



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

R-20-134  
Meeting 20-27  
November 18, 2020

## AGENDA ITEM 6

### AGENDA ITEM

Award of Contract with Applied Technology & Science for Planning Services, Feasibility Assessment, and Preparation of Habitat Restoration Plans within the Irish Ridge Area of Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS *den*

1. Authorize the General Manager to contract with Applied Technology & Science (ATS), to provide Phase I environmental planning and biological consulting services to determine the feasibility and maximum net natural resource benefits of restoring a section of Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve for a base contract amount of \$42,037.
2. If the completion of the Phase I items in the base contract demonstrates high long-term net natural resources benefits at a reasonable price for the planned restoration work, authorize the General Manager to amend the contract to complete Phase II habitat restoration plans, for an additional not-to-exceed amount of \$57,230.
3. Authorize a 10% contingency for each Phase of work for a total amount of \$9,927 (\$4,204 for Phase I and \$5,723 for Phase II) to cover unforeseen complexities or additional biological survey needs, for a grand total contract amount not-to-exceed \$109,194.

### SUMMARY

Legacy logging activities and replanting with non-native timber species, coupled with current fire suppression policies threatens the biodiversity of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Approximately 17 acres of a non-native, invasive blackwood acacia trees are located within the Irish Ridge area of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District's (District) Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. These non-native trees were planted prior to District ownership, provide very limited habitat value, and pose a significant wildland fire risk. Habitat restoration to return the native natural resource values requires extensive planning to ensure habitat goals are successfully met in a cost-efficient manner. The General Manager recommends awarding a contract to Applied Technology & Science (ATS) of San Francisco, CA, for a base amount of \$42,037 to assess the feasibility and maximize the long-term net natural resource benefits of the planned restoration work (Phase I). If Phase I demonstrates that high resource benefits can be attained at a fair price, the General Manager recommends amending the contract by an additional \$57,230 to allow for Phase II: development of habitat restoration plans. A 10% contingency is also requested to address unforeseen complexities, for a grand total not-to-exceed \$109,194. The Fiscal Year 2020-21 (FY21) budget includes sufficient funds to complete Phase I. Funds for Phase II would be proposed as part of the FY22 budget.

## BACKGROUND

The District manages public lands under its jurisdiction in a natural state with minimal development. Open Space Preserves provide protection in the form of permanent sanctuaries for native wildlife and vegetation. Development pressures continue to reduce the quantity and quality of natural habitats, making the District's mission to protect and restore the natural environment even more important.

The District purchased the first Purisima Creek Redwoods property in 1982 and has since incorporated additional properties, growing the Preserve to its current size of 4,711 acres. The trees at Purisima Creek Redwoods are predominantly second-growth redwoods of uneven age, with trees varying between 50 and 100 years old. The original redwood forest was logged in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The largest redwoods were approximately 1,000 years old when they were cut, with diameters between 10 and 20 feet. Large stumps along Purisima Creek Trail are evidence of these trees.

Blackwood acacia (*Acacia melanoxylon*) is presumed to have been actively planted in the Irish Ridge area of the Preserve long before District ownership (Attachment 1: Project Location Map). The trees were likely planted as a potential lumber crop; however, as is the case with many planted acacia trees in the San Mateo coastal area, the trees proved to produce poor quality wood for lumber production due to twisted, uneven growth. The planted trees at Irish Ridge have since grown into a dense overstory and now exclude many native species (including the rare Kings Mountain manzanita), provide poor quality habitat for rare species (e.g. federally and state listed marbled murrelet), increased the fire risk, and continue to invade surrounding areas, further displacing native species and habitats.

## DISCUSSION

### *Project Design Objectives and Requirements*

The three objectives and requirements of the restoration work are (1) to protect and restore the natural resources, (2) increase climate change resiliency by increasing carbon sequestration through native forest restoration, and (3) reduce wildfire risk and improve the Irish Ridge Trail as a viable evacuation route per discussions with CalFire (the site is listed as a priority in the District's draft Wildland Fire Resiliency Program).

The project would be completed in three phases; the proposed contract covers the first two:

- Phase I – Biological Surveys and Sampling as well as a Restoration Options and Feasibility Report (including options and cost estimates for reuse of the acacia trees);
- Phase II – Habitat Restoration Plans and Permitting; and
- Phase III – Implementation.

