



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-19-52  
Meeting 19-11  
April 24, 2019

## AGENDA ITEM 6

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Amend Contract for Fire Ecology Services: Wildland Fire Resiliency Program Development

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS *den*

1. Authorize the General Manager to amend the multi-year contract with Spatial Informatics Group, LLC of Pleasanton, California, to provide additional fire ecology services in the amount of \$194,755, for a new not-to-exceed contract amount of \$296,005 (original contract is \$101,250).
2. Authorize a 15% total contingency of \$44,400, to be awarded only if necessary to cover unforeseen conditions, for a new total contract amount not-to-exceed \$340,405.

### SUMMARY

California has experienced devastating fire seasons over the last two years and the trend has been toward bigger, more damaging, and deadlier fires. The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) commits extensive staff time and resources toward fuel reduction work every year and recognizes that more work needs to be done. Due to the increased fire risk, the Board of Directors (Board) added an objective to its Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-20 to work with fire agencies and surrounding communities to strengthen the prevention of, preparation for, and response to wildland fires. The District is currently under contract with a consultant to develop a Prescribed Fire Program. The General Manager recommends expanding the scope of services to add additional tasks that will allow the District to complete more fuel reduction work and accelerate the creation of preserve focused wildland fire preplans. This increase in scope would result in a Wildland Fire Resiliency Program (Program), establishing a more robust, strategic, and comprehensive fire and fuels management plan for District lands. An expanded Program would include non-fire fuels reduction and other techniques (in addition to prescribed fire) to promote wildland fire resiliency. The General Manager recommends amending the contract with Spatial Informatics Group, LLC (SIG) to provide fire ecology services for a not-to-exceed new contract amount of \$296,005 and authorizing a 15% contingency amount of \$44,400. Staff anticipates the contract work to span four fiscal years. There are sufficient funds in the adopted Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19 budget to cover the anticipated scope of services for this fiscal year. Additional funds would be included in future budgets to fund the contract work.

### DISCUSSION

In June of 2018, the Board authorized the General Manager to enter into contract with SIG to perform fire ecology services to develop a Prescribed Fire Program for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$116,438 (R-18-72; includes 15% contingency). Staff returned to the Board in

February of 2019 to provide an informational update on the development of the Prescribed Fire Program (R-19-16). Staff discussed potential changes in the project scope that would transform the project from a Prescribed Fire Program to a comprehensive Wildland Fire Resiliency Program (Program). The expanded Program and the scope of work under the proposed contract amendment includes:

- *Fuels Management (non-fire)*  
Multiple fire agencies have requested that the District increase the number and scale of its fuel management projects. Currently, fuel management activities fall under the District's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program's CEQA, which evaluated a limited number of acres for fuel reduction. Working in conjunction with partner fire agencies, the new CEQA Project Description would allow the District to expand its fuels management work beyond what was evaluated in the IPM program to address recent requests from the fire agencies.
- *Wildland Fuels Monitoring*  
The consultant would include a fuels monitoring plan in the CEQA Project Description that establishes baseline conditions for post Program analysis (including pre and post-project vegetation, soil, erosion, and water quality monitoring). The fuels monitoring plan would outline a process to assess the achievement of individual fire resiliency project objectives in reducing fuel loads and identify outcomes in a manner consistent with other land management agencies to allow for comparable analysis. Monitoring of fuel loads allows the District to respond to changing conditions in real-time and adapt management activities.
- *Wildland Fire Pre-Plans*  
The consultant would also prioritize and prepare wildland fire pre-plans for each individual preserve or groups of preserves that identify existing infrastructure (e.g. roads, fuel breaks, water sources) as well as known sensitive natural and cultural sites for fire personnel to avoid during fire and fuels management activities. This effort would provide much needed capacity to expedite the work begun by the Visitor Services Department. To date, the District has completed one pre-plan and second one is in progress.
- *Education and Outreach*  
The consultant would provide up to two educational overviews of fire ecology in the Santa Cruz Mountains to District docents as an enrichment activity to provide the information needed to engage the public on the topic of wildland fire resiliency.

