



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-14-52
Meeting 14-13
May 28, 2014

AGENDA ITEM 4

AGENDA ITEM

Amendment to an Agreement with Phytosphere Research to Continue Monitoring of Treatment Methods to Suppress the Spread of Sudden Oak Death

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SOD".

Authorize the General Manager to execute an Amendment to the Agreement with Phytosphere Research for an additional \$15,000 to continue monitoring of treatment methods in Calendar Years 2014 and 2015 to suppress the spread of Sudden Oak Death, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$67,500.

SUMMARY

The Board of Directors of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) approved original agreements with Phytosphere Research on October 22, 2008, October 28, 2009, July 25, 2012, and July 24, 2013 to design treatment of oak trees for the suppression of Sudden Oak Death (SOD) disease and monitor the results (R-08-123, R-09-97, R-12-66 and R-13-67). This amendment would extend the monitoring phase of this research and provide matching funds for a research grant from the U.S. Forest Service. In the next year, the General Manager will provide a summary of all SOD activities completed in the past ten years and work with the Board to develop a future strategy.

DISCUSSION

SOD is a plant disease caused by the fungus-like pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*, responsible for killing millions of oaks and tanoaks throughout California's forests. On December 14, 2005, the Board of Directors adopted a ten-year plan for addressing SOD, including mapping of potentially resistant trees, treating a select number of specimen-sized trees with fungicide, and establishing a collaborative research fund for SOD research to help guide land management decisions (R-05-122). District staff continues to work with researchers, primarily Phytosphere Research, on all of these SOD tasks, particularly treatment of oaks with fungicide.

In 2007, Drs. Ted Swiecki and Elizabeth Bernhardt with Phytosphere Research were hired to test treatment methods to suppress the spread of SOD in oak stands at Rancho San Antonio, Monte Bello, and El Corte de Madera Creek Open Space Preserves (OSPs). The two treatment methods consist of removing bay trees within 15 feet of oak trees and annual spraying of a fungicide on oak trees. SOD has had minimal spread in the last three years because of drought conditions, thus some years with more typical rainfall will be needed to adequately evaluate the effectiveness of these treatment methods.

Phytosphere Research continues to find opportunities for additional funding and collaboration with the US Forest Service and university experts to expand SOD research on District preserves. Drs. Swiecki and Bernhardt have expanded their research to Los Trancos, Russian Ridge and Skyline Ridge OSPs and were the first to document the SOD pathogen causing death of canyon live oaks. They are currently working with District staff and contractors to refine the methods for applying fungicide to protect oak trees.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of the recommended action will cost an additional \$15,000, raising the current contract of \$52,500 to \$67,500. Funding for this amendment was included in the Natural Resources Department budget for FY2014-15 as approved by the Board on March 26, 2014.

Over an eight-year period (2007 through 2015), Phytosphere Research will have received \$155,075 in grant funding from the U.S. Forest Service to assist in SOD research on District preserves. The District's matching contributions have been an important incentive for continued funding by the U. S. Forest Service.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

Board committee review for this item was not required.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The SOD treatment activities conducted as a part of this research were included in the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Site-Specific Weed and Pest Management Project approved by the Board on May 9, 2012 (R-12-47). No further CEQA review is required.

NEXT STEPS

If the recommended action is approved by the Board, staff will execute the amendment to the Phytosphere Research agreement to allow continued SOD research on District preserves. In the next year, staff will provide a summary of all Sudden Oak Death activities completed in the past ten years including SOD trends, research results, District expenditures, and matching funds. At that time, staff will also work with the Board to develop a future strategy for managing SOD on District preserves.

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