



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-22-16
Meeting 22-04
February 9, 2022

AGENDA ITEM 5

AGENDA ITEM

Award of Contract for Botanical Services in Support of the Fire Safe San Mateo County-Highway 35 Evacuation Route Shaded Fuel Break Partnership

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authorize the General Manager to enter into a multi-year contract with Avila and Associates of Concord, California to provide botanical services in support of a collaborative partnership for fuel reduction work with Fire Safe San Mateo County for a base amount of \$65,950.
2. Authorize an allowance of \$3,966 for the development of mitigation measures, if deemed necessary for project implementation.
3. Authorize a 10% contingency of \$6,595 to cover unforeseen conditions and complexities, for a total contract amount not-to-exceed \$76,511.

SUMMARY

Fire response agencies have deemed Highway 35 (Skyline Blvd) as an important evacuation route in the Skyline region. Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) seeks assistance from a qualified consultant to complete botanical surveys on District-managed lands and prepare mitigation recommendations, as necessary, for a collaborative partnership to reduce fuels along Highway 35. A Request for Qualifications and Proposals (RFQP) was issued on November 12, 2021. The General Manager recommends awarding a contract to Avila & Associates Consulting Engineers, Inc., (Avila) to provide botanical services for a base amount of \$65,950, an allowance of \$3,966 for the development of mitigation measures (if necessary), and authorizing a 10% contingency amount of \$6,595 for a total not-to-exceed contract amount of \$76,511. This contract work will be considered as a match to a Fire Safe San Mateo County-led CAL FIRE Early Action Fire Prevention Grant and is anticipated to span two fiscal years. There are sufficient funds in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 (FY22) budget to cover the recommended action and expenditures through the end of the fiscal year. Funds to continue a second year of contract work will be proposed as part of the FY23 budget and action plan process.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Highway 35 Evacuation Route Shaded Fuel Break Partnership project will protect life, property, infrastructure and the watershed by reducing fuels and fire risk along approximately 22 miles of mostly forested lands. Collaborating organizations include: CalTrans, Fire Safe San Mateo County, Woodside Fire Protection District (Woodside Fire), and the District.

A CAL FIRE Early Action Fire Prevention Grant Award is partially funding this project, for \$2,679,223 over four years (Project Tracking Number 20-FP-CZU-0315). This funding will cover approximately 280 acres on District lands, including areas of: Coal Creek, El Corte de Madera, La Honda Creek, Long Ridge, Miramontes Ridge, Monte Bello, Purisima Creek Redwoods, Russian Ridge, Skyline Ridge, and Windy Hill Open Space Preserves.

DISCUSSION

Staff issued a RFQP on November 12, 2021, with the following consultant requirements that are consistent with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) guidelines for botanical surveys:

- Knowledge of plant taxonomy and natural community ecology;
- Familiarity with the plants of the area, including special status species;
- Familiarity with natural communities of the area, including special status natural communities;
- Experience conducting floristic field surveys or experience with floristic surveys conducted under the direction of an experienced surveyor;
- Familiarity with appropriate state and federal statutes related to plants and plant collecting; and
- Experience with analyzing impacts of development on native plant species and natural communities.

Staff circulated the RFQP through email and by posting on the BidSync website. The following five firms submitted proposals by the December 20, 2021, deadline.

Firm	Location	Proposed Fees (over 2 years)	Proposed Fees for Mitigation Measures Development [^]
Sequoia Ecological Consulting, Inc.	Danville, CA	\$53,134	Failed to Provide
Nomad Ecology, LLC	Martinez, CA	\$54,928	\$4,030
AECOM Technical Services, Inc.	Oakland, CA	\$59,928	\$13,174
Avila & Associates Consulting Engineers, Inc.	Walnut Creek, CA	\$65,950*	\$3,966
Horizon Water and Environment, LLC	Oakland, CA	\$91,988	\$6,440
<p>* District staff negotiated with Avila & Associates to reduce fees by 12% from the original proposal. [^]At this time, it is uncertain whether mitigation measures will be required; therefore, this item is accounted for as an allowance in the event this service is needed.</p>			

Evaluation criteria were determined prior to the release of the RFQP that included the quality of the proposal, project approach, firm expertise, and alignment with the District's sustainability and Equity goals. After careful review of all proposals, Avila, a woman and minority owned small business, was deemed most qualified and best suited for the project at a fair and reasonable price. Avila's proposal went above and beyond describing their alignment with District policies and priorities, including recommendations for incorporating climate change considerations and addressing wildfire resiliency. In addition, their Project Manager and Senior Botanist brings 15

years of experience in rare plant surveys within the District's region (a requirement of a protocol-level survey).

The base contract includes three rounds of botanical surveys (as required by CDFW), a final botanical survey report, and Worker Environmental Awareness documents. Vegetation management projects are designed to avoid impacts, when feasible. If the consultant identifies sensitive species or habitats during the survey, the recommended allowance provides funding for the consultant to develop mitigation measures for any impact that cannot be avoided. Mitigation measures would be consistent with the District's Wildland Fire Resiliency Program Environmental Impact Report ([R-21-58](#), [Minutes](#)).

FISCAL IMPACT

The Avila contract work will be considered as a match to the CAL FIRE Early Action Fire Prevention Grant and is anticipated to span two fiscal years. There are sufficient funds in the FY22 budget to cover the cost of the recommendation. Funds to continue a second year of contract work will be proposed as part of the FY23 budget and action plan process.

The recommended action is not funded by Measure AA.

BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

A Board Committee did not previously review this item.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Award of a contract is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act. Additionally, the proposed botanical surveys to be provided by the District's contractor is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Article 19, Sections 15306:

Section 15306 exempts basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

Implementation of the shaded fuel break along the Highway 35 corridor on District lands will comply with the District's Wildland Fire Resiliency Program and its associated Environmental Impact Report. Best Management Practices and applicable mitigation measures will be incorporated into the Project as required.

NEXT STEPS

Following Board approval, the General Manager will execute a contract with Avila for a two-year period beginning in FY22.

Attachment

1. Highway 35 Project Map

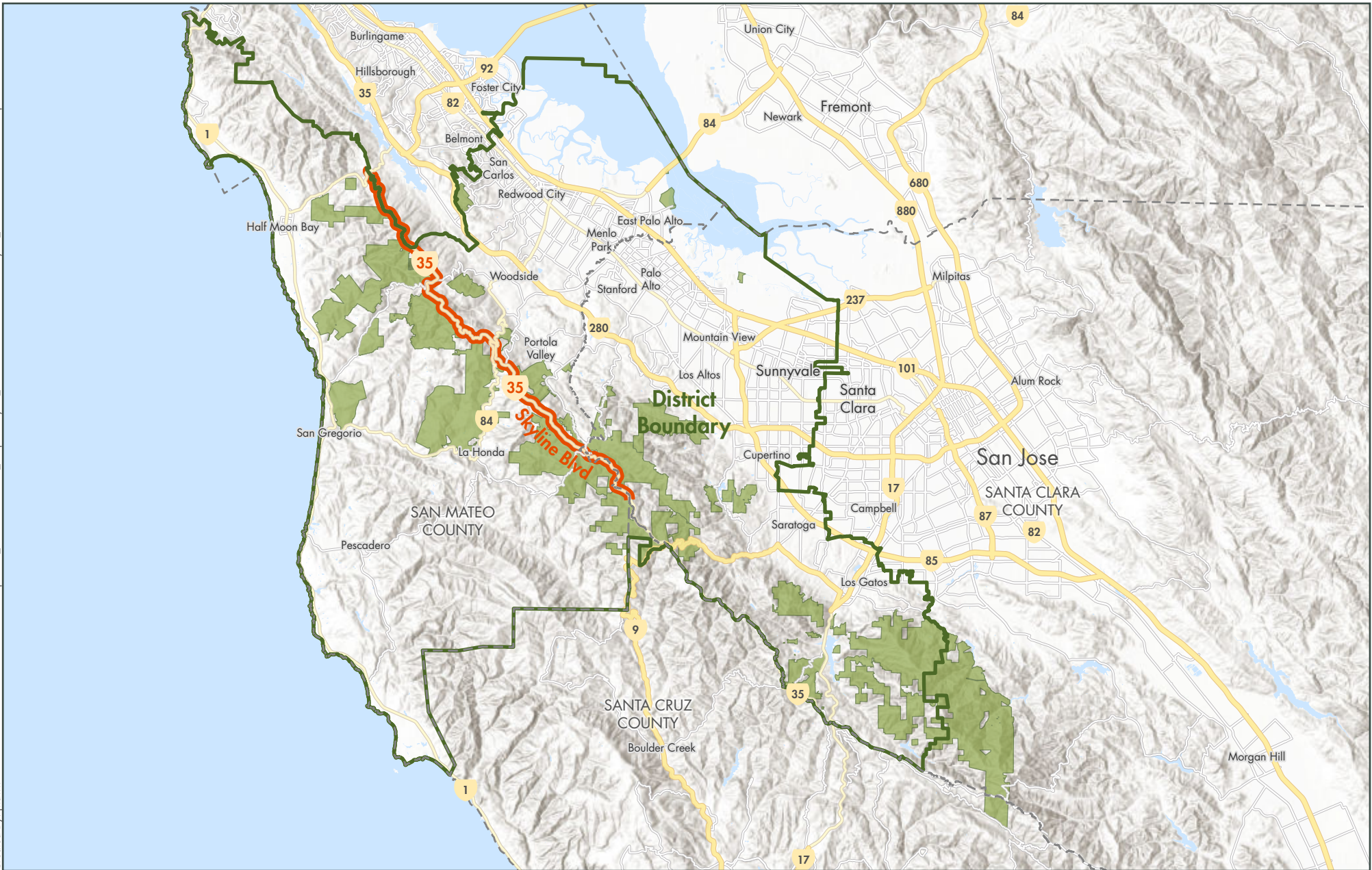
Responsible Department Head:
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources

Prepared by:
Coty Sifuentes-Winter, Senior Resource Management Specialist, Natural Resources





Contact person for the Highway 35 Partnership:
Christian Bonner, Field Resource Specialist, Land and Facilities

Contact person for Botanical Surveys:
Coty Sifuentes-Winter, Senior Resource Management Specialist, Natural Resources

Graphics prepared by:
Jamie Hawk, GIS Program Administrator



Hwy 35 Critical Evacuation Route

-  Hwy 35 Critical Evacuation Route in San Mateo County
-  County Boundaries
-  Midpen District Boundary
-  Midpen Preserves

Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District
(Midpen)
1/14/2022



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.