



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-19-158  
Meeting 19-31  
December 11, 2019

### AGENDA ITEM 3

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Award of Contracts to Two Firms for On-Call Environmental Consulting Services

#### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the General Manager to enter into contracts for on-call environmental consulting services with AECOM and Ascent Environmental for amounts not-to-exceed \$100,000 each through the end of Fiscal Year 2021-22.

#### SUMMARY

Staff conducted a competitive qualification and proposal process for on-call environmental consulting services, primarily for consultation, analysis, and documentation related to compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Typical projects needing environmental consulting services include resource management plans and projects, infrastructure and maintenance projects, and public access projects. To maximize flexibility and allow individual projects to be assigned to the firm that best exhibits the specialization necessary for the project, the General Manager recommends awarding contracts to two qualified environmental consultants on an on-call basis. AECOM and Ascent Environmental submitted the most qualified and economical proposals out of a total of nineteen (19) firms. The General Manager recommends awarding two on-call contracts for amounts not-to-exceed \$100,000 each through the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-22. Funds for environmental work completed this fiscal year would come from and remain within individual Board-approved project budgets. Funds for subsequent fiscal years would be requested in future project budgets as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

#### DISCUSSION

With the Board of Directors' (Board) approval of the Vision Plan priorities and voter approval of Measure AA in 2014, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) has amplified its ability to acquire, plan, develop, and complete new public access trails and low-intensity recreational facilities, and resource management projects in the District's open space preserves. To deliver these Vision Plan and Measure AA priorities in an efficient and timely manner, the District has been improving and streamlining various aspects of the project delivery process for construction and maintenance activities. This includes pursuing programmatic resource agency permits for routine maintenance and small-scale construction projects and expanding contractor outreach and bid competition through the use of Bidsync.

Another opportunity to gain project delivery efficiencies is to streamline the contracting and procurement process by establishing on-call contracts for routine services. The recommended on-

call CEQA/NEPA consultant services contracts would reduce project schedules by up to four months, providing project managers with a list of qualified consultants that have already been selected and hired in accordance with public contracting law and District policies. The on-call consultants would be immediately available to take on environmental review assignments for District projects to ensure compliance with State law (CEQA) and Federal law (NEPA). These on-call contracts would be managed by the Planning Department and be available to address CEQA/NEPA needs districtwide through individual task orders.

On September 24, 2019, staff issued a Request for Proposals and Qualifications (RFQP) for on-call environmental consulting services. District staff solicited proposals through our website, BidSync, and a comprehensive list of environmental consulting firms used by the District and partner agencies. Example of requested services include, but are not limited to:

- Peer review of internally-prepared or outside consultant-prepared CEQA/NEPA documents, sections, mitigations or other supporting information/studies;
- Technical studies to determine baseline conditions, including biological assessments, wetlands delineation, traffic studies, water supply estimates, cultural resources investigation, etc.;
- Review, incorporation, and/or modification of previously prepared technical studies or other information supporting CEQA/NEPA document development;
- Public scoping and Notice of Preparation;
- Initial Studies using the Appendix G Checklist;
- Preparation of Negative Declarations/Mitigated Negative Declarations/Environmental Impact Reports; and
- Development and facilitation of CEQA/NEPA training.

Responding firms provided work samples, hourly rates, references, and information regarding general project team/firm background and qualifications. Additionally, firms indicated their interest and experience in twelve (12) project subject areas, including but not limited to trails, grazing, and historic resources, to assist with firm specialization determination. In accordance with Board Policy 3.03, *Public Contract Bidding, Vendor and Professional Consultant Selection, and Purchasing*, a consultant selection panel comprised of staff from Planning, Natural Resources, and General Manager's Office evaluated the nineteen (19) proposals and identified thirteen (13) that best fit the requested criteria.

After reviewing the proposals, the consultant selection panel ranked and selected two environmental consulting firms for contract award. The selection is based on their proposal quality, experience with open space projects, availability, and cost (shown in alphabetical order):

1. **AECOM** – expertise in open space projects, wide range of environmental and technical specialties, and in-house technical expertise. Experience conducting environmental review for public access, grazing, and master planning projects in the San Francisco Bay Area for open space agencies, such as California State Parks and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District
2. **Ascent Environmental** – expertise in open space projects, and wide range of environmental and technical specialties. Extensive experience working with Bay Area open space districts, including East Bay Regional Parks District and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority

The General Manager recommends awarding a contract to each of these two firms for an amount not-to-exceed \$100,000 through the end of FY2021-22. Funds for all contracts would come from the individual budgets of the projects requiring environmental consulting services.

Examples of upcoming projects and environmental needs that require these services include:

- Rangeland management plans for various preserves
- Structure stabilizations, such as the Deer Hollow Farm White Barn Stabilization at Rancho San Antonio and Redwood Cabin in La Honda Creek
- Assorted agricultural/grazing/facilities infrastructure projects
- New policies or policy amendments such the Agricultural Policies Review
- New public access projects such as the Beatty Parking Area and Trailhead at Sierra Azul

Projects utilizing on-call environmental consulting services are approved annually by the Board of Directors in the District action plan and budget. Projects requiring environmental consulting services will be matched to the firm that best possesses the qualifications and specialties needed for each specific project. Specialties will be determined through an analysis of the firm's team qualifications, structure, and related project experience. If more than one firm possesses the qualifications and specialties necessary to complete environmental review for a project, the District will distribute tasks on a rotating basis.

In addition to recommending two on-call contracts for CEQA related services, with this RFQP selection process, the District has also established a pre-qualified list of 13 consultants for future use as needed; this list can remain active for up to four years. If additional CEQA services are needed in the near future, the District could further leverage the work of this RFQP and expedite the procurement process by soliciting separate fee proposals from the consultants that have been added to the prequalification list without needing to re-obtain and re-review qualifications, since this step has already been accomplished.

The firms recommended for award of contract and many that have been added to the pre-qualification list provide the full suite of environmental consulting specialties either through in-house staff or subconsultants. For example, Ascent Environmental has supplemented their team with the specialties of Page and Turnbull for historic resources and Sequoia Ecological Consulting, Inc., for biological services. Some of the firms added to the pre-qualification list provide specific environmental consulting services, such as Garavaglia Architecture who specializes in historic structure assessments. In the event that a specific environmental consulting service cannot be performed by a contracted or pre-qualified firm, the firms may supplement their teams with additional subconsultants, or the District may seek that service through a separate contract, to ensure that the CEQA review process includes the right suite of expertise for each project.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

Funding for the environmental consulting contracts will come from the individual budgets of the projects that require environmental consulting services. Funds for subsequent fiscal years would be requested in future project budgets as part of the annual Budget and Action Plan process.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. No additional notice is required.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

This proposed action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act and no environmental review is required.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Pending Board approval, the General Manager will execute the on-call environmental consulting services contracts, and District staff would use the selected firms' services on an as-needed basis. The General Manager may also enter into smaller on-call contracts with firms from the pre-qualification list under the General Manager contracting authority on an as-needed basis.

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