



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-14-55
Meeting 14-08
March 12, 2014

AGENDA ITEM 8

AGENDA ITEM

Status Report on the Resource Management Grant Program

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. G. G.", written over the text "GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION".

Receive a Status Report on the Resource Management Grant Program, including New Grant Recipients, as Approved by the General Manager.

SUMMARY

The Resource Management Grant Program (RMGP) has previously funded seven (7) research projects which have contributed to achieving the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) mission of resource stewardship through relevant scientific research. Since the current set of grants were nearing completion, a new Request for Proposals was released in November 2013 in order to award the remaining available funds for the current fiscal year (\$10,000) and award grants for the next five years, as specified under the Board-approved grant policy guidelines (adopted in 2007 and amended in 2010; see Attachment 1).

DISCUSSION

The District encourages and supports applied academic research that is relevant to its Preserves and its mission. In 2007 the Board approved the RMGP to foster and strengthen partnerships with researchers from academic institutions and advance the scientific understanding of natural processes. When applied, such knowledge furthers the District's mission to provide low-intensity public recreation, environmental education, and sound resource stewardship. Grant awards provide up to \$5,000 per year for any single project and provide up to \$25,000 annually in total RMGP funding for all projects. Multi-year projects are considered, provided that the total amount of funding does not exceed \$25,000 over five (5) consecutive years. The Grant team, composed of staff from several departments, has applied the grant policy criteria to select the most valuable research projects and the team's recommended projects have subsequently been approved by the General Manager who is awarding funds as described below and under his authority as delegated by the Board.

Past Grantees

Past Grant recipients have contributed to our scientific understanding in a number of ways and forged successful partnerships which further the District's mission. For example, UCSC mountain lion research, partially funded by the District's RMGP, identified critical bottlenecks caused by major highways in the region as well as provided information on animal behavior in relation to human disturbance levels. In addition to writing peer-review publications on the subject, they provided education and outreach opportunities for students and the public to learn more about the species.

Other grants have provided useful information on seeding with natives in conjunction with weed control, identification of critical wildlife corridors in the region, pathways and limitations of non-native insect invasion into natural areas, and the level of genetic divergence among populations of an amphibian species. Projects such as the UCSC mountain lion studies and the Bay Area Critical Linkages study are being used in regional planning to develop wildlife corridors and target important habitat for conservation. Although science is sometimes not conclusive, such as in the case of a grantee who studied genetically distinct populations of California giant salamander, these studies push the topics forward and define the future work needed. Attachment 2 describes the past grant awards and the amounts awarded by the RMGP.

Newly Selected Grantees

On November 14 2013, a Request for Proposals was announced on the District website and through an email memo which was sent to 80 regional groups and individuals involved in relevant research. The Grant Team held an optional information session on November 20, 2013 for those interested in applying. Twenty (20) applications were received by the closing date of January 15, 2014 and scored according to the criteria established in the RMGP Policy. The top ranking 10 proposals were further considered by staff to ensure they met the grant requirements and to select award amounts based on the amount requested and funds available in order to maximize the number of projects that could be funded.

Seven (7) research projects were selected for funding based on the available funds. Below are brief descriptions of these grant proposals (Attachment 3 provides more detail):

1. *Fish Habitat in San Gregorio (San Francisco State University)*. This study will collect stream channel measurements and analyze them along with an existing large woody debris (LWD) inventory to help land managers identify priority sites for salmonid habitat enhancement projects along San Gregorio Creek.
2. *Hicks Road Cultural Resource Assessment (Santa Clara University)*. This archeological site survey will benefit both the District by providing information on any Native American use as well as use associated with the historic Guadalupe Mines in the area; this project will also provide an educational opportunity to undergraduate students studying archeology.
3. *Using Ecology to Recover Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Protect Cultural Resources (University of California, Berkeley)*. This project is designed to identify sites of ethnobotanical value, experiment with various traditional management practices on a small scale, and collect culturally significant plant materials for traditional use by the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band.
4. *Quantifying the Impacts of Habitat Loss, Woody Plant Encroachment and Land Management Strategy on Coastal Montane Grassland Bird Communities (San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory)*. This research will quantify grassland encroachment, historical land use data, and compile existing regional bird surveys to determine effects on montane bird communities within the region.
5. *Camera Trap Study of Wildlife Use of Conservation-grazed Coast Rangelands (California Academy of Sciences)*. This study will track the presence and habits of wildlife in several of the District's coast preserves where verified observations of wildlife are sparse.
6. *San Francisco Bay Area Cultural and Historic Landscape Pilot Project (Stanford University)*. This archeological study will use archival research, remote sensing, and field methods to predict and survey locations of potential former Native American land use in upland and foothill zones of District Preserves.
7. *Monitoring Fire Weather and Fuels Conditions in a Changing Climate (San Jose State University)*. This research will improve the ability to predict sudden changes in fire danger level which are expected to become more common as fire seasons extend throughout the State. A combination of fuel sampling, weather data collection in the Mt. Umunhum area,

