

San Bruno Mountain Habitat Conservation Plan Trust Meeting Minutes November 30, 2020

The meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom Online Conference Call.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Mike Callagy (County of San Mateo), Clay Holstine (City of Brisbane), Shawna Maltbie (City of Daly City), Mike Futrell (City of South San Francisco)

STAFF PRESENT: Hannah Ormshaw (SMCP NRM, HCP Habitat Manager), Stephen Stolte (City of Daly City), Nicholas Calderon (SMCP), Sean Correa (SMCP NRM), Evam Cole (SMCP NRM), Rolando Jorquera (SMCP), Austin Lam (SMCP)

1. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

2. Review and Approve Proposal for the Utilization of Unrestricted Fund Balance for the Habitat Conservation Plan Trust Fund and Accept Grant Funding in the Amount of \$137,900 from the State Coastal Conservancy and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and \$20,000 from the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

- a. Current Unrestricted Fund Balance is \$408,847.85
 - b. Recommend Board to authorize allocation of \$215,840 of fund balance and accept \$137,900 grant award. Fund balance allocation contributes to 2:1 match requirement for the awarded grant funds. Match contribution accounts for the \$20,000 existing annual budget allocation for grazing program, over 3-year term of grant (\$60,000 total). The grant proposal is to fund the implementation of the cattle grazing pilot program.
 - c. Recommend Board to authorize allocation of \$100,000 for reduction of high fire-risk vegetation within HCP area
 - d. Would result in reduction of Fund Balance to \$89,007.85
 - e. Recommend Board to accept a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded grant of \$20,000 for a restoration project for the Federally Endangered San Francisco Lessingia.
- During the May 2020 HCP Trust meeting, the Board requested that Ms. Ormshaw and staff consider options for how to utilize the large existing balance from the HCP Trust Fund. During the May meeting, trustees observed that due to the secure nature of the trust fund's revenue, there was no need to maintain such a significant balance. This agenda item follows up on that request and provides updates on grant opportunities the county has been pursuing.
 - Three different projects are under consideration for this agenda item: the SBM HCP Cattle Grazing Pilot Program, a project to support fuel reduction work at

SBM, and a project to restore and enhance a population of SF Lessingia, a federally endangered plant species present at SBM.

– **HCP Cattle Grazing Pilot Program**

- The County Parks Department has been working on this project since 2018. The main focus so far has been on planning – conducting initial studies, feasibility studies, and working with the TAC to get recommendations for the program.
- The program has been funded by annual allocations of between \$20,000 and \$40,000 as part of the annual HCP budget.
- The request is for part of the trust fund balance to be used as matching funds for a grant opportunity that has been recommended for award through the Priority Conservation Area Grant Program. This grant program is a regional grant program overseen by the State Coastal Conservancy, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and the Association of Bay Area Governments. San Bruno Mountain has been identified as a regionally significant open space in the Bay Area, making it eligible for the Priority Conservation Area Grant Program.
- The Department was invited to apply for funding under a mini-grant round opened in the summer of 2020. For this grant application, the county submitted a proposal to fund planning stages and infrastructure installation for the Cattle Grazing Pilot Program.
- Awarded grant funds (\$137,900) would represent one-third of the total project cost. The remaining match requirement would total \$275,840. Of this \$275,840, the secured match is \$60,000, representing three years of the existing \$20,000 annual budget allocation. The pending match is \$215,840 to bring the total project cost to \$413,740. This budget would cover the items listed in the table from the memo – developing a monitoring and reporting plan, developing a grazing strategy, conducting pre-grazing monitoring and a pre-grazing grassland productivity study, and installing fencing infrastructure, water and access.
- Mr. Holstine noted that the Northeast Ridge pilot site is very close to houses. The Department, likely in conjunction with the City of Brisbane, will need to put extensive effort into educating the public on what's happening and why it's happening before cattle are brought to the mountain. He recommends that the county get in touch with Caroline Cheung, the communications manager in his office.
- Ms. Ormshaw agreed that public outreach, especially for park neighbors but also for other constituents of San Mateo County, will be a huge and important component of the grazing pilot.

– **Fuel reduction and fire break installation within the SBM HCP Area**

- Within HCP document itself, installing fire breaks and creating fire buffers is identified as necessary to protect developments. While the specifications in the HCP are more applicable to new developments, the Department has identified that fuel reduction and fire break installation is a high priority for existing developments too.

