



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-23-96
Meeting 23-22
August 23, 2023

AGENDA ITEM 5

AGENDA ITEM

Contract Amendment with Grassroots Ecology for California Native Plant Species Propagation Services

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract amendment with Grassroots Ecology of Palo Alto, California, to extend the term of the agreement for one additional year and increase the compensation by \$145,000 to address a substantial increase in native plant nursery orders for restoration and capital improvement projects, for a total amended not-to-exceed contract amount of \$305,000 over five years.

SUMMARY

The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) utilizes California native plants grown in specialty native plant nurseries that have implemented strict phytosanitary best management practices to minimize the introduction and spread of plant pathogens to revegetate and restore natural habitats. These plants are installed at restoration and mitigation sites throughout District Preserves to fulfill permit requirements, restore degraded lands, and enhance ecosystem function. The Board of Directors (Board) authorized a contract with Grassroots Ecology on February 12, 2020, in the amount of \$160,000, to be expended over four years for native plant propagation services. Due to the larger native plant nursery orders for capital improvement projects in 2023, the contract will reach the \$160,000 total not-to-exceed amount and is unable to accommodate all 2023 nursery task orders, including multi-year nursery task orders for capital improvement projects, including the Alma Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Project in Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve (OSP) and Alpine Road Regional Trail in Coal Creek OSP, grant-funded habitat restoration work at Ravenswood Bay Trail in Ravenswood OSP, and smaller nursery plant orders for mitigation site replacement plants. The General Manager recommends a contract amendment with Grassroots Ecology to extend the contract term by one year and increase the compensation by \$145,000, for a new contract term of 5 years and a total amended contract not-to-exceed \$305,000. There are sufficient funds in the Fiscal Year 2023-24 (FY24) budget to cover the recommended action and anticipated scope of services through June 30, 2024. Funding in future years would be requested as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

DISCUSSION

The Board of Directors authorized a contract with Grassroots Ecology on February 12, 2020, in the amount of \$160,000, to be expended over four years (estimated approximately \$40,000 per year), to provide California native plant species propagation services. These services include collecting and cleaning propagules (e.g., seed, cuttings and plant divisions) from District lands,

germination and maintenance of nursery stock, and testing for *Phytophthora* species (Attachment 1) before installation into wildland settings.

From 2020-2022, the District expended \$74,971 on nursery task orders for capital improvement and restoration projects. In 2023, cost estimates provided by Grassroots Ecology for 2023 nursery task orders total \$120,246; therefore, the contract is only able to accommodate some 2023 nursery task orders. The majority of 2023 nursery task order costs (\$88,261) are attributed to the large number of nursery plants to be installed at the Alma Cultural Landscape and the Alpine Road Regional Trail sites. The 2023 nursery task orders include 1,137 nursery plants and up to 25,000 groundcover plugs for the Alma Cultural Landscape, and 2,722 nursery plants for Alpine Road. Due to the larger size of these orders and difficulties propagating certain native plant species, nursery staff informed District staff that it may take two to three years to propagate the quantities of native plant species requested for the Alma Cultural Landscape and Alpine Road Sites.

As a result of the FY23 work performed under this contract for the District, Grassroots Ecology still holds a supply of locally collected site-specific native plant seed collected for the Alma Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Project, Alpine Road Regional Trail Project, Ravenswood Bay Trail grant-funded habitat restoration work, and smaller nursery plant orders for mitigation site replacement plants. It is unlikely that another native plant nursery that has implemented all phytosanitary best management practices will have the amount of locally collected site-specific seed available to propagate the requested species and quantities for installation by the fall/winter of 2023. A contract amendment in the amount of \$145,000 will ensure all 2023 nursery task orders are accommodated under the Grassroots Ecology contract and will provide up to two years of propagation services for multi-year nursery orders to complete the Alma Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation Project, Alpine Road Regional Trail Project, Ravenswood Bay Trail grant funded habitat restoration work, and smaller seed collection and replacement plant orders for mitigation sites.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is sufficient funding in the adopted FY24 operating budget to cover the cost of the recommendation to implement and support non-MAA projects. Funds will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets as a part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

The FY24 adopted budget includes \$1,106,763 for the Alpine Road Regional Trail, Coal Creek project MAA10-001. Funds will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets as a part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

Alpine Road Regional Trail, Coal Creek MAA10-001	Prior Year Actuals	FY24 Adopted	FY25 Projected	FY26 Projected	Estimated Future Years	TOTAL
District Funded (Fund 30):	\$2,459,706	\$1,106,763	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$60,000	\$3,676,469
Grant Amount:	\$272,211	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$272,211
Total Budget:	\$2,731,917	\$1,106,763	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$60,000	\$3,948,680
Spent-to-Date (as of 07/25/23):	(\$2,731,917)	(\$168)	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$2,732,085)
Encumbrances:	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Grassroots Contract Amendment:	\$0	(\$6,668)	(\$10,000)	(\$5,000)	\$0	(\$21,668)
Budget Remaining (Proposed):	\$0	\$1,099,928	\$20,000	\$15,000	\$60,000	\$1,194,928

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 10 Coal Creek — Reopen Alpine Road for Trail Use allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA10 Coal Creek — Reopen Alpine Road for Trail Use Portfolio Allocation:	\$8,017,000
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$272,211
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$8,289,211
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 07/25/23):	(\$2,732,085)
Encumbrances:	\$0
Remaining FY24 Project Budgets:	(\$1,106,595)
Future MAA10 project costs (projected through FY27):	(\$110,000)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$3,948,680)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$4,340,531

