



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

## PROCUREMENT AGENDA ITEM

R-25-05  
Meeting 25-01  
January 8, 2025

## AGENDA ITEM 6

### AGENDA ITEM

Award of Contract for the Development of a Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Habitat and Population Management Plan

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. Award a contract to Jodi McGraw Environmental Consulting to create a Habitat and Population Management Plan to increase the population resiliency of Santa Cruz kangaroo rat within Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve for a not-to-exceed base contract amount of \$86,875.
2. Authorize a 15% contingency in the amount of \$13,031 for unanticipated challenges in conducting field studies and habitat suitability modeling, bringing the agreement to a not-to-exceed amount of \$99,906.
3. Authorize an allowance of \$13,560 that would be reserved solely to obtain a more robust habitat connectivity analysis if prior habitat suitability modeling is inadequate for that purpose, for a not-to-exceed total contract amount of \$113,466.

### DISCUSSION

A new population of the Critically Imperiled Santa Cruz kangaroo rat, *Dipodomys venustus venustus* (SCKR), was discovered in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (Sierra Azul) in 2019 (Attachment 1). The Critically Imperiled designation is a California Natural Diversity Database Conservation Status Ranking that indicates the subspecies is at a very high risk of extirpation/extinction from the state. At present, SCKR is not listed as state or federally, Threatened or Endangered. The process of ecological succession, coupled with historic fire suppression, is causing vegetation to encroach on limited habitat for the species within Sierra Azul. This encroachment limits mobility, burrowing, and foraging opportunities for SCKR, reducing long-term viability of both the local population and the species. The Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) recognizes the need to assess the current habitat conditions to better protect this unique population that is geographically isolated and is likely highly susceptible to extirpation or extinction.

On November 10, 2021, the District Board of Directors (Board) approved [Resolution No. 21-40](#), allowing the District to apply for up to \$295,000 of WCB grant funding towards SCKR research, monitoring and population assessments for developing a Habitat and Population Management Plan (HPMP) (Phase I) that will inform future conservation actions (Phase II) for the species. To date, these funds have been utilized to support a state-wide genetic species assessment of the narrow-faced kangaroo rat (of which SCKR is a sub-species), a SCKR population assessment, habitat assessment, and rare plant surveys ([R-22-144](#)) in Sierra Azul. The population assessment

was completed in May 2024, detecting 24 individual SCKR spread across 9 trapping sites. Population modeling estimated a total of 23-29 individual SCKR within the trapping areas. Trapping was not conducted in all potential habitat within Sierra Azul since it was inaccessible to researchers due to dense vegetation and steep terrain. The number of individuals at each site was considered very low (0-10 individuals per site) with little or no connectivity between habitat fragments.

The HPMP will identify opportunities and constraints for implementable site-specific habitat enhancements to increase the population resiliency of SCKR within Sierra Azul. The HPMP will include site specific recommendations for low-cost and feasible enhancements in both occupied habitat and unoccupied potential habitat along with a list of ideal habitat criteria for SCKR, strategies for improving and increasing habitat, and measures to maintain or create connectivity between fragmented populations within Sierra Azul to improve genetic diversity and population resiliency. The HPMP will also include a monitoring plan, along with measurable criteria, to determine the efficacy of habitat enhancement efforts and their effect on habitat suitability and the SCKR population over time. Where proposed management actions intersect with ongoing District programs, the HPMP will comply with the Wildland Fire Resiliency Program (WFRP), Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Program and/or other identified permit requirements. The HPMP will also identify all required regulatory permits to accomplish habitat and population management goals.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

### **The current fiscal year budget contains:**

- sufficient funds.
- insufficient funds; the next quarterly budget update will include a reallocation of unspent funds from other project budgets to cover for this expenditure.
- insufficient funds; approval of this item requires a fiscal year budget augmentation.
- future fiscal year budgets will include additional funds to complete the contracted work.

### **Measure AA**

- No, this contract is not part of a Measure AA project.
- Yes, this contract is part of a Measure AA project.

## **PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND SELECTION**

On September 20, 2024, staff issued a Request for Proposals and Qualifications (RFPQ) via Periscope and performed outreach to qualified firms. A mandatory pre-proposal site visit was held on October 11, 2024, and was attended by representatives from two firms. The District received one proposal by the November 21, 2024 deadline from Jodi McGraw Environmental Consulting. They submitted a joint proposal with Biosearch Environmental Consulting, who bring 35 years of expertise in the ecology and management of small mammals, including SCKR, as well as extensive experience preparing species management plans.

Staff reviewed the proposal and deemed Jodi McGraw Environmental Consulting qualified for the project due to their subject matter expertise with Santa Cruz kangaroo rat monitoring and habitat management. The consultant team has 65 years of combined experience in utilizing applied research to inform species conservation management. Jodi McGraw Environmental

Consulting has developed multiple rare species habitat and population management plans for endemic kangaroo rat species within chaparral communities. Furthermore, the project team has over a decade of direct experience surveying for SCKR at Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park and other sandhill habitats throughout the Santa Cruz Mountains. The firm proposed a strategic and streamlined workplan at a fair and reasonable price. Jodi McGraw Environmental Consulting previously led planning and analysis for the District's Vision Plan on time and within the allocated budget. Based on past services procured by the District for environmental consulting services, and a comparison of billing rates for environmental consulting services from the most recent biological on-call services, Jodi McGraw Environmental Consulting's proposal is deemed to be at a fair and reasonable price.