### *Request for Qualifications and Proposals (RFQP) Process*

On September 9, 2020, staff issued a RFQP by posting on the District's website and BidSync, as well emailing eleven firms with pertinent experience. A virtual pre-proposal conference was held on September 8, 2020 and attended by ten firms. The District received three proposals by the October 9, 2020 deadline.

<i>Lead Firm</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Phase I Proposed Fees</i>	<i>Phase II Proposed Fees</i>	<i>Total Proposed Fees</i>
<i>Applied Technology &amp; Science (ATS)</i>	San Francisco, CA	\$34,785*	\$57,230	\$92,015*
<i>Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting<sup>1</sup></i>	Berkeley, CA	\$34,840	\$111,960	\$146,800
<i>GPA Consulting<sup>2</sup></i>	El Segundo, CA	\$54,980	\$82,830	\$146,921 <sup>2</sup>

\*Original Phase I proposed amount. Received revised Phase I proposed amount from ATS on 10/21/2020 for \$42,037 to modify scope per staff direction as explained below.

Evaluation criteria were determined prior to the release of the RFQP that included the quality of the proposal, relevant project experience, and implementation approach. After careful review of all proposals, staff, with assistance from CAL FIRE, deemed ATS as the most qualified and best suited for the project at a fair and reasonable price. The District included Cal Fire on the review panel since they will be an important partner during implementation. ATS demonstrated a clear understanding of the project to meet the multiple project objectives.

#### *Revised Proposal to Address Current and Future Needs*

After recently completing two large fuel reduction and invasive tree removal projects (Page Mill Eucalyptus fuel removal project and invasive tree removal at Woods Trail in Sierra Azul), the District has come to recognize the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits and tradeoffs of different biomass management approaches. Understanding the benefits and tradeoffs will become even more important as the District increases the size and scale of its vegetation management work under the proposed Wildland Fire Resiliency Program. Staff therefore requested that ATS revise their proposal and fee to not only include reuse options for the blackwood acacia biomass at this site, but also comprehensively evaluate reuse options for biomass that is removed at other District locations. As part of this work, ATS would evaluate the benefits and tradeoffs for the following areas of interest:

- Allelopathy<sup>3</sup>;
- Biodiversity;
- Carbon sequestration;
- Fuel loads;
- Greenhouse gas emissions;
- Pathogen spread;
- Visual impacts; and
- Wildlife habitat.

The findings of this comprehensive evaluation will guide the creation of a toolkit that the District will use to identify best approaches for managing the vegetation that is removed from Preserves as part of large fuel reduction and invasive plant removal projects.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There are sufficient funds in the adopted FY21 Budget to cover Phase I. Should the contract get extended for Phase II, funding would be proposed as part of the FY22 Budget and Action Plan process.

The recommended action is not funded by Measure AA.

<sup>1</sup> Both Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting and GPA Consulting firms submitted proposals as collaborative teams with two other firms.

<sup>2</sup> GPA Consulting included two separate line items in their proposal that were not integrated into the phased approach.

<sup>3</sup> Allelopathy is the chemical inhibition of one plant (or other organism) by another, due to the release into the environment of substances acting as germination or growth inhibitors.

## **BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW**

This item was not previously reviewed by a Board committee.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act. Adjoining neighbors near the project site have been notified.

## **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

Retention of professional consultants will not result in a direct physical change in the environment [CEQA Guidelines Section 15060(c)(2)] and does not constitute Board approval of the proposed project or related proposed project elements.

A requirement of the RFQP is that the selected consultant shall produce a habitat restoration plan comprised of actions covered by existing and/or draft District CEQA documents (e.g. Integrated Pest Management Program, San Mateo Coastal Annexation Final Environmental Impact Report, draft Wildland Fire Resiliency Program).

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following Board approval, the General Manager will execute a contract with ATS. At the conclusion of the Feasibility Study (Phase I), staff will inform the Board of the findings. If Phase I demonstrates that the District can meet the project design objectives at a fair and reasonable price, the General Manager will amend the contract to include Phase II.