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 10 allocation, projected life of project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA10 Coal Creek — Reopen Alpine Road for Trail Use Portfolio Allocation:	\$8,017,000
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$272,211
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$8,289,211
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
10-001 Alpine Road Regional Trail, Coal Creek	(\$3,948,680)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$3,948,680)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$4,340,531

The FY24 adopted budget includes \$159,887 for the Bear Creek Redwoods - Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation project MAA21-006. Funds will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets as a part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

Bear Creek Redwoods - Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation MAA21-006	Prior Year Actuals	FY24 Adopted	FY25 Projected	FY26 Projected	Estimated Future Years	TOTAL
District Funded (Fund 30):	\$3,857,460	\$159,887	\$84,038	\$30,713	\$0	\$4,132,098
Grant Amount:	\$1,592,557	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,592,557
Total Budget:	\$5,450,017	\$159,887	\$84,038	\$30,713	\$0	\$5,724,655
Spent-to-Date (as of 07/25/23):	(\$5,450,017)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$5,450,017)
Encumbrances:	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Grassroots Contract Amendment:	\$0	\$0	(\$25,000)	(\$25,000)	\$0	(\$50,000)
Budget Remaining (Proposed):	\$0	\$159,887	\$59,038	\$5,713	\$0	\$224,638

The FY24 adopted budget also includes \$1,377,259 for the Phase II Trail Improvements, Bear Creek Redwoods OSP project MAA21-011. Funds will be recommended in future fiscal year budgets as a part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

Phase II Trail Improvements, Bear Creek Redwoods OSP MAA21-011	Prior Year Actuals	FY24 Adopted	FY25 Projected	FY26 Projected	Estimated Future Years	TOTAL
District Funded (Fund 30):	\$1,753,570	\$1,377,259	(\$378,614)	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,754,215
Grant Amount:	\$0	\$1,411,507	\$1,059,614	\$0	\$0	\$2,471,121
Total Budget:	\$1,753,570	\$2,788,766	\$681,000	\$2,000	\$0	\$5,225,336
Spent-to-Date (as of 07/25/23):	(\$1,753,570)	(\$2,391)	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$1,755,961)
Encumbrances:	\$0	(\$128,484)	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$128,484)
Grassroots Contract Amendment:	\$0	(\$6,894)	(\$2,000)	(\$2,000)	\$0	(\$10,894)
Budget Remaining (Proposed):	\$0	\$2,650,997	\$679,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,329,997

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 21 Bear Creek Redwoods — Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects allocation, costs-to-date, projected future project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA21 Bear Creek Redwoods — Public Recreation and Interpretive Projects Portfolio Allocation:	\$17,478,000
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$5,035,798
Interest Income Allocation:	\$2,709,530
Fund 40 Allocation:	\$1,750,000
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$26,973,328
Life-to-Date Spent (as of 07/25/23):	(\$16,385,052)
Encumbrances:	(\$132,204)
Remaining FY24 Project Budgets:	(\$3,281,388)
Future MAA21 project costs (projected through FY27):	(\$4,246,150)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$24,044,794)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$2,928,534

The following table outlines the Measure AA Portfolio 21 allocation, projected life of project expenditures and projected portfolio balance remaining.

MAA21 Bear Creek Redwoods — Public Recreation and Interpretive Project Portfolio Allocation:	\$17,478,000
Grant Income (through FY27):	\$5,035,798
Interest Income Allocation:	\$2,709,530
Fund 40 Allocation:	\$1,750,000
Total Portfolio Allocation:	\$26,973,328
Projected Project Expenditures (life of project):	
21-001 Moody Gulch Fence & Gate Improvements	(\$847)
21-004 Bear Creek Stables Project	(\$3,791,801)
21-005 Bear Creek Redwoods Public Access	(\$5,548,003)

21-006 Bear Creek Redwoods - Alma College Cultural Landscape Rehabilitation	(\$5,724,655)
21-007 Bear Creek Redwoods Preserve Plan Invasive Weed Treatment	(\$2,027,046)
21-008 Bear Creek Redwoods Ponds Restoration and Water Rights	(\$681,517)
21-009 Bear Creek Redwoods Webb Creek Bridge	(\$487,492)
21-010 Bear Creek Redwoods Landfill Characterization and Remediation	(\$467,182)
21-011 Phase II Trail Improvements, Bear Creek Redwoods OSP	(\$5,225,336)
21-012 Bear Creek Redwood Tree Restoration	(\$90,915)
Total Portfolio Expenditures:	(\$24,044,794)
Portfolio Balance Remaining (Proposed):	\$2,928,534

PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

On February 12, 2020, the Board authorized the General Manager to enter into a contract with Grassroots Ecology to provide California native species plant propagation services ([R-20-18, Minutes](#)).

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Project Description

The Project consists of the hand collection of native California propagules (e.g., seed) from local watersheds to be grown in a nursery setting. Individual projects that include restoration planting covered under this recommended contract undergo appropriate CEQA evaluation before implementation.

CEQA Determination

The District concludes that work implemented under this recommended contract will not have a significant effect on the environment. It is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under *Article 19, Section 15304 Minor Alterations to Land* as follows: the work will result in a minor public alteration in the condition of vegetation (hand removal of native California propagules (e.g., seed) and does not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. In addition, this work is exempt from CEQA under *Article 19, Section 15333 Small Habitat Restoration Projects* as follows: the hand collection of native California propagules (e.g., seed) will not exceed five acres in size and will maintain, restore, enhance, and protect habitat for fish, plants, and wildlife. There will be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare, or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065. Moreover, the work will not occur near hazardous materials, and the project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

NEXT STEPS

Following Board approval, the General Manager will execute a contract amendment with Grassroots Ecology of Palo Alto, California.

Responsible Department Head:
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Department

Prepared by:
Amanda Mills, Resource Management Specialist II, Natural Resources Department