- In February 2020, a 5.2 acre area of gorse near the Youth Camp burned. In response, the Department has developed a plan and initiated treatment of the 5.2 acre area and an adjacent 7.7 acre area, which is a full stand of gorse. The plan is to eradicate gorse in these areas and reduce the fuel and fire risk posed by this vegetation type.
- To date, the Department has implemented the majority of the initial treatment by having in-house operators crush and masticate the gorse. However, the species is likely to re-sprout and persist, as seeds can remain viable in the seed bank for a long time.
- The request is to allocate a portion of the fund balance for the re-treatment of the gorse stands. The plan relies on vegetation contractors applying herbicides for follow-up treatment, but the Department also investigated the use of goats who can browse on gorse seedlings.
- The re-treatment plan will likely involve a combination of these chemical and mechanical means to suppress and eradicate the gorse and prepare the area for native species reintroduction.
- Looking for an allocation of \$100,000. \$60,000 would fund gorse re-treatment efforts over 3 years, and \$40,000 would be used to thin and reduce stand density of eucalyptus groves that are present along the boundary of the park and pose some fuel risk for adjacent communities.
- **Grant Award from USFWS**
 - In cooperation with San Bruno Mountain Watch, the Department submitted a proposal this summer to USFWS for a project that would promote the expansion of and do habitat restoration work for endangered SF *Lessingia*.
 - This project would primarily be carried out by San Bruno Mountain Watch, as it builds on previous volunteer stewardship efforts they have been leading in the Daly City dunes area where this species is present.
 - The grant would fund nursery propagation and seed expansion of the species at the Mission Blue nursery as well as San Bruno Mountain Watch's time to manage and implement the project.
 - The grant was awarded in the amount of \$20,000. For this item, the recommendation is that the Board of Trustees accept the grant-funding to support this project.

Action: Motion/Second Callagy/Futrell to approve the item.

Motion carried 4-0.

3. Review Selected Vendor Contracts for Various Services for the San Bruno Mountain Habitat Conservation Plan.

- a. Selected vendor contracts for various on-call biological and ecological services
- b. Selected vendor contract for SBMHCP Trust Fund auditing services

- County Parks Department selected a suite of on-call contractors and executed agreements with them to conduct various biological and ecological services within the HCP area. These services include tree removal and limbing, biological monitoring, vegetation management, ecological restoration, and rangeland management.
- Having on-call agreements in place facilitates the Department's implementation of various routine projects focused on habitat enhancement, invasive species control, and monitoring and habitat restoration projects for endangered species.
- A Request for Proposals (RFP) was released in July 2020 and the agreements were executed in September 2020 at the approval of the County Board of Supervisors, with varying not-to-exceed amounts between \$100,000 to \$500,000. The agreements have 3-year terms. Projects involving these contractors could use funding from anticipated grants and additional Department funding.
- Department also released an RFP for qualified auditing firms, in October. This is to re-initiate a contract for an auditing firm for the SBMHCP Trust. 7 firms were contacted and 2 firms responded. The firm selected was JJACPA, Inc., which is the firm that has provided auditing services for the SBMHCP Trust Fund for the last several years. This is another 3-year agreement, with a total cost of \$5,400.
- Questions:
 - Mr. Holstine asked about what is anticipated for the agreement with Lawrence D. Ford, the Rangeland Management contractor.
 - Ms. Ormshaw responded that some of the funding would be for participation in the Technical Advisory Committee, so for time to advise on the cattle grazing program. In addition, there would be the development of the grazing strategy, which is a document that must be written by a certified rangeland consultant. There would also be repeated effort to measure and monitor grassland productivity within grazing areas. Grassland productivity studies involve measuring residual dry matter, grass height, and above-ground biomass to determine what amount of grass is available to support cattle. Repeated studies are needed to ensure that grazing stays within appropriate targets for residual dry matter and remaining grass cover.

No action required for this update.

Mr. Callagy asked if anyone had additional questions or if Ms. Ormshaw had any other information or updates to impart.

- Mr. Holstine asked about the anticipated timeline for the grazing program.
- Ms. Ormshaw outlined the timeline from the grant proposal. She is anticipating that the coming year would be focused on the remaining planning items: planning for infrastructure installation, establishing a lease agreement with a grazing tenant, and creating a biological monitoring plan. She estimates that the infrastructure would be installed in 2022 and the cattle would be brought to the mountain in fall 2022.
- No further questions or comments were raised.

Mr. Callagy closed the meeting.