and analysis will be utilized to make better fire weather predictions available to fire agencies and the public.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Sections 15306 as follows: Section 15306 exempts basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities that do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The District's RMGP will fund research projects consistent with this exemption.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Notices were also sent to persons requesting notice of resource management activities.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Board previously authorized a maximum of \$25,000 annually to fund the RMGP, although this maximum has not been reached every year in the past. Additionally, the grant policy specifies that each grant project may be awarded up to \$5,000 per year and up to \$25,000 per project in total over five years. The Natural Resources Department Budget for FY 2013-14 includes \$25,000 in funds for the RMGP, as does FY 2014-15 budget. The total fiscal impact of the RMGP over fiscal years 2013-14 through 2018-19 is \$97,073. Attachment 3 specifies the amounts to be distributed in Fiscal Years 2013-14 through 2018-19.

NEXT STEPS

A staff member from the most appropriate Department (typically Natural Resources, Planning, or Public Affairs) will be assigned to act as project manager and establish a short form agreement with their grantee. Short form agreements are in keeping with similar small grants programs and will help keep overhead low for grantees as the Grant has a 10% overhead cap. The project manager will finalize the milestones, deliverables, and permit to enter District lands, making fund dispersals contingent upon satisfactory milestones and deliverables. A progress update will be provided to the Board within 2 years.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Board Policy Resource Management Grant Program
- Attachment 2: Summary of Previous Research Grant Awards
- Attachment 3: Summary of New Research Grant Awards

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Board Policy
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
GRANT PROGRAM

Adopted by the Board of Directors
November 14, 2007
Amended: November 17, 2010

Purpose:

The District encourages and supports applied academic research on District preserves. Partnerships with researchers from academic institutions can provide the District and the larger scientific community with information that furthers the District's mission, enhance public education, and advances scientific understanding of natural processes. The goal for the Resource Management Grant Program is to develop and strengthen local partnerships with researchers in support of the District's mission. This policy establishes the guidelines by which District staff will solicit, review, award, and administer grant funds to meritorious projects.

Background:

Numerous academic research institutions are located within the San Francisco Bay Area, providing opportunities for the District to partner with researchers to make better informed decisions about land management and public outreach.. Numerous research projects have been conducted on District lands, however, given the diversity of natural habitats found on District lands and the volume of research questions of direct interest to District staff, fostering research opportunities will provide the District with applied research that is targeted specifically to the District's needs. Partnerships with local academic institutions are a vital component to achieving the District's mission to "protect and restore the natural environment".

Procedures:

The following procedures will assist the General Manager in soliciting, reviewing, and awarding grant funds to research projects consistent with the District's mission:

1. The Resource Management Grant Program (Program) will be an interdepartmental program jointly administered by the Planning, Operations, and Public Affairs Departments. Staff from these departments will collaboratively administer all aspects of the Program.
2. Grant awards will not exceed \$5,000 for any one project annually and total annual Program funding will not exceed \$25,000. Multi-year projects will be considered provided that the total amount of funding does not exceed \$25,000 over five consecutive years, subject to approval in the District's annual budget and an annual review by District staff to ensure satisfactory progress.

