jennifer Parke and Ebba Peterson was selected as the most qualified for the following reasons:

- Their proposed research design will cover more sites;
- The team will test watershed conditions to determine historical context;
- Their approach is practical for the variety of site conditions present at District revegetation sites;
- The team has experience testing *Phytophthora* conditions in nurseries; and
- The team will recommend practical remediation measures to reduce future risk.

The consultant will sample soil, plants, and waterways in a range of revegetation sites to determine the disease status and what features may influence establishment and spread of soil *Phytophthoras*. Samples will be taken from adjacent areas to determine background levels. Once the distribution of *Phytophthora* species is determined, consultant will perform an analysis of the geographic and historical variables that are associated with pathogen introduction. The consultant will prepare a report that details the findings of *Phytophthora* presence in District revegetation sites, recommends remedial actions for each contaminated site, and identifies conditions that pose high risk for *Phytophthora* contamination to guide future revegetation efforts.

FISCAL IMPACT

There are sufficient funds in the amount of \$55,000 in the proposed FY2017-18 Natural Resources Department budget to cover the initial year of testing. The total cost estimate for the first year is less than the amount budgeted. Funds in the amount of \$35,000 will be requested in the Natural Resources Department budget for FY2018-19 to cover the cost of a second and final year of testing and recommendations.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

This item was not previously reviewed by a Board committee.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The action described in this item consists of information collection and minor alteration of vegetation on existing officially designated wildlife management areas that will result in protection and improvement of wildlife habitat. It will not result in serious or major disturbance of any environmental or historical resources; removal of healthy, mature scenic trees; impacts to environmental resources of hazardous or critical concern; significant effects; or cumulative

impacts. None of the actions will disturb vistas from a scenic highway. These sites are not located on a hazardous waste site. Therefore, this action is categorically exempt under Sections 15302 (Minor Alterations of Land) and 15306 (Information Collection) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval by the Board of Directors, the General Manager will execute an agreement with Oregon State University to conduct the proposed research. Upon completion of the analysis of revegetation sites and determination of potential remedial actions to be taken, if any, staff will review with the Planning and Natural Resources Committee, and seek approvals and funding from the Board of Directors as necessary.

Responsible Department Head:
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Department

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