

County Of Sonoma Agenda Item Summary Report

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

Department: Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and Regional Parks Department

4/5 Vote Not Required

Contact:
 Sara Press
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Phone:
 (707) 565-7360

Board Date:
 10/20/2009

Deadline for Board Action:
 10/20/2009

AGENDA SHORT TITLE: Taylor Mountain Interim Public Access Permit Program

REQUESTED BOARD ACTIONS:

See Supplemental Page

CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT

EXPENDITURES:

ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL:

Estimated Cost	\$319, 874	Contingencies	\$0
		(Fund Name:)	
Amount Budgeted	\$319,874	Unanticipated Revenue	\$0
		(Source:)	
Other Available Appropriations	\$0	Other Transfers	\$0
(Explain Below)		(Source:)	
Additional Requested	\$0	Additional Funds Requested	\$0

Explanation (if required): This expense is included in the District's FY 09/10 budget.
 District Operations 697029-6169 = \$114,374 and 697029-8510 = \$205,500

Prior Board Action: October 11, 2005 by Reso. No. 05-0915, the Board approved the fee title acquisition of the Taylor Mountain property. On July 14, 2009, the Board approved an amended contract with Nancy Dakin for the Taylor Mountain Interim Public Access Permit Program Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration.

Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval: Do not adopt resolutions. Approval and implementation of the project would not occur.

Supplemental Page

Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (“District”) adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Taylor Mountain Interim Public Access Permit Program (“the Project”); determining the Project is consistent with the 2020 Sonoma County General Plan; approving the Project, and making certain findings in connection therewith; authorizing the Interim General Manager to pursue an application with the City of Santa Rosa for vacation of a portion of Kawana Terrace and an encroachment permit for pedestrian improvements along Kawana Terrace, to pursue a license agreement with the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA), and to execute an agreement between the District and LandPaths to coordinate the Project, in an amount not to exceed \$84,374; and authorizing additional negotiations as needed to implement the Project.

Concurrent resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma authorizing and directing the District Interim General Manager and Regional Parks Director to execute a Park Management and Planning Agreement for operations and maintenance associated with the Project, in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for the first fiscal year, and a Construction Contract Administration Services Agreement to provide construction management of installation of park improvements, in an amount not to exceed \$200,000.

Authorize the Interim General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to execute an amended agreement between the District and Nancy Dakin for services associated with the revision and recirculation of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Taylor Mountain Interim Public Access Permit Program, in an amount not to exceed \$5,500, for a total contract amount of \$47,045.

Background:

NOTE: Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration; Recirculated Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration; Notice of Determination; Park Management and Planning Agreement; Construction Contract Administration Services Agreement; Personal Services Contract; and Amended Agreement are on file with the Clerk of the Board.

SUMMARY

On October 11, 2005, the District Board of Directors approved the fee title acquisition of the 823-acre Taylor Mountain property. Since this acquisition, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (District) has contracted with the local non-profit LandPaths to offer public docent-led hikes to Taylor Mountain through LandPaths' outing program and coordination of a volunteer patrol on the property.

The District has created an Interim Public Access Permit Program for Taylor Mountain in collaboration with pedestrian, bicyclist, and equestrian user groups as well as the general public. With the assistance of Nancy Dakin, Environmental Consultant, the District prepared the environmental document for the project, which resulted in the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration. The proposed Permit Program will allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrian public access onto Taylor Mountain in the interim while a master planning process is conducted in conjunction with Sonoma County Regional Parks (Regional Parks) for long-term use of the property. The District proposes to contract with LandPaths during this period to implement and manage the Permit Program.

DISCUSSION

Permit Program Overview

The Permit Program will allow a maximum of 2,500 people to obtain a permit for access to the property after attending an orientation on Taylor Mountain. The permits will be issued on a first-come, first-serve basis, and limited to 500 per calendar quarter. This will enable the District and its partners to assess the permit process and analyze any impacts that may result from the increased use. Each person obtaining a permit will be allowed to bring up to three guests per site visit.