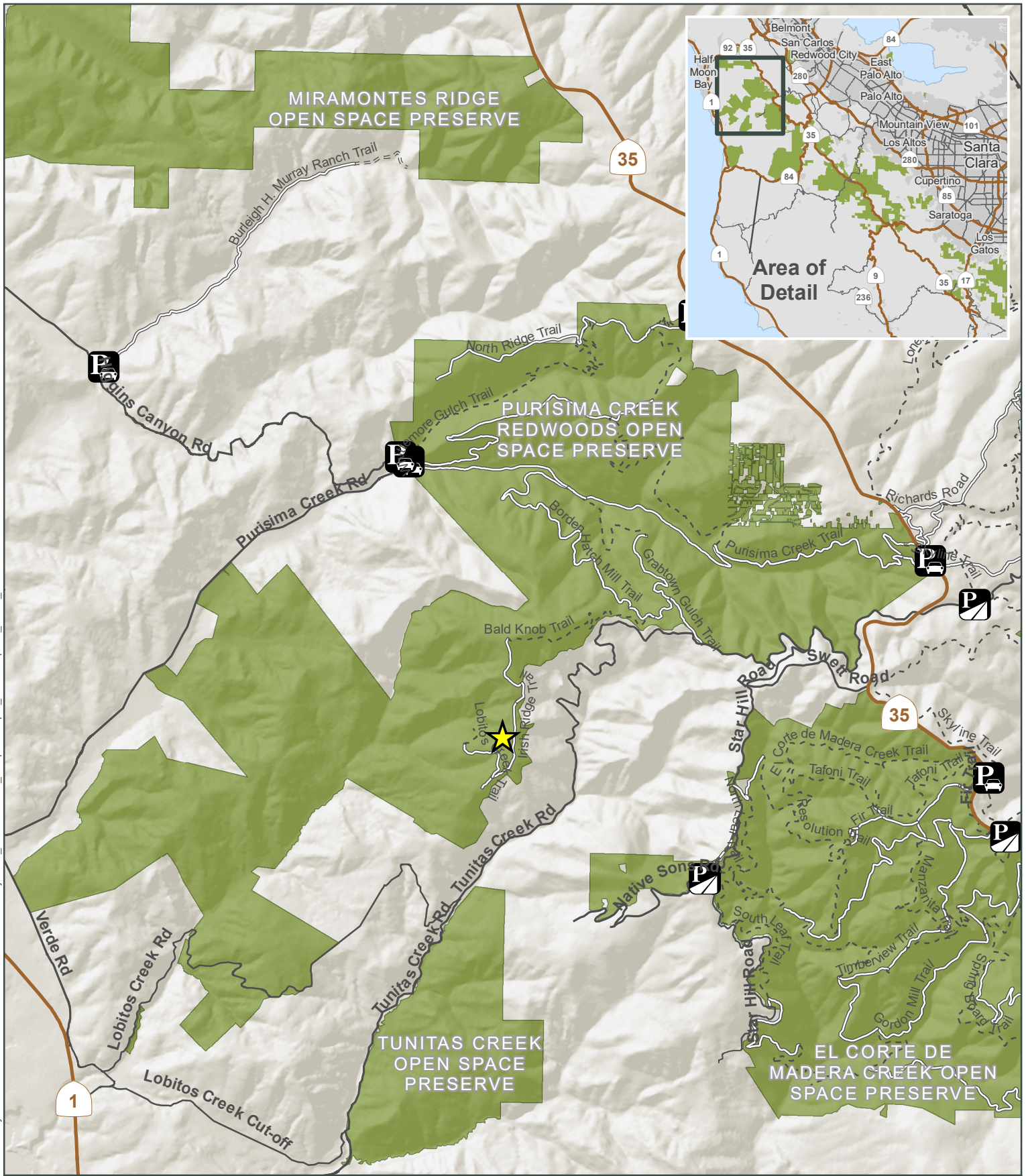
### Attachment

1. Project Location



Responsible Department Head:  
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources

Prepared by:  
Coty Sifuentes-Winter, Senior Resource Management Specialist, Natural Resources

Graphics prepared by:  
Coty Sifuentes-Winter, Senior Resource Management Specialist



### Attachment 1: Irish Ridge Habitat Restoration Site

-  MROSD Preserves
-  Site Location

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
10/21/2020



While the District strives to use the best available digital data, these data do not represent a legal survey and are merely a graphic illustration of geographic features.