

**COUNTY OF SONOMA
AGENDA ITEM
SUMMARY REPORT**

Clerk of the Board Use Only
Meeting Date **Held Until**
 ___/___/___ ___/___/___
Agenda Item No: **Agenda Item No:**

Department: Permit & Resource Management Department

() 4/5 Vote Required

Contact:
Scott Briggs

Phone:
(707) 565-8351

Board Date:
July 21, 2009

Deadline for Board Action:

AGENDA SHORT TITLE: Cal Fire Cooperating Agency Agreement for Preservation Ranch EIR

REQUESTED BOARD ACTION:

Authorize the Chairman of the Board to execute an Agreement with Cal Fire for consultation on and review of the proposed Preservation Ranch project.

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT

EXPENDITURES

ADD'L FUNDS REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL

Estimated Cost \$

Contingencies \$
(Fund Name:)

Amount Budgeted \$

Unanticipated Revenue \$
(Source:)

Other Avail Approp \$
(Explain below)

Other Transfer(s) \$
(Source:)

Additional Requested: \$

Add'l Funds Requested: \$

Explanation (if required):

Prior Board Action(s):

The Chairman of the Board executed an Agreement for Professional Services with ENTRIX, Inc. in the amount of \$320,060 (\$256,048.00 plus a 25% contingency of \$64,012.00) to peer review environmental technical studies, prepare a CEQA Initial Study, and conduct Scoping Meetings for the Preservation Ranch project.

Alternatives - Results of Non-Approval:

Cal Fire will not review and comment on administrative drafts of the CEQA documents for the proposed Preservation Ranch project. The County would not have the opportunity to review administrative drafts of environmental review documents for future timber projects.

Background: On File with Clerk: Full Preservation Ranch Project Proposal.

PRMD is requesting that your Board authorize the Chair to execute the attached Cooperating Agency Agreement with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (“Cal Fire”) for consultation on and review of the proposed Preservation Ranch project, PRMD File Number PLP06-0107, Supervisorial District No. 5.

Project: The Preservation Ranch proposal encompasses approximately 19,652 acres of forest and woodlands in the northwest part of the County north of Soda Springs Road and Annapolis Road. The project proposal seeks to:

1. restore and enhance the majority of the acreage for timber production;
2. convert approximately 1,671 acres of timberland to vineyard through Timber Harvest Plans (THP) and Timber Conversion Permits (TCPs);
3. resubdivide 160 existing parcels into 63 parcels;
4. provide permanent, on-site housing for 35 full-time farm workers;
5. create a new 2,702 acre wildlife preserve (Windy Gap Preserve);
6. provide a 221 acre easement with a 5 mile loop trail to the Soda Springs Reserve Park;
7. obtain various rezonings to facilitate the project;
8. carry out 93± miles of roadway improvement and maintenance;
9. create 10± aggregate borrow sites and up to 40 water reservoirs;
10. install 85 miles of deer fencing around proposed vineyards.

A full description of the project proposal is on file with the Board Clerk and is also posted on the PRMD website <http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/presranch/presranch.htm>. Some changes and revisions to the proposal may occur over time.

Cooperating Agency Agreement: The proposed project requires Cal Fire as well as County entitlements, including state approval of the proposed rezoning out of the timberland production zone and a Timberland Conversion Permit (“TCP”) and Timber Harvesting Plan (“THP”). The County of Sonoma is the lead agency and is preparing the EIR under CEQA, while Cal Fire will review and comment on the EIR as a responsible agency.

Cooperating agency agreements are frequently used to allow outside agencies to review and comment on administrative drafts of environmental review documents, while preserving the confidentiality of those documents. For example, the County is a cooperating agency for both the Graton Rancheria Casino and Hotel project and the Cloverdale Rancheria Resort Casino project.

A cooperating agency agreement is warranted here due to Cal Fire’s expertise with timber harvesting and timberland conversion. The agreement would increase Cal Fire’s opportunity to review and comment on the EIR, which should result in a better and more thorough environmental review of the proposed project.

Attachments: Cooperating Agency Agreement.

On File With Clerk: Full Preservation Ranch Project Proposal.

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than “Requested”)

Vote:

Background: (Continued)

The agreement also allows for County review and comment on administrative drafts of environmental review documents for future timber projects for which Cal Fire is the lead agency. This provision would give the County a greater opportunity to identify issues or concerns, and to influence the final direction of timber projects in the County.

PRMD Staffing: David Schiltgen is the Project Planner. Scott Briggs and Steve Dee of the Environmental Review Section are administering the EIR. Jennifer Barrett - Deputy Planning Director will oversee PRMD operations.

Budget: All costs associated with preparing and processing the permits, EIR and Cooperating Agency Agreement will be reimbursed by the applicant with no cost to the County.

Recommendation: Authorize the Chairman of the Board to execute the attached Agreement with Cal Fire for consultation on and review of the proposed Preservation Ranch project.