Attachments:

1. Interim Public Access Map
2. Resolution
3. Concurrent Resolution

On File With Clerk:

1. Notice of Intent to Adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration
2. Recirculated Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration, including public comments and responses to comments
3. Notice of Determination
4. Park Management and Planning Agreement between the District and Regional Parks
5. Construction Contract Administration Services Agreement between the District and Regional Parks
6. Personal Services Contract with LandPaths
7. Amended Agreement with Scope of Work with Nancy Dakin

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than "Requested")

Vote:

Hikers, bicyclists and equestrians will be allowed onto the property on designated ranch roads and mowed paths during appropriate times of year. Hikers will be able to access mowed pedestrian paths (both a western trail and an eastern trail) that reach the top of the property as well as create a loop route.

Bicyclists and equestrians will be able to use an existing ranch road on the eastern side of the property until the wet season. This road reaches the top of the mountain. An additional ranch road (the western route) will be accessible to bicyclists and equestrians after the District obtains necessary environmental permits and constructs necessary improvements.

Parking for cars and horse trailers will be available at the interim staging area next to the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) water tanks. This unimproved staging area is used by the Volunteer Patrol and for outings and other events.

Public Process

Public meetings were held November 6, 2008 and September 9, 2009 to present the proposed Permit Program and to receive feedback from the community. In addition, representatives of multiple user groups provided input for the proposed Permit Program. The District then met with these representatives on Taylor Mountain on July 13, 2009.

Program Implementation

The District and Regional Parks are proposing to enter into an agreement to ensure that the property is regularly maintained and patrolled, and that safety issues are addressed. The District and Regional Parks are proposing to enter into an agreement to construct a number of improvements needed to provide safe multi-use access and parking on-site. These improvements include a self-closing key card gate, a pedestrian gate, self-closing and locking farm gates, bicycle racks, informational kiosk, signs, a chemical toilet, trash and recycling containers and picnic tables. Initial construction work includes grading the staging area, fencing the access driveway and staging area, and installing pedestrian improvements along Kawana Terrace, which will require an encroachment permit from the City of Santa Rosa. The District is proposing to obtain a license agreement from SCWA in order to allow the public to access the service road that runs through the SCWA parcel. Future improvements, which may require permits, include stabilizing two drainage crossings. For full project implementation, a portion of Kawana Terrace would be vacated by the City of Santa Rosa in order to become part of the future Taylor Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve.

The District is proposing to contract with LandPaths to provide the orientation training, and to manage the Permit Program through 2010. The program will be modeled after the successful permit program that LandPaths currently coordinates on the Willow Creek property owned by State Parks, and that Regional Parks has established at Tolay Lake Regional Park. LandPaths was selected based on their experience coordinating the Willow Creek Permit Program since 2005, as well as their familiarity with the property; they have been coordinating the Volunteer Patrol and public outings on Taylor Mountain since District acquisition of the property in 2006. LandPaths' pricing and total cost is very competitive based on the District's recent outings RFP process in which a number of entities submitted proposals for services. Due to lack of available staff at the District, these services cannot be performed in-house.

Master Planning Process

The District will collaborate with Regional Parks and the City of Santa Rosa to develop a comprehensive master plan for Taylor Mountain that will address the existing resources and conditions on the property and identify an appropriate level of public access. The District and Regional Parks are committed to a broad public process as part of developing the plan. This planning process is expected to take up to two years.

California Environmental Quality Act and Mitigated Negative Declarations Public Process

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), an Initial Study and proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) was prepared for the Taylor Mountain Interim Public Access Permit Program. Together with a Notice of Intent (NOI) to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project, the IS/MND was circulated to public agencies by direct mail and through the State Clearinghouse. The document was also posted on the District's website and was available at the District's office in Santa Rosa, Santa Rosa City Hall, and the Santa Rosa and Sonoma County libraries. The NOI was published in the Press Democrat and mailed to property owners within a 400-foot radius of the project area's boundaries.

