



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

PROCUREMENT AGENDA ITEM

R-25-15
Meeting 25-03
January 22, 2025

AGENDA ITEM 7

AGENDA ITEM

Award of On-Call Contracts for Inventory and Monitoring of Botanical Resources Services

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Award contracts for on-call botanical services to the following five firms, each contract with a term of four (4) years and a not-to-exceed contract amount of \$320,000:

1. Avila and Associates, Inc., of Walnut Creek, CA
2. H. T. Harvey and Associates of Los Gatos, CA
3. Nomad Ecology, LLC of Martinez, CA
4. UC Santa Cruz Arboretum & Botanic Garden (University of California, Santa Cruz)
5. Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting, Inc., of Berkeley, CA

DISCUSSION

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District) aims to protect and restore its ecological resources while enabling public use in alignment with conservation goals. To support this mission, the District's Resource Management Policies (RM Policy) outline botanical resource inventories, regular monitoring, and adaptive management. Recognizing the growing complexity and volume of projects that require natural resource surveys, the District transitioned from project-specific procurements to a streamlined, comprehensive Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process for botanical services. An RFQ was released on November 12, 2024, seeking consultants with expertise in regional plant taxonomy, sensitive habitats, and regulatory compliance to support programs such as conservation grazing, integrated pest management, wildland fire resilience, and public access planning. The General Manager recommends entering into agreements with five qualified firms, each not exceeding \$320,000 over four years.

The District protects and restores the diversity and integrity of its natural resources and ecological processes for their value to the environment and to people and provides for the use of the preserves consistent with natural resource protection. The District's Board of Directors (Board) adopted [Resource Management Policies](#) (RM Policy), which require the inventory and monitoring of botanical resources and emphasize the following key points:

- **Inventory of Botanical Resources:** The policies mandate a thorough inventory of native vegetation, focusing on identifying special-status species and sensitive plant communities. This includes cataloging existing flora, mapping habitats, and assessing plant species of concern to ensure accurate documentation of botanical diversity.

- **Monitoring for Conservation and Management:** Regular monitoring is required to track the health and distribution of native plant species, particularly those that are rare or endangered. This ongoing surveillance is intended to detect changes in plant populations, habitat conditions, and the impacts of environmental threats (e.g., invasive species or habitat degradation).
- **Adaptive Management:** The policies encourage an adaptive management approach, utilizing monitoring data to inform and adjust conservation strategies. This ensures the management actions are responsive to ecological changes and effective in preserving native botanical resources.
- **Data Integration:** Collected data on botanical resources is to be integrated into the District's Geographic Information System (GIS) for accessibility and better-informed decision-making.

The District is pursuing a variety of Board-adopted programs and projects that must comply with the RM Policy, including:

- [Conservation Grazing Program](#): infrastructure installation and other agricultural-support projects identified in Rangeland Management Plans.
- [Integrated Pest Management Program](#): Invasive Species Management, Brush Management.
- **Open Space Maintenance and Restoration Program:** vegetation management related to demolition, installation, or maintenance of infrastructure.
- [Wildland Fire Resiliency Program](#): actions specified in vegetation management plans, including ecosystem resiliency projects (e.g., Forest Health), enhanced fire management (e.g. defensible space, shaded fuel break), and management of Eucalyptus and Acacia, as well as actions specified in monitoring plans, including post-fire and infrastructure installation.

The District also pursues other discretionary actions that require or are informed by botanical surveys, including:

- New land acquisitions (as part of due diligence work)
- Development of Master Plans or Use and Management Plans for Preserve
- Public access projects

BUDGET / 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

The District released a comprehensive RFQ for a suite of common botanical services on November 12, 2024. The District held a pre-qualification conference on December 2, 2024 with interested firms. The RFQ laid out the requirements for a botanical consultant as follows:

- Knowledge of plant taxonomy and natural community ecology;
- Familiarity with plants of the region, including special status plants;
- Familiarity with natural communities of the region, including sensitive natural communities;
- Experience with the CNDDDB, BIOS, and Survey of California Vegetation Classification and Mapping Standards;
- Experience conducting floristic botanical field surveys, or experience conducting such botanical field surveys under the direction of an experienced botanical field surveyor;
- Familiarity with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to plants and plant collecting; and
- Experience analyzing the impacts of projects on native plant species and sensitive natural communities.

Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) were due on December 12, 2024, and the District received sixteen (16) SOQs. Staff reviewed all submittals with the table below showing the results of the analysis.

Qualification	Firm ¹	Location
Top Five Qualified Firms- Recommended for On Call Contracts	Avila and Associates, Inc.	Walnut Creek, CA
	H. T. Harvey and Associates	Los Gatos, CA
	Nomad Ecology, LLC	Martinez, CA
	UC Santa Cruz Arboretum & Botanic Garden (UCSC)	Santa Cruz, CA
	Vollmar Natural Lands Consulting, Inc.	Berkeley, CA
Other Qualified Firms Recommended to be Added to the Prequalification List	AECOM Technical Services, Inc.	Oakland, CA
	Applied Technology & Science	Los Gatos, CA
	Ecological Concerns, Inc.	Santa Cruz, CA
	Dudek, Inc.	Oakland, CA
	Integral Consulting, Inc.	Santa Cruz, CA
	Jodi McGraw Consulting	Freedom, CA
	LSA Associates, Inc.	Point Richmond, CA
	MIG, Inc.	San Jose, CA
	Monk and Associates, Inc.	Walnut Creek, CA
	Naiad Biological Consulting	Arcata, CA
Sequoia Ecological Consulting, Inc.	Walnut Creek, CA	

¹ – Firms are listed in alphabetical order within their respective qualification listing and is not indicative of ranking.

The General Manager recommends entering into four-year agreements for not-to-exceed contract amounts of \$320,000 per firm for the top five (5) qualified firms. All other firms deemed qualified would be placed on the District’s Prequalification List for up to four years in accordance with the District’s administrative procurement policy to be considered for future contract work.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION SUPPORTING THE PROJECT

On January 11, 2012, the Board approved the Mitigated Negative Declaration, the Mitigation Monitoring Program and a Resolution of Findings in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and formally adopted the District's RM Policy as applicable to all District owned and/or managed lands ([R-12-05](#)). Since that time, the Board has approved multiple revisions and additions to the RM Policy with the latest on March 23, 2022 ([R-22-10, Minutes](#)). The RM Policy sets the framework upon which District requirements for inventory and monitoring of botanical resources is based on.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

A contract execution is not a project subject to CEQA. Additionally, the proposed field surveys to be conducted by the selected consultants are categorically exempt from CEQA under Article 19, Section 15306:

Section 15306 exempts basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

NEXT STEPS

Pending Board approval, the General Manager will enter into on-call agreement with the five (5) top qualified consultants. As needs arise, the District will issue task orders to complete inventory and monitoring botanical resources for projects approved within the Capital Improvement and Action Plan under these contracts.

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