County Of Sonoma
Agenda Item
Summary Report

Department: Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

4/5 Vote Not Required

Name and Phone Number: Karen Gaffney, Strategic Initiatives Mgr. - (707) 565-7344

Board Date: 12/13/2011

Deadline for Board Action: 12/13/2011

AGENDA SHORT TITLE: Approval of Moore Foundation Grant to Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation & Open Space District (Economic Evaluation of Conservation).

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION: Authorize Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District General Manager to enter into a $750,000 grant agreement with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and to enter into a sub-contract agreement in the amount of $194,000 with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County.

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURES:</th>
<th>ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Cost</td>
<td>$750,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount Budgeted</td>
<td>$0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Available Appropriations</td>
<td>$0 (Explain Below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Requested</td>
<td>$750,000.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Contingencies (Fund Name:) $0

Unanticipated Revenue (Source: Moore Foundation) $750,000.00

Other Transfers (Source:) $0

Explanation (if required): The budget adjustment will be submitted for Board approval during the January, 2012 consolidated budget adjustment process.

Prior Board Action: None.

Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval: District will not be able to enter into grant agreement with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and will not receive $750,000 in grant funds to analyze the economic benefits associated with conservation in Sonoma County. District will not be able to participate in an innovative regional partnership to evaluate the economic value of conservation.
Background:

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (District) has protected over 80,000 acres of land in Sonoma County via fee title and conservation easements since its inception in 1990. These actions have benefitted the community by protecting agricultural lands, open space, scenic viewsheds, and ecosystems, and by creating recreational opportunities for people within and beyond Sonoma County. This conservation work has been accomplished with multiple local and regional partners, and has leveraged significant funding from foundations, and federal and state agencies.

Need for Economic Analysis of Conservation

Although there are preliminary data suggesting that conservation has economic benefits that accrue to local communities (e.g., increased real estate values, recreational tourism revenues, viable agriculture), these economic benefits have not yet been quantified in a comprehensive and systematic way in Sonoma County. Economic analyses of the value of conservation have been accomplished in many areas in the United States, and the results indicate that the return on investment from conservation is substantial, and benefits local communities over long periods of time. Examples of the economic benefits of conservation include such things as clean drinking water supplies, carbon sequestration, pollination services, public health benefits, recreational tourism, agricultural viability, and flood and storm water mitigation, maintenance of biodiversity—all of which can be quantified and in many cases assigned a monetary value. Because the District and its partners have been engaged in conservation in Sonoma County for over 20 years, there is an opportunity to evaluate the return on investment associated with conservation, to quantify these economic data, and use this information to leverage additional conservation revenues for Sonoma County (i.e., grants and other sources of outside funding). Additionally, this economic information can be used to support prioritization of future District actions related to land conservation and stewardship.

Grant from Moore Foundation

This $750,000 grant from the Moore Foundation will support the District and its local and regional partners in performing innovative economic analyses related to the value of conservation in Sonoma and Santa Cruz counties. The District will be the lead grantee, with a sub-contract of $194,000 issued to the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County. The District expects to work closely with nationally recognized economists from Stanford’s Natural Capital Project, Resources for the Future and others. Data developed from this grant will document the economic value of various aspects of conservation accomplished by the District and its partners. Data will be shared with the community, decision makers, and funders—both locally and nationally—to inform conservation decisions and to enhance financial arguments for funding conservation. A stakeholder group will help advise the process as it moves forward, and is expected to include county agency personnel, NGOs (e.g., non-profit organizations), and representatives from local and regional agricultural organizations. There is no matching funds requirement for this grant. The District will contribute staff time (Strategic Initiatives Manager) as an in-kind match to support the community engagement process, perform education and outreach, and manage the contract and sub-contractors. District staff (Conservation Planner, Analyst) will be paid from the grant to perform data analysis, develop educational and outreach materials and communicate outcomes from the grant. The District will provide a match in the form of acquisitions and stewardship actions, and other data gathering and mapping actions that are inherent to regular District conservation activities. This “match,” listed as $432,600 in the Foundation Grant Summary (on file with the Board), is not a required monetary obligation, rather it reflects the conservation activities the District will undertake over next three years, even if the grant was not available.

Regional Context

The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation is focused on regional, state, national, and international outcomes that result in positive change for the environment and human communities. As a result, it wishes to support
economic analyses that take place in two innovative counties in the Bay Area – Sonoma and Santa Cruz, with the intention of expanding this economic analysis approach to other parts of the Bay Area, state, and nation. The Moore Foundation’s Bay Area Program is interested in comparing information from the two counties to inform economic analysis of conservation in the Bay Area region. The idea is to evaluate information from the two counties as demonstration projects, with the data being used to inform future analyses in other Bay Area counties, the region, and state.

The Moore Foundation has asked the District to take the lead on this grant, given Sonoma County’s history of innovation and leadership in creating a nationally unique Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and on issues related to conservation. As the lead, the District would provide a sub-contract to the Resource Conservation District (R.C.D.) of Santa Cruz County so that the R.C.D. can carry out economic analyses in their area. The District expects the resource allocation for administration of the sub-contract to Santa Cruz to be minimal. At the regional scale, the counties will work together to compare information and data and evaluate opportunities for future funding to support additional conservation.

The District intended to bring this board item in early 2010 on the regular Board calendar, and to provide a joint presentation with our county partner agencies. In the last two weeks, the Moore Foundation informed the District that their accounting policy required that the agreement be signed this calendar year. The District intends to bring an item to the Board in early 2012 on the regular calendar to present and discuss this innovative project.

Partners

County partners include the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department, Sonoma County Water Agency, Sonoma County Economic Development Board, Sonoma County Regional Climate Protection Authority, and Sonoma County R.C.D.s. The three year grant will engage interested local N.G.O.s and agricultural groups, many of whom have already expressed interest and support for participation.

Requested Board Action

Authorize Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District General Manager to enter into a $750,000 grant agreement with the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and to enter into a sub-contract agreement in the amount of $194,000 with the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County.

Attachments: None

On File With Clerk: SCAPOSD Grant Application - Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation