



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: COUNTY MANAGER: OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

File #: 22-138

Board Meeting Date: 2/22/2022

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Carolyn Bloede, Director, Office of Sustainability

Subject: Agreement with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District for administration and expansion of the Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Measure K: Recommendation to:

- A) Adopt a resolution authorizing the execution of an agreement with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District for expansion of the Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Program for the term of October 1, 2020 to February 22, 2024 for an amount not to exceed \$400,000; and
- B) Approve an Appropriation Transfer Request (ATR) transferring \$100,000 of **Measure K** funds from the County Manager's Office to the Office of Sustainability to fund certain wildfire resiliency measures to be provided under the Agreement

BACKGROUND:

The San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) is a special district within San Mateo County that provides comprehensive and integrated services around wildlife, water, climate, fire, and agriculture to the local community. In the wake of the August 2020 CZU Lightning Fire Complex, there have been increased efforts to reduce fire risk in San Mateo County with the RCD at the forefront leading programs that support fire recovery, forest health, and fire resilience. The San Mateo RCD works in close partnership with local agencies, organizations, and communities to accomplish the goal of improved fire resiliency through the Neighborhood Chipper Program and projects that aim to build fire adapted communities through community engagement, technical assistance and education, strategic fuel breaks, and landscape fuels treatment and vegetation management. RCD also implements programs in ecosystem conservation and restoration in partnership with local communities that enhance forest health and increase fire resiliency.

District-discretionary **Measure K** funding for this organization has previously been provided to RCD to promote wildfire resiliency as listed below:

- \$75,000 for El Granada Wildfire Resiliency Scoping Project (Sept 2021 to July 2022)
- \$175,000 for Wildfire Risk Reduction (March 2019 to June 2020)

DISCUSSION:

The proposed agreement (the “Agreement”) with the San Mateo RCD expands the Forest Health and Fire Resiliency Program in two ways. First, **Measure K** monies in an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000 would be used to support the administration of fire mitigation programs from October 1, 2020 through February 22, 2024. This includes program elements such as neighborhood chipping, development of grant applications for fire mitigation, and technical assistance for property owners to reduce fire risk throughout the County.

The Neighborhood Chipping Program provides no-cost chipping to select neighborhoods to assist homeowners in creating and maintaining defensible space. Chipping is a process of using a mechanical chipper to break down biomass that builds up from property owners limb trees and to remove excess fuels around their homes. Homeowners are responsible for cutting, gathering, and piling vegetation from around their homes to a designated roadside location. Chipping crews visit designated locations neighborhood by neighborhood to chip vegetation either to be distributed on site as mulch or prepared for removal. Since October 2020, the RCD has provided chipping services to communities in San Mateo County.

Second, in addition to direct fire mitigation programs, the Agreement would help ensure forest health and fire resiliency to reduce fire risk to the region. The RCD implements critical programs in the areas of water conservation, water quality improvements, floodplain restoration, carbon sequestration, and agricultural water projects that enhance forest health and increase fire resiliency. To support these ongoing efforts, the Agreement would authorize funding comprehensive wildlife, water, climate, wildfire, and agriculture programs including \$211,241.06 of program costs incurred from October 1, 2020 through January 31, 2022 and upcoming program activities from February 22, 2022 through February 22, 2024, in a total amount not to exceed \$300,000. The \$300,000 of general fund monies for this purpose is available in the Office of Sustainability’s adopted FY 2021-22 budget. Due to the emergency conditions of the CZU Lightning Complex Fire and the COVID-19 emergency conditions, RCD performed the fire resiliency work in advance of a formal funding agreement being established.

In San Mateo County there is a clear need for improving forest health, creating adequate defensible space around homes, minimizing fuel loads across larger landscapes, reducing the spread of invasive plants and pathogens, providing technical forestry assistance, and providing post-fire landowner assistance. This work has and will continue to improve forest health and resiliency to fire.

The ATR presented to this Board for appropriation of the **Measure K** funds has been approved by the County Manager and Controller or their authorized designees. The resolution has been reviewed and approved by County Counsel as to form.

MEASURE K PERFORMANCE MEASURE:

Description	Amount	Target
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Expansion of the San Mateo Fire Safe Council's Chipper Program and support fire resiliency related project development	\$100,000	Provide chipping services to approximately 12 communities Develop a minimum of two projects
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FISCAL IMPACT:

There are sufficient **Measure K** funds in the FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget for this specific \$100,000 FY 2021-22 **Measure K** request. The ATR will transfer **Measure K** funds in the amount of \$100,000 from the County Manager's Office to the Office of Sustainability. Additionally, the Office of Sustainability allocated departmental reserves for FY 2020-2021 to support this program. Funds were unspent and carried over into FY 2021-2022 for work that the RCD completed from October 2020 to present.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Agreement with the San Mateo RCD
- B. Appropriation Transfer Request