



City of Chula Vista

Staff Report

File#: 16-0447, **Item#:** 5.

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-201 OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHULA VISTA ACKNOWLEDGING GRANT REQUIREMENTS OF SANDAG TO IMPLEMENT AN EIGHTEEN MONTH COASTAL CACTUS WREN HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM WITHIN THE CHULA VISTA OTAY RANCH PRESERVE MANAGEMENT AREA, AUTHORIZING ACCEPTANCE OF THE GRANT FUNDING SHOULD IT BE AWARDED FROM SANDAG, AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A GRANT AGREEMENT WITH SANDAG

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Council adopt the resolution.

SUMMARY

On March 7, 2016, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) issued a Call for Projects (CFP) for grant funding under the TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) to support environmental land management projects. The City prepared and submitted a grant proposal to fund an eighteen month land management program to restore and enhance degraded Coastal cactus wren habitat within the City's Otay Ranch Preserve Management Area (Otay Ranch Preserve), specifically within Salt Creek Canyon. On September 13, 2016, the EMP Working Group approved a list of projects, including Chula Vista's, to be considered for funding by SANDAG. The project's recommendation for funding will be presented to the SANDAG Transportation Committee, Regional Planning Committee and Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee this fall before being presented to the Board of Directors for final approval. In accordance with SANDAG's selection process, to be considered eligible for grant funding, grant applicants are required to provide SANDAG with a resolution accepting grant funding, if awarded, acknowledging the City's commitment to provide matching funds through in-kind administrative services, and authorizing subsequent execution of SANDAG's standard grant agreement. Tonight's actions would ratify and approve the grant application for TransNet funding, authorize staff to accept the requested grant funds, if awarded, acknowledge the City's commitment to providing matching funds through in-kind administrative services, and execute a grant agreement between SANDAG and the City to implement the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Environmental Notice

The Project qualifies for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines.

Environmental Determination

The Director of Development Services has reviewed the proposed project for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the project qualifies for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15304(d) (Minor Alterations to Land) of the State CEQA

File#: 16-0447, Item#: 5.

Guidelines. Consistent with Section 15304(d), the proposed project involves minor alterations in lands within an existing officially designated wildlife management area (i.e., Otay Ranch Preserve) for purposes of improving existing wildlife habitat and resources. Thus, no further environmental review is necessary.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Not Applicable

DISCUSSION

SANDAG TransNet EMP Grant Funding

In November 2004, the voters of San Diego County approved the TransNet Extension Ordinance 04-01 and Expenditure Plan, including an Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP). The EMP is a funding allocation category for the costs to mitigate habitat impacts for regional transportation projects. The EMP is a unique component of the TransNet Extension, in that it goes beyond traditional mitigation for transportation projects by including a funding allocation for habitat acquisition, management, and monitoring activities, as needed, to help implement regional habitat conservation plans.

On February 26, 2016, the SANDAG Board of Directors approved land management activities and a budget of \$1.8 million for projects that related to: 1) Threat Reduction Stewardship and 2) Species and Habitat Recovery.

SANDAG Call for Projects and Chula Vista's Proposal

On March 7, 2016, SANDAG issued a Call for Projects (CFP) from entities wishing to apply for a portion of TransNet funds for the use of environmental land management projects. A copy of the CFP is provided as Attachment 3 to this staff report. On June 10, 2016, the City submitted a grant proposal requesting grant funds to support an eighteen month land management program to increase the quality of habitat and improve connectivity for the Coastal cactus wren within the City's Otay Ranch Preserve, particularly along Salt Creek through shrub thinning within suitable wren habitat. The Coastal cactus wren is a qualifying MSP Category SO species (species whose persistence of one or more significant occurrences in the MSP area is at high risk of loss without immediate management action above and beyond that of daily maintenance activities). A summary of the City's grant proposal and requested funding amount is provided below:

Increase and Enhance Quality Coastal Cactus Wren Habitat within the Otay Ranch Preserve

The goal of the project is to increase the quality of habitat and improve connectivity for the coastal cactus wren (MSP Category SO) along Salt Creek through shrub thinning within suitable wren habitat. This program addresses the immediate needs of coastal cactus wren within Salt Creek where loss and degradation of existing wren habitat has occurred due to historical cattle grazing, vegetation succession processes, an increase of invasive plant species, unauthorized off-road vehicle use, and drought. Activities included in this short-term program include shrub thinning, pre-implementation focused cactus wren monitoring, and photographic monitoring. These program methodologies are similar to those used to successfully restore 27 acres of low-quality coastal cactus wren habitat located in Wolf Canyon (Otay Ranch Preserve), 9 acres in Rice Canyon (EMP Grant #5001130), and 15 acres in lower Salt Creek (EMP Grant #5001970).