Consultant	Location	Proposed Fee
Jodi McGraw Environmental Consulting	Santa Cruz, CA	\$100,435

### **PRIOR BOARD AND COMMITTEE REVIEW**

November 10, 2021: Board approved [Resolution No. 21-40](#), allowing for the submittal of a grant application for the Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Habitat and Population Management Project. ([R-21-154](#), [Minutes](#))

December 14, 2022: Board authorized the General Manager to enter into an agreement with Nomad Ecology for related botanical surveys and habitat assessments ([R-22-144](#), [Minutes](#))

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

### **CEQA COMPLIANCE**

An agreement for the development of an HPMP is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### **NEXT STEPS**

Following Board approval, the General Manager will execute an agreement with Jodi McGraw Environmental Consulting, to develop the HPMP. The HPMP will inform future habitat management activities which are expected to take place between 2025 and 2030.

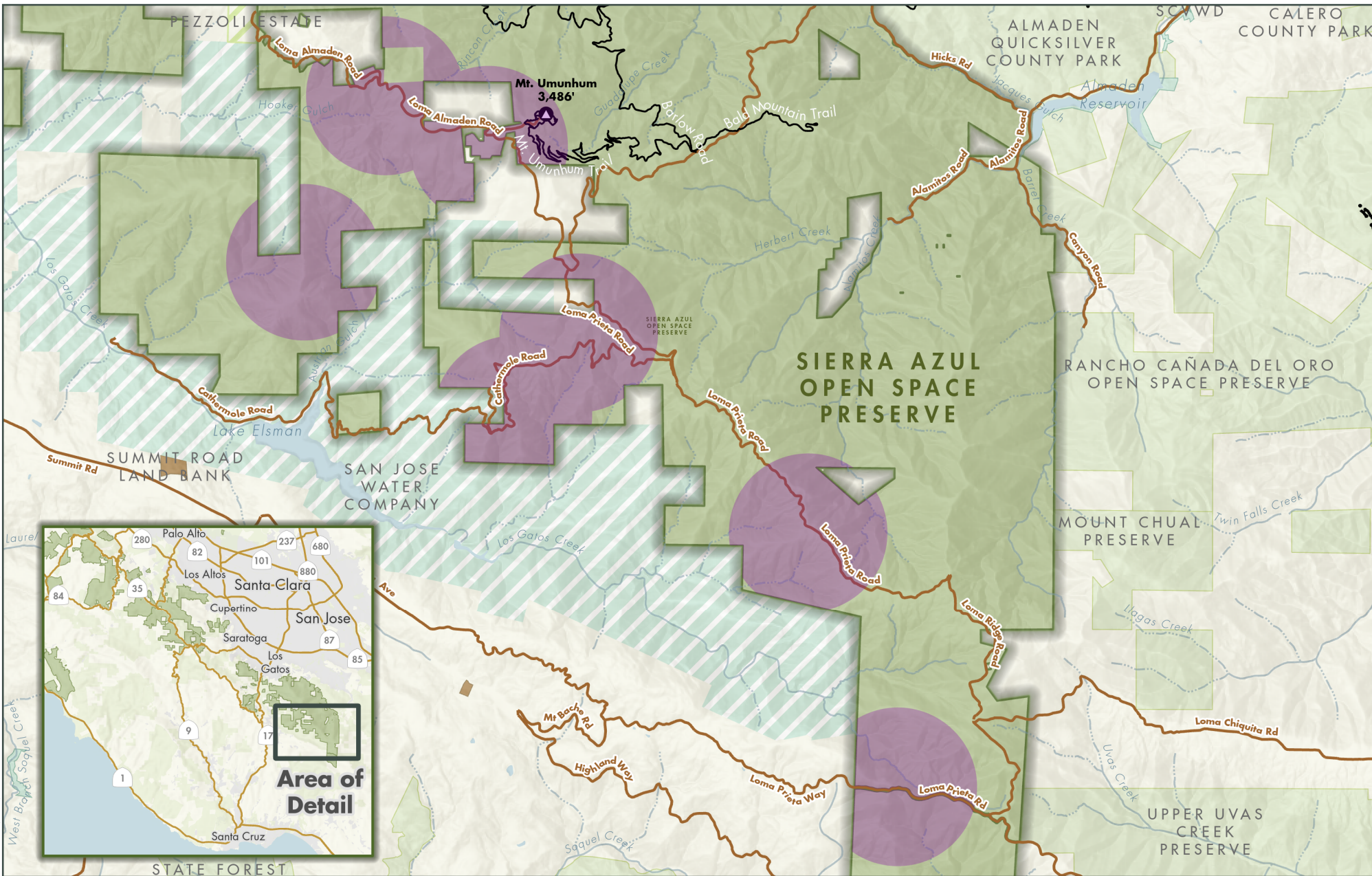
Attachment(s)

1. Map of Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Study Area in Sierra Azul

Responsible Department Head:  
Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Department Manager

Prepared by / Contact person:  
Matt Sharp Chaney, Resource Management Specialist II, Natural Resources

Path: G:\Projects\Sierra\_Azul\Kangaroo Rat Habitat\SCKR\_HabitatAreas\_MapSeries\SCKR\_HabitatAreas\SCKR\_HabitatAreas.aprx  
Created By: flopez



### Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Study Area

- Midpen preserves
- Other protected lands
- Private property
- Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat study area

Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District  
(Midpen)  
9/18/2024



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.