3. Eligible projects must, at a minimum, be sponsored by a faculty member of an accredited academic research institution.
4. Eligible projects must contribute information that aids in resource management, operational and maintenance actions, public outreach, or public use decisions by the District or provide a larger educational purpose that furthers the District mission.
5. Eligible projects must not result in permanent damage and/or impairment to habitats or natural resources on District lands and will be in compliance with the District's Permit to Enter procedures (required for each research project).
6. The General Manager will establish a detailed evaluation and selection process to be used in reviewing eligible proposals in the form of Administrative Guidelines. Evaluation criteria will include but not be limited to the proposal promoting and accomplishing the District's mission, advancing the District's management of natural resources, enhancing the District's interface with the public, establishing collaborative partnerships with research institutions, and advancing the general understanding of the natural environment.
7. A Request for Proposals will be released annually to solicit proposals for consideration for funding provided funding is available. Proposals will also be accepted throughout the year and considered for funding as received and as funding is available.
8. The General Manager will prepare an annual report to the Board of Directors on the Resource Management Grant Program that details the proposals received as well as those selected for funding, and the results of research received.
9. This Policy will be reviewed every five years from the date of approval.

Attachment 2: Summary of Previous Resource Management Grant Awards

Title	Organization	Academic Sponsor	FY 2007-08	FY 2008-09	FY 2009-10	FY 2010-11	FY 2011-12	FY 2012-13	FY 2013-14	Total Cost Per Grantee
Development of an Invasive Argentine Ant Management Plan (2007-2011)	Stanford University	Stanford University	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 500.00		\$ 25,000.00
Wildlife Corridor Stewardship Team Partnership (2008-2012)	Foothill-De Anza College	Foothill-De Anza College		\$ 4,500.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 500.00				\$ 10,000.00
Genetic Distinction and Population Structure of the California Giant Salamander (2008)	Sonoma State University	Sonoma State University		\$ 4,500.00	\$ 500.00					\$ 5,000.00
Using Native Tarweeds to Manage Yellow Starthistle in California Grasslands (2008)	UC Santa Cruz	UC Santa Cruz		\$ 1,305.00						\$ 1,305.00
Santa Cruz Mountains Puma Project (2009-2013)	UC Santa Cruz	UC Santa Cruz			\$ 4,500.00	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 25,000.00
Rancher, Manager, and Scientist Forum on Rangeland Conservation, Central Rangeland Coalition (2009-2013)*	Central Coast Rangeland Coalition (administered by Elkhorn Slough Foundation)	UC Santa Cruz					\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 20,000.00
Bay Area Critical Linkages (2009 - 2012)	SC Wildlands	UC Davis			\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00			\$ 15,000.00
Total Cost Per Year	-	-	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 16,305.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 16,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 10,500.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 101,305.00

Attachment 3: Summary of New Resource Management Grant Awards

Title	Organization	Principal Investigator	Academic Sponsor	FY 2013-14	FY 2014-15	FY 2015-16	FY 2016-17	FY 2017-18	FY 2018-19	Total \$ Per Grant
See Attachment 2	Pre-existing Grant Awards	multiple	multiple	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 5,000.00					\$ 15,000.00
San Francisco Bay Area Cultural and Historic Landscape Pilot Project	Stanford University	Wilcox	Stanford University	\$ 5,000.00						\$ 5,000.00
Hicks Road Cultural Resource Assessment	Santa Clara University	Panich	Santa Clara University		\$ 1,650.00					\$ 1,650.00
Using Ecology to Recover Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Protect Cultural Resources	Amah Mutsun Tribal Band	Reid	UC Berkeley	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00		\$ 25,000.00
Quantifying the Impacts of Habitat Loss, Woody Plant Encroachment and Land Management Strategy on Coastal Montane Grassland Bird Communities	SFBBO	Burns	UC Santa Cruz		\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00			\$ 15,000.00
Camera Trap Study of Wildlife Use of Conservation-grazed Coast Rangelands	Individual	Hickman	Cal Academy of Sciences		\$ 3,350.00	\$ 2,994.00				\$ 6,344.00
Fish Habitat in San Gregorio.	SFSU	Issel	SFSU	\$ 5,000.00						\$ 5,000.00
Monitoring Fire Weather and Fuels Conditions in a Changing Climate	SJSU	Vaccaro	SJSU		\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 4,079.00	\$ 24,079.00
Total \$ Per Year				\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 17,994.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 4,079.00	\$ 82,073.00*

*Grand Total Box Does Not Include Pre-existing Grant Award Amount (\$15,000)