

<h1 style="margin: 0;">County of Sonoma</h1> <h2 style="margin: 10px 0 0 0;">Agenda Item</h2> <h2 style="margin: 10px 0 0 0;">Summary Report</h2>	<p style="margin: 0;">Clerk of the Board Use Only</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Meeting Date ___/___/___</p> <p style="margin: 0;">Agenda Item No: _____</p>
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Department: Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District	() 4/5 Vote Required
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Contact: Marta Puente	Phone: (707) 565-7360	Board Date: 04/14/09	Deadline for Board Action:
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AGENDA SHORT TITLE:

ACQUISITION OF A CONSERVATION EASEMENT OVER THE [REDACTED] RANCH PROPERTY

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION:

Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District authorizing and directing the President to execute an agreement for the acquisition of a conservation easement over the [REDACTED] Ranch property (approximately 396 acres) for a total price of \$1,615,000; determining that the acquisition is consistent with the 2020 Sonoma County General Plan; authorizing and directing the execution of a certificate of acceptance; directing the preparation of escrow instructions; and directing the filing of a Notice of Exemption in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT			
<u>EXPENDITURES</u>			<u>SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUESTED</u>
Estimated Cost	\$	1,615,000	Contingencies (Fund Name:)
			\$ 000.00
Amount Budgeted	\$	1,615,000	Unanticipated Revenue (Sources:)
			\$ 000.00
Other Avail. Approp.			Other Transfer(s): Fund Balance
			\$ 000.00
(Explain below)		1,615,000	Total Source of Funds:
Additional Requested:	\$		\$ 000.00

Explanation (if required): **Funding will be provided by the 2007 Series A Measure F Sales Tax Bond Proceeds.**

Prior Board Action(s):

Alternatives - Results of Non-Approval:
Do not adopt resolution. Close of escrow to acquire a conservation easement over the [REDACTED] Ranch property will not occur.

Background:

NOTE: Conservation Easement, Preservation Agreement, Certificate of Acceptance, Notice of Exemption and Appraisal are on file with the Clerk of the Board.

Project Summary

The District is proposing to acquire a conservation easement over the [REDACTED] Ranch property, totalling approximately 396 acres. The property includes an approximately 295-acre property currently owned by [REDACTED] and two other contiguous parcels, totaling approximately 101 acres, which are presently in contract to be purchased by [REDACTED] as part of the conservation project. The purchase price of the 396-acre conservation easement is \$1,615,000. The conservation easement will protect a large livestock ranch, preserve the scenic viewshed from the Bodega Highway Scenic Corridor and protect the natural resources of 1.4 miles of Salmon Creek.

[REDACTED] Ranch Property (District Five)

Acreage: 396 acres

2020 Sonoma County General Plan

Land Use: Land Extensive Agriculture 80 and 160 acre densities; Diverse Agriculture 40/160 CC density; Diverse Agriculture 40/160 density; and Land Extensive Agriculture 160/640 CC density

Open Space and Resource Conservation Element: Scenic Corridors and Biotic Resources

Property Characteristics

The [REDACTED] Ranch property is located east and south of the town of Bodega and contributes significantly to the rural open space character of the County. The topography consists of open meadows and gently rolling to moderate coastal hills that support highly productive grassland. Salmon Creek traverses the property from east to west. The property possesses features that make it well-suited for continued agricultural use, including soils consisting primarily of Blucher and Steinbeck loams which are among the most productive pasture soils in Sonoma County. The property is currently used for raising heifer replacements sold primarily to local dairy ranches. The surrounding area consists of rural residential properties, dairies, and pasture ranches used for livestock grazing. The property is in the vicinity of the District's Bianchi Dairy, protected by the District through an agricultural conservation easement.

Project Significance/Project Design

The project is the acquisition of an agricultural conservation easement over the entirety of the property. Approximately 24 acres are designated limited agriculture and the remainder is designated for unlimited agriculture. The proposed limited agricultural area includes the riparian corridor along Salmon Creek. [REDACTED] has fenced the riparian corridor of Salmon Creek with the assistance of the Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District through a State Coastal Conservancy grant. Native riparian vegetation has been planted throughout the riparian zone. To provide lasting protection of Salmon Creek from livestock damage to the bed and banks, and to minimize adverse water quality impacts and to ensure re-establishment of riparian vegetation to enhance habitat values, an agreement entitled [REDACTED] Ranch Preservation Agreement' will be executed and recorded along with the conservation easement.

Attachments:

- 1. Site Map
- 2. Resolution

On File With Clerk:

- 1. Conservation Easement
- 2. Preservation Agreement
- 3. Certificate of Acceptance
- 4. Notice of Exemption
- 5. Appraisal

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than "Requested")

Vote:

Background (cont'd):

██████████ has agreed to provide public access for scientific research and educational tours four times annually to the "Salmon Creek Restoration Area," by appointment. The property will be merged into one parcel and one primary single-family residence and associated agricultural structures will be permitted under the conservation easement.

General Plan Consistency

Acquisition of a conservation easement over the ██████████ Ranch project furthers goals in the Agricultural Element of the Sonoma County General Plan by protecting lands currently in agricultural production, lands with soils and other characteristics suitable for continued agricultural use. It furthers the goals of the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element, policies for scenic corridors, by preserving the landscape along a scenic corridor and retaining the open, rural character of an important scenic area. It furthers the Element's goals for biotic resources, by providing for protection of riparian corridors, areas along streams that support dense native vegetation, providing food, water and nesting areas for insects, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

Connecting Communities and the Land

The ██████████ Ranch project fulfills policies in the Farms and Ranches category of the District's acquisition plan, including policies for the protection of agricultural lands vital to maintaining ranching and dairy operations, the linkage of large contiguous areas of protected agricultural lands, as well as the protection of lands important to local agricultural heritage. The project also fulfills policies in the Greenbelt and Scenic Hillside category including policies the protection of lands that are visible from highly traveled roads and highways and that contribute to the county's rural character and sense of place. Additionally, the ██████████ Ranch project fulfills policies in the Water, Wildlife and Natural Areas category, including policies for the protection of areas critical to watershed function by preserving and restoring riparian areas.

Strategic Plan

Support Sustainable Water: The ██████████ Ranch project protects the riparian corridor along 1.4 miles of Salmon Creek and improves the local watershed, including the riparian area, water resources and quality.

Approvals

Expenditure Plan Consistency

On February 5, 2009, by Resolution No. 2009-002, the Open Space Authority determined that the acquisition was consistent with its Expenditure Plan.

Appraisal Information and Purchase Price

A full narrative appraisal was conducted by Chris Bell of Appraisal Associates with a date of valuation of September 22, 2008. The appraiser determined that the highest and best use of the property before acquisition of the conservation easement was for development of four legal lots for rural residential estate use. After acquisition of the easement, the highest and best use of the property was for one legal lot for rural residential estate use with conservation easement restrictions.

The appraiser concluded the estimated market value of the conservation easement to be \$1,615,000. District staff reviewed the appraisal and concluded it meets the District's Appraisal Standards and Guidelines. The Open Space Authority reviewed and approved the appraisal at its January 15, 2009 meeting. The District's General Manager recommends a purchase price of \$1,615,000.

Escrow/Closing

Close of escrow for the conservation easement is proposed to occur in late May 2009.

CEQA

The project is Categorical Exempt from CEQA pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15317; alternatively it is exempt pursuant to Section 15325(a), (b), and (c); and alternatively it is not a project subject to CEQA pursuant to Section 15378.