



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-21-154
Meeting 21-31
November 10, 2021

AGENDA ITEM 6

AGENDA ITEM

Application for Grant Funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION *den*

Adopt a resolution authorizing the General Manager to apply for grant funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board and negotiate a grant funding agreement of up to \$295,000 for the Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Habitat and Population Management Plan Project.

SUMMARY

The General Manager recommends that the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) adopt a resolution authorizing the General Manager to apply for grant funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). This report provides a description of the funding available through the WCB and the approval process for use of the funds.

DISCUSSION

The Fiscal Year 2020-21 State Budget, passed by the California State Legislature and signed by Governor Newsom on June 29, 2020, reappropriated \$10,000,000 in funding to the WCB. The original \$10 million appropriation requested by Senator Beall was to support acquisitions of San Jose Water Company (SJWC) lands, but at the time of reappropriation, the senator secured an expanded use of the funds that now includes a broader array of public benefits in alignment with the District's mission. This reappropriation did two important things: first, it extended the encumbrance or expenditure deadline for the funds to June 30, 2025; and second, it expanded the eligibility of projects to also include the acquisition, planning, design, development, public access, rehabilitation, restoration, protection, and expansion of wildlife corridors and open space, including projects that improve connectivity and reduce barriers between habitat areas in the Upper Guadalupe, Los Gatos Creek, Saratoga Creek and adjacent areas.

In October 2021, WCB and District staff met to begin discussion on the proposed use of up to \$295,000 of state funding for the Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Habitat and Population Management Plan Project (Project). Ecological succession in our region is reducing the extent of habitat that supports critically imperiled Santa Cruz kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys venustus venustus*, SCKR) populations on District land. A presumed population of SCKR is found in two locations within Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve. Along with another known population in Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park, these are the only two known, extant populations of this rare subspecies of kangaroo rat. The proposed grant request would provide funding for genetics research, a habitat

assessment, and restoration efforts to support future land management actions to protect the SCKR.

The District's Natural Resources Department created a two-phased work plan for SCKR found in Sierra Azul: Phase 1 would span four years (July 2021 – June 2025) and involve researching, monitoring, and assessing populations of kangaroo rat and habitat quality to develop a habitat and population management plan (HPMP); Phase 2 would span 6 years (July 2024 – June 2030) and involve implementing the recommendations from the HPMP, including habitat enhancements and monitoring.

The proposed use of up to \$295,000 of state funding would cover Phase 1, which notably includes a genetics research component that would be led by Mark Statham from the University of California at Davis, in partnership with independent researchers Ken Hickman (independent), Tim Bean with the California Polytechnic State University, and Craig Fiehler with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The research is planned to focus on genetically verifying the historical occupancy of the species throughout the range of the SCKR, assess subspecies status, population substructure and genetic diversity, and genetically differentiate the three subspecies of *D. venustus* (including SCKR, big-eared kangaroo rat, and Santa Lucia kangaroo rat). The research would support the development of a range-wide monitoring plan using distribution modeling informed by sampling within high- and medium-suitability habitat, and further inform conservation management decisions and the state and federal listing status of each subspecies.

WCB confirmed the proposed grant funding item can be developed for the February 2022 WCB Board meeting for consideration and possible approval. All grant-funded work would need to be completed by March 31, 2025, in order to submit for reimbursement prior to June 30, 2025.

WCB requires a resolution from the District's Board of Directors prior to reviewing the project and potentially awarding funds at the February 2022 WCB Board meeting. The resolution (Attachment 1) authorizes the General Manager or her designee to sign the application for WCB funds and to execute a grant agreement for the funding.

FISCAL IMPACT

Upon review and approval by WCB, this funding opportunity would have a positive impact of up to \$295,000. The fiscal impact for implementing Phase 2 will be determined after a habitat and population management plan is developed.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

This report was not previously reviewed by a committee.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Submitting grant applications to secure funding is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The WCB requires that grantees comply with CEQA and certify that the CEQA analysis for any project encompasses all aspects of the work to be completed with grant funds.

NEXT STEPS

If approved by the Board, District staff would complete a WCB grant application for the Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Habitat and Population Management Plan and the General Manager would submit the grant application to the WCB for consideration at the February 2022 WCB Board meeting. Upon review and approval by WCB, District staff would work with WCB staff to develop a grant agreement for grant funding and the General Manager would execute the agreement.

Attachment

1. Resolution authorizing the General Manager to apply for Wildlife Conservation Board grant funding and negotiate a grant funding agreement.

Responsible Department Head:

Stefan Jaskulak, Chief Financial Officer, Administrative Services

Prepared by:

Deborah Hirst, Grants Program Manager, Administrative Services

RESOLUTION NO. 21-__

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MIDPENINSULA REGIONAL OPEN SPACE DISTRICT APPROVING THE APPLICATION FOR A WILDLIFE CONSERVATION BOARD GRANT FOR THE SANTA CRUZ KANGAROO RAT HABITAT AND POPULATION MANAGEMENT PLAN PROJECT

WHEREAS, funds were made available to the Wildlife Conservation Board (“WCB”) for the enhancement or restoration of fish and wildlife habitat and for the development of public access facilities for hunting, fishing or other wildlife-oriented recreational uses; and

WHEREAS, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (“District”) intends that the Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Genetics and Habitat Project will complete field research, genetics work, habitat management planning and enhancement work on District land in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve.

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

1. Approves the filing of an application for funding from the WCB.
2. Certifies the District will comply with all federal, state and local environmental, public health, and other appropriate laws and regulations applicable to the project and will obtain or will ensure that the other project partners obtain all appropriate permits applicable to the project.
3. Further commits to the terms and conditions specified in the grant agreement.
4. Authorizes the General Manager or designee as a representative of the District to conduct negotiations, execute, submit and sign all documents including but not limited to applications, agreements, amendments, payment requests, and other documents which may be necessary to administer grant funding for the proposed project.

* * * * *

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District on _____, 2021, at a regular meeting thereof, by the following roll call vote:

- AYES:**
- NOES:**
- ABSTAIN:**
- ABSENT:**

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

Larry Hassett, Secretary
Board of Directors

Curt Riffle, President
Board of Directors

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Hilary Stevenson, General Counsel

I, the District Clerk of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a resolution duly adopted by the Board of Directors of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District by the above vote at a meeting thereof duly held and called on the above day.

Jennifer Woodworth, District Clerk