During the public comment review period of this original IS/MND, from October 14 to November 13, 2008, a total of eight comment letters and nine emails were received in response to the NOI. Many of the comments address policies of the Permit Program, which are outside the purview of CEQA regulations. The written comments and responses are on file with the Clerk.

Modifications and revisions were made to the proposed Permit Program in response to the comments. The Permit Program was revised to allow bicyclists and equestrians to safely access the property. The IS/MND was then revised to reflect these changes, and was recirculated for public comment pursuant to CEQA. Together with an NOI to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project, the IS/MND was circulated to public agencies by direct mail and through the State Clearinghouse. The document was also posted on the District's website and was available at the District's office in Santa Rosa, and at the Sonoma County library in Santa Rosa. The NOI was published in the Press Democrat and mailed to property owners within a 400-foot radius of the project area's boundaries. A public meeting was held on September 9, 2009.

During the public comment review period on the recirculated IS/MND, from August 24 to September 23, 2009, a total of three letters were received in response to the NOI. The written comments and responses are on file with the Clerk. Many of the comments address policies and details of the Permit Program structure, which are outside the purview of CEQA regulations. Minor modifications were made to the Plan in response to the comments; however, none of the information provided in the modifications or responses affects the conclusions of the proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration. Additional assistance was needed from the consultant Nancy Dakin to revise and recirculate the IS/MND, including conducting further analysis of pedestrian safety and preparing responses to additional public comments.

2020 Sonoma County General Plan

The Project is located within unincorporated Sonoma County, within a Scenic Landscape Unit visible from the Petaluma Hill Road Scenic Corridor. The Taylor Mountain property is designated Resources and Rural Development in the Sonoma County General Plan. The Project meets multiple goals in the Land Use Element and the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element of the General Plan, including: identifying important open space areas between and around the county's cities and communities; preserving the visual identities of communities by maintaining open space areas between cities and communities; retaining the largely open, scenic character of important Scenic Landscape Units; preserving the unique rural and natural character of Sonoma County for residents, businesses, visitors and future generations; protecting and enhancing the County's natural habitats and diverse plant and animal communities; and establishing a countywide park and trail system near urban areas and on public lands that meets future recreational needs of the County's residents while protecting agricultural uses.

The Permit Program is consistent with goals, objectives and policies set forth in the 2020 General Plan regarding preserving scenic, agricultural and natural resources, and providing opportunities for recreation, and is therefore consistent with the 2020 General Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

The Interim General Manager recommends that the Board:

- 1) Adopt resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District adopting a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Taylor Mountain Interim Public Access Permit Program ("the Project"); determining the Project is consistent with the 2020 Sonoma County General Plan; approving the Project; authorizing the Interim General Manager to pursue an application with the City of Santa Rosa for vacation of a portion of Kawana Terrace and an encroachment permit for pedestrian improvements along Kawana Terrace, to pursue a license agreement with the Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA), and to execute an agreement between the District and LandPaths to coordinate the Project, in an amount not to exceed \$84,374; authorizing additional negotiations as needed to implement the Project; and
- 2) Adopt concurrent resolution of the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and the Board of Directors of the County of Sonoma authorizing and directing the District Interim General Manager and Regional Parks Director to execute a Park Management and Planning Agreement for operations and maintenance associated with the Project, in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for the first fiscal year, and a Construction Contract Administration Services Agreement to provide construction management of installation of park improvements, in an amount not to exceed \$200,000; and

3) Authorize the Interim General Manager of the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to execute an amended agreement between the District and Nancy Dakin for services associated with the revision and recirculation of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Taylor Mountain Interim Public Access Permit Program in an amount not to exceed \$5,500, for a total contract amount of \$47,045.