



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-12-29
Meeting 12-08
February 29, 2012

AGENDA ITEM 10

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Award of Contract for CEQA Analysis of Site Specific Weed and Pest Management Project for 2012 - 2014

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the General Manager to execute a contract with Ascent Environmental for an amount not to exceed \$33,815 to conduct an analysis of potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed Site-Specific Weed and Pest Management 2012-2014 Project pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

SUMMARY

A qualified consultant is needed to conduct an environmental review of the proposed Site-Specific Weed and Pest Management 2012-2014 Project (Project) planned for implementation at a limited number of sites. The environmental review will evaluate how weeds and disease can be controlled at site-specific locations in Open Space Preserves while protecting and restoring natural resources and avoiding adverse environmental impacts. The General Manager recommends retaining the firm of Ascent Environmental to conduct an environmental analysis of the proposed Project pursuant to CEQA.

DISCUSSION

Background

As part of its mission to protect and restore the natural environment of Open Space Preserves, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) controls non-native, invasive plants (also referred to as weeds) that adversely affect natural resources. Not all invasive plants can be controlled at one time, so the District sets priorities to protect the most valuable and threatened natural resources and to concentrate on work that can provide feasible and effective control based on Integrated Pest Management principles. In addition, the District is researching and developing strategies for controlling the pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum* which causes the forest disease Sudden Oak Death (SOD).

The District has identified high-priority vegetation management sites within its preserve system where work is needed to control invasive weed species, maintain optimal habitat conditions, and prevent the spread of disease. The District is proposing vegetation management work at these high-priority sites. This work would be consistent with the IPM management techniques used by

the District. The proposed sites in this Project have been selected because, among other things, they address the most invasive plants, those with the greatest likelihood of impacting sensitive resources, and those with the greatest potential for re-infestation. The highest priority invasive plant and SOD work sites (consisting of approximately 30 sites) have been identified and these limited areas are proposed for treatment over the next three calendar years (2012 through 2014). The proposed project will include the environmentally appropriate use of both herbicide and non-herbicide methods. The work to be performed under this contract is the CEQA review of the Project

Concurrent with the implementation of the high-priority, site-specific Project, the District is undertaking a process to develop a long-term IPM Program that will comprehensively address invasive species and pest and disease management for its entire preserve system. This comprehensive Program will be the subject of a separate and independent CEQA review at the time the program is fully defined. This Program is a Key Project in the District's current FY2011-12 Action Plan and is to be carried forward as a Key Project in the proposed FY2012-13 Action Plan.

Consultant Selection

The District's professional consultant selection policy includes a process to pre-qualify consultants. After staff has completed a consultant selection process consistent with this policy, the District maintains a list of those consultants who were determined to be qualified and competent to deliver professional services. Staff maintains a list of such consultants in their appropriate categories and, for a period of two (2) years from the determination of qualification, staff may recommend a prequalified consultant from this list.

In July 2011, Ascent Environmental submitted a proposal to prepare a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Mindego Gateway project. Although not selected for that project, Ascent was among the firms determined to be qualified to perform this type of CEQA work. Accordingly, District policy enables staff to recommend selection of Ascent as a prequalified consultant without having to repeat the Request for Proposal Process which significantly shortens the contracting process and, in this case, will expedite the completion of the environmental review so seasonally-dependent work can proceed to protect the natural resources of the open space preserves.

Ascent has knowledge of District policies, practices, and environment due to extensive recent experience with Mount Umunhum; has conducted environmental reviews of vegetation management projects in natural areas; and the Ascent staff is adept at analyzing complex and highly sensitive projects.

FISCAL IMPACT

The FY2011-12 Action Plan and budget include \$95,750 to fund development and environmental review of vegetation management on District Preserves. Payment for the Ascent contract for this Project will come from these funds.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The scope of work for the Ascent contract will undertake the actions required by CEQA for the proposed Site-Specific Weed and Pest Management 2012 – 2014 Project. No separate CEQA review is required to award this contract.

Once the CEQA analysis is completed, the environmental analysis will be released for Board and public review. Notice of this review period and upcoming public hearing to consider CEQA certification and project approval will be mailed and distributed to the Resource Management mailing list as well as posted on the District’s website, and posted at the trailheads of the affected preserves.

NEXT STEPS

Upon Board authorization, the General Manager will enter into a contract with Ascent Environmental to complete the environmental analysis. A public hearing will be scheduled following this review period for the Board to consider additional public comment, certification of the environmental review document, and determine whether to approve the project consistent with any environmental or other constraints and required mitigation measures identified during the environmental review process.

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