




DATE: September 25, 2019

MEMO TO: Board of Directors

THROUGH: Ana Ruiz, General Manager 

FROM: Hayley Edmonston, Management Analyst I
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Manager

SUBJECT: Santa Cruz Mountains Climate Resilience Project

SUMMARY

The District launched the *Santa Cruz Mountains Climate Resilience Project* in June 2019 in partnership with the Santa Cruz Mountains Stewardship Network (Network). This operating project is titled Climate Resiliency Planning in the Fiscal Year 2019-20 Capital Improvement and Action Plan within the Natural Resources Department workplan. The project will bring together land managers in the region to assess the vulnerability of select natural resources to the effects of climate change and develop land management strategies to increase resilience through spatial analysis and workshops. The project is being managed by the District and jointly funded by the District and Sempervirens Fund.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Network has contracted with climate change planning consultant EcoAdapt to conduct a vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning exercise to better understand and manage natural resources for climate change impacts in the Santa Cruz Mountains region. The scope of work includes the tasks listed below.

1. Project scoping
The project scoping meeting was held in June 2019 with a dozen staff from the District and the Network. Attendees received an introduction to the project and provided input on key scoping decisions: the geographic boundary of the project, 10 habitats to be analyzed, 10 species to be analyzed, and the timeframe for analysis.
2. Spatial analysis
EcoAdapt has sub-contracted with Pepperwood Preserve's Terrestrial Biodiversity and Climate Change Collaborative (TBC3) to conduct spatial analysis of climate change impacts in the Santa Cruz Mountains. TBC3 produces among the most sophisticated climate change modeling in the Bay Area, and will use downscaled spatial climate data to assess projected changes to temperatures, hydrology, vegetation, and species (where possible) across the region. Deliverables: GIS data, print-ready maps, report summarizing climate projections, and impacts for the region.

3. Vulnerability assessment

EcoAdapt will convene one full-day workshop with District staff in October 2019 to gather qualitative information on climate vulnerability of selected habitats and species. Using workshop findings and a review of scientific literature, EcoAdapt will assess the vulnerability of selected resources. Deliverables: vulnerability briefs for 10 habitats and 10 species.

4. Adaptation planning

EcoAdapt will convene one full-day workshop with District staff and one full-day workshop with Network staff in spring 2020. These workshops will review spatial analysis and vulnerability assessment findings and use scenario planning to generate actionable land management strategies to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience. The District workshop will be a deeper dive into site- or project-specific adaptation planning. Deliverables: adaptation briefs for 10 habitats and 10 species, report summarizing Network workshop proceedings.

BOARD INVOLVEMENT

If interested, up to three Board members (due to Brown Act/quorum considerations) may attend the District adaptation planning workshop in spring 2020. After the project concludes in summer 2020, staff will share an informational presentation with the full Board of Directors on projected climate impacts and land management strategies to increase resilience.

COST

The total cost for EcoAdapt's contract is \$75,000. The District contributed \$49,999 (paid in August 2019) and Sempervirens Fund contributed \$25,001. The District's contribution will pay for two District staff workshops and a portion of the spatial analysis, vulnerability assessment, and adaptation planning deliverables described above. The District contributed a greater share of funding than Sempervirens Fund because some tasks will only serve the District and not the larger Network. The District will manage the project and will contribute the most input on scoping decisions and deliverables. The District was initially planning to conduct the project independently; however, staff have determined that significant benefits can be achieved by partnering with the Network both for the opportunity to cost share with Sempervirens Fund and to expand the reach of land management decision-making to address climate change impacts at a regional landscape scale.

VALUE OF PARTNERSHIP

The District and the Network each saw a need for regional analysis and planning for climate change impacts on natural resources and have been discussing the project since 2017. Each entity was initially planning to conduct this type of project independently, and came together to achieve economies of scale. The District and the Network worked together to develop the scope of work for the project to provide value to both groups.

Because climate change impacts and resulting land management approaches are regional in nature, the District will benefit from going through this process in collaboration with agency partners in the Network. By leading the funding and management of this project, the District is providing a valuable contribution to partners that otherwise would not have the capacity or resources to allocate towards in such a robust and proactive manner.