



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: November 4, 2020

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing a professional services contract with Dudek for the planning and development of a Regional Forest and Fire Priority Plan for lands managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a professional services contract with Dudek. for the development of a Regional Forest and Fire Priority Plan in an amount not to exceed \$374,952.

Background: The Regional Forest and Fire Priority Plan is an effort to review and analyze existing fire prevention plans within the Conservancy Zone and identify best management practices for fire resiliency of different land types. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy received a block grant of \$1.5 million for this project, and granted \$700,000 to MRCA in 2019 to prepare the plan and identify demonstration projects. Funding for the project comes from the State's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Fund, and five other block grants are being implemented in other areas of the state. One goal of the project is to describe and quantify the short- and long-term benefits of different land management practices on climate change. Demonstrating a clear link between practices such as periodic brush removal and reduction of greenhouse gases would provide evidence that justifies a State investment in those practices.

In July 2020 staff issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a consultant team to assist with the planning, coordination, development and preparation of the Plan. Prospective teams were required to include a Fire Ecologist, have significant experience both with large-scale wildfire management plans and community engagement, and be familiar with the unique ecosystems of our local mountains. This required niche expertise limited the number of qualified teams, making a wide, general distribution of the RFP ineffective. Therefore, the RFP was directly distributed to 35 contacts in the local fire planning community and staff solicited

assistance from partner agencies and academic experts to reach a broader audience. The RFP deadline was extended to encourage more participation, and it was also published via MRCA social media.

Two teams submitted proposals in August. Both teams were interviewed in September by staff from MRCA, the Conservancy, and the National Park Service. Section 5.3 of the MRCA's Procurement Policy states that the selection of consultants to perform professional services shall be on the basis of demonstrated competence and the professional qualifications necessary for the satisfactory performance of the services required. Considering all of the information available, staff determined that Dudek was the best fit for the project.

Dudek's team is composed of forest-oriented environmental planners and scientists and has previously completed forest fire planning projects of all scales throughout California including plans such as Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Vegetation Management Plan, Carbon Storage Study, and Climate Adaptation Plan and will be able to apply that experience to the Regional Forest and Fire Priority Plan. Their core team has the expertise to complete technical analysis, including GHG emissions calculations, and translate technical findings into easy to access data for the public.

The scope of work includes inventory and review of existing information, supplemental new mapping, analysis and prioritization of resources and projects, and preparation of the Regional Priority Plan. One component of the plan will be bilingual story maps that can effectively communicate the plan's findings to a broad audience. Dudek submitted a proposal in the amount of \$350,652 for these services. Excerpts from their proposal describing the scope and fees are attached.

Staff is recommending including a contingency of \$24,300 in case additional fire behavior modeling/mapping is needed in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. Modeling for this area is planned to be undertaken by the Conservation Biology Institute as part of their Santa Monica Mountains Woolsey Fire Recovery and Adaptation Program. It is not certain at this time whether the Conservation Biology Institute modeling will be completed in time to sync with the MRCA's Regional Priority Plan. This amount will not be included in the initial contract, and only authorized if needed.

Consideration: The proposed contract with Dudek is for an amount not to exceed \$374,952.00, which includes a \$24,300 contingency for optional modeling.

Fiscal Impact: The contract will be funded through an existing grant from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The expense was anticipated in the fiscal year 20/21 budget. There is no impact on the general fund.