This work, if approved by the Board, would allow the District to increase the amount of fuels reduction work performed by the District and others on District land, hasten the creation of wildland fire preplans, continue the development of a prescribed fire program, and expand public awareness and support for wildland fire resiliency efforts.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The cost of the recommended change in scope of services is beyond the authorized contingency amount of the original contract. A net-zero budget adjustment was executed in Quarter 3 to cover the additional amount. Sufficient funds will be requested for the FY2019-20 proposed budget as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

| <b>Prescribed Fire Program Development (new Wildland Fire Resiliency Program) (Project #80003-10)</b> | <b>Prior Year Actuals</b> | <b>FY2018-19<br/><i>Projected Amended Budget</i></b> | <b>FY2019-20<br/><i>Projected Budget</i></b> | <b>FY2020-21<br/><i>Projected Budget</i></b> | <b>FY2021-22<br/><i>Projected Budget</i></b> | <b>Total</b>       |
|---|---------------------------|--|--|--|--|--------------------|
| <b>Project #80003-10 Budget:</b>  | \$29,534                  | \$177,920  | \$466,000                                    | \$276,000                                    | \$311,000                                    | <b>\$1,260,454</b> |
| Spent-to-Date (as of 03/26/2019):   | (\$29,534)                | (\$27,189)   | \$0  | \$0  | \$0  | <b>(\$56,723)</b>  |
| Encumbrances:   | \$0                       | (\$76,561)   | \$0  | \$0  | \$0  | <b>(\$76,561)</b>  |
| SIG Contract Amendment:   | \$0                       | (\$74,170)   | (\$115,845)                                  | (\$101,940)                                  | (\$4,050)                                    | <b>(\$296,005)</b> |
| <i>15% Contingency:</i>   | \$0                       | \$0  | (\$11,100)                                   | (\$11,100)                                   | (\$22,200)                                   | <b>(\$44,400)</b>  |
| <b>Budget Remaining (Proposed):</b>   | <b>\$0</b>                | <b>\$0</b>   | <b>\$339,055</b>                             | <b>\$162,960</b>                             | <b>\$284,750</b>                             | <b>\$786,765</b>   |

The recommended action is not funded by Measure AA.

### **BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

Staff will bring Program related items to the Planning and Natural Resources Committee for review and guidance. See Next Steps for current timeline.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Public notice was sent to interested parties and tenants by postal or electronic mail.

### **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

The amendment of the contract with SIG is not a project subject to CEQA. Future Board consideration of a Wildland Fire Resiliency Program will be subject to CEQA.

The District has separately contracted with Panorama Environmental, Inc. (Panorama) (R-18-120) to analyze the Program and address CEQA requirements based on the project description developed by SIG and subject to future Board approval.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Following Board approval, the General Manager will amend the contract with SIG for a four-year period beginning in FY2018-19. To respond effectively to fire agencies requests for increased non-fire related fuels management activities, staff will direct SIG to prioritize the contract elements for the Program in the following order:

1. Fuels Management (non-fire)
2. Wildland Fire Pre-Plans/Resource Advisor Maps
3. Monitoring
4. Prescribed Fire

The Program timeline described below includes multiple public and Planning and Natural Resources Committee meetings. If the Board approves the expanded scope of services for SIG,

the General Manager will return to the Board for authorization of a subsequent contract amendment with Panorama to complete the CEQA analysis of the expanded Program and staff will provide a CEQA timeline at that time. The increase in scope will hasten the development of fuels management plans and wildland fire pre-plans, but would delay the implementation of a prescribed fire component.

Table 1: Wildland Fire Resiliency Program Timeline

| Meeting Type                             | Description  | Expected Date   |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Community Informational Meetings         | Engage the Community at 3 different locations within the District's Boundary                     | Q4 of FY2018-19 |
| Planning and Natural Resources Committee | Review Community Informational Meetings feedback; Review draft Wildland Fire Resiliency Policies | Q1 of FY2019-20 |
| Community Informational Meetings         | Engage the Community at 3 different locations within the District's Boundary                     | Q2 of FY2019-20 |
| Planning and Natural Resources Committee | Review draft Fuels Management (non-Fire)   | Q2 of FY2019-20 |
| Planning and Natural Resources Committee | Review Community Informational Meetings feedback; Review draft Monitoring                        | Q2 of FY2019-20 |
| Planning and Natural Resources Committee | Review draft Prescribed Fire   | Q3 of FY2019-20 |
| Planning and Natural Resources Committee | Review refined Prescribed Fire   | Q4 of FY2019-20 |

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