The grant amount requested to retain a qualified biological consultant to implement this proposal is \$49,972 and would provide up to eighteen months of funding. Staff will select a qualified biological consultant to implement this project in accordance with the City's purchasing procedures set forth in Chula Vista Municipal Code (CVMC) 2.56. Attachment 2 contains the City's grant proposal. Alternatively, the City may consider amending its current contract with the Otay Ranch Preserve steward.

Pending Grant Award and Eligibility Requirements

On September 13, 2016 the EMP Working Group approved a list of projects to be considered for funding by SANDAG's Transportation Committee, Regional Planning Committee and Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee this fall before being presented to the Board of Directors for final approval. The City's proposal was included on the list of projects recommend for TrasNet funding. To be considered eligible for grant funding, the City is now required to provide SANDAG with a resolution authorizing City acceptance of the requested grant funds, if awarded, and execution of SANDAG's standard grant agreement.

The City's grant proposal included matching funds through the use of in-kind administrative resources, more specifically, through the use of City staff time. City staff will be utilized to implement the proposed project and administer the consultant contract. City staff time for this project, and all MSCP related projects, is assured due to the City's obligation to implement the provisions of the Chula Vista MSCP Subarea Plan and the associated MSCP implementing ordinances. This obligation is pursuant to the Implementing Agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the City of Chula Vista. Consistent with SANDAG's grant requirements, the City is also required to include a statement in the resolution assuring the City's commitment to provide matching funds through in-kind City services. Applicants that do not provide the required resolution to SANDAG by October 21, 2016 will not be eligible for grant funding.

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the property holdings of the City Council and has found no property holdings within 500 feet of the boundaries of the property which is the subject of this action. Staff is not independently aware, and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision maker conflict of interest in this matter.

LINK TO STRATEGIC GOALS

The City's Strategic Plan has five major goals: Operational Excellence, Economic Vitality, Healthy Community, Strong and Secure Neighborhoods and a Connected Community. If awarded, the funds received through this grant program will support the Healthy Community goal, particularly City Initiative 3.2.1 (Implement environmental/conservation programs). The Chula Vista Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Subarea Plan and associated Implementing Agreement with the Wildlife Agencies rely on supplemental funding sources such as SANDAGs EMP to implement enhanced conservation projects (e.g., habitat restoration and habitat enhancement) for the protection of biological resources within the Otay Ranch Preserve.

CURRENT YEAR FISCAL IMPACT

All costs associated with the grant application and the preparation of this report, as well as any consulting contracts, should the contract be awarded, are not subject to cost recovery and will be absorbed in the existing General Fund personnel budget. Pursuant to the timeframe specified in the grant application, implementation of the program is not scheduled to commence until February 2017.

ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT

The \$49,972 in grant funds will be sufficient to cover costs for a biological consultant to perform the necessary habitat enhancement, increase the quality of habitat, shrub thinning, and monitoring activities. If the grant funds are awarded, a separate contract will be brought to the City Council for consideration. Payment for invoices received from the biological consultant will be paid directly from grant funds provided by SANDAG. Therefore, no appropriation of funds from the General Fund is required to cover biological consultant services. If the grant funds are awarded, appropriation of funds will be added to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016-17 CIP Program.

In-kind City staff services for eighteen months of project management are anticipated to total \$1,300. No additional appropriations will be requested to fund the associated personnel expenditures. The City is not obligated to continue to implement maintenance and enhancement once the grant funds have been expended.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Resolution
- 2) Chula Vista 2016 EMP Grant Proposal
- 3) A copy of the Call for Projects (CFP)
- 4) City Council Conflict Map

File#: 16-0447, Item#: 5.

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