



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 5/9/2017
Agenda Placement: 6DD

NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Molly Rattigan for Leanne Link - County Executive Officer
County Executive Office

REPORT BY: Nelson Cortez, Staff Assistant-BOS - 7072991478

SUBJECT: County Executive Officer requests adoption of a resolution supporting the application for grant funds from the California Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program

RECOMMENDATION

County Executive Officer requests adoption of a resolution supporting the Land Trust of Napa County's easement and funding proposal to the California Department of Conservation's California Sustainable Agricultural Land Conservation Program.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Land Trust of Napa County (Land Trust) has submitted an application with the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) to receive grant funding to preserve grazing lands on the east side of Lake Berryessa for the purpose of conserving priority agricultural land resources and preserving open space.

The SALCP supports the State's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission goals by making strategic investments to protect agricultural lands. The purpose of this program is to protect critical agricultural lands from conversion to urban or rural residential development, promoting smart growth within existing jurisdictions, ensuring open space remains available, and supporting a healthy agricultural economy.

This resolution supports the Land Trust's application to receive grant funds from the SALCP and certifies that the easements being proposed meet the grant application guidelines.

The Board unanimously approved a similar resolution at their regular meeting on November 11, 2015.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The Land Trust of Napa County is in the process of obtaining conservation easements east of Lake Berryessa to preserve grazing lands for the purpose of conserving priority agricultural land resources and preserving open space by utilizing grant funds from the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP).

The Budget Act of 2014 appropriated \$130 million from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) to develop and implement, "the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC)." Accompanying legislation (SB 862) apportions 20 percent of the GGRF annual proceeds to the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALCP) beginning in FY 2015-16. The SALCP, administered by the Strategic Growth Council, aims "to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through projects that implement land use, housing, transportation, and agricultural land preservation practices to support infill and compact development..." The statute further specifies that projects eligible for funding include, "the acquisition of easements or other approaches or tools that protect agricultural lands that are under pressure of being converted to nonagricultural uses, particularly those adjacent to areas most at risk of urban or suburban sprawl or those of special environmental significance."

The SALCP is intended to integrate and leverage existing agricultural land protection programs, as established in various sections of current statute. There are three major elements of the SALCP:

1. Sustainable Agricultural Land Strategy Plans- Short term grants to counties, cities, and partners, to inventory and evaluate which agricultural lands are most highly productive and critically threatened and develop locally appropriate strategies, programs, and actions that ensure the long term protection of those lands.
2. Agricultural Conservation Easements- Provide funding to leverage the protection of strategically located, highly productive, and critically threatened agricultural land, via permanent agricultural conservation easements.
3. Financial Incentives for Adoption and Use of Land Management Practices- Leverage USDA and other funding to incentivize management practices designed to reduce GHGs, sequester carbon and provide other co-benefits on working agricultural operations.

The principal goal of this grant program is to fund plans and conservation acquisitions in order to avoid increases in greenhouse gas emissions associated with agricultural lands, consistent with AB 32: the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006. Recent University of California research estimates that land in agricultural and healthy open space use sequesters up to 70 times more carbon than any form of urban development. In future years, the program proposes to add a third program element to incentivize land management practices that lead to additional reductions of GHG on agricultural lands.

As a requirement to receive the grant funds from the SALCP, the Napa County Land Trust must get support and approval from the Board of Supervisors to file the application and certifying that the easements being proposed by

the Land Trust would meet the eligibility criteria set forth in current law. Public Resources Code Section 10251 states that applicants for an agricultural conservation easement or fee acquisition grant shall meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

- a. The parcel proposed for conservation is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The land is also in an area that possess the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural protection.
- b. The applicable city or county has a general plan that demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. This commitment shall be reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the plan, as they relate to the area of the county or city where the easement acquisition is proposed.
- c. Without conservation, the land proposed for protection is likely to be converted to nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future.

While the likelihood of the parcels being converted to nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future is unknown, in the past land east of Lake Berryessa has been a target of development pressure. The Land Trust believes there are multiple possible opportunities for large scale development. The Land Trust has been working with SALCP and have been approved for funding. This resolution process is requested to complete the grant application.

The Board unanimously approved a similar resolution at their regular meeting on November 11, 2015.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

A . Resolution

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Molly Rattigan