



Midpeninsula Regional  
Open Space District

## PROCUREMENT AGENDA ITEM

R-24-110  
Meeting 24-23  
August 28, 2024

## AGENDA ITEM 8

### AGENDA ITEM

Award of Contract to Ecological Concerns, Inc., for 2024 Conservation Grazing Vegetation Management and Brush Reduction

### GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Award a contract to Ecological Concerns, Inc., of Santa Cruz, CA for the 2024 Conservation Grazing Vegetation Management and Brush Reduction for an initial one-year term (Year 1) in the amount of \$460,096.
2. Authorize the General Manager to extend the contract for up to three additional one-year terms, based on contractor performance for a not-to-exceed base contract amount of \$2,035,096 over a total of four years.
3. Authorize a 15% contingency in the amount of \$305,264 over the four-year term to address unforeseen issues, for a total not-to-exceed contract amount of \$2,340,360 over the four-year term.

### DISCUSSION

Vegetation management, specifically the reduction of brush encroachment in grasslands within coastal San Mateo County is an essential land management function of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (District). The purpose of this work is to provide ecologically sensitive brush reduction within seven (7) grazing units in various District preserves. The scope of the vegetation management work includes mechanical brush removal and limited pesticide use (e.g., spot-spraying brush re-growth with backpack sprayers) to enhance coastal grasslands and improve forage resources in support of the Conservation Grazing Program. This work is structured on an annual work basis for a total of up to four (4) years of work, based on contractor performance. The Year 1 work includes eight (8) projects at seven (7) Grazing Units (see Tables 1 and 2). Four (4) projects are brush mowing, and four (4) projects are follow-up spot-spraying of previously mowed coyote brush. The existing grazing tenants at each of the seven Grazing Units are strongly supportive of the proposed Year 1 work.

**Table 1. Brush Mowing**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Work Description</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Blue Brush Canyon Grazing Unit Purisima Creek Open Space Preserve	Medium-density brush mowing	20
Elkus/Lobitos/South Cowell Grazing Unit- Purisima Creek Open Space Preserve	Medium-density brush mowing	48
Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve	Medium- to heavy-density brush mowing	35
Butano Farms Grazing Unit Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve	Medium-density brush mowing	27
	<b>Total</b>	130

**Table 2. Follow-up, targeted herbicide application**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Work Description</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Cloverdale Ranch Grazing Unit Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve	Spot-spray herbicide on previously- mowed, medium-density coyote brush	72
Johnston Ranch Grazing Unit Miramontes Ridge Open Space Preserve	Spot-spray herbicide on previously- mowed, light-density coyote brush	35
Toto Ranch Grazing Unit Tunitas Creek Open Space Preserve	Spot-spray herbicide on previously- mowed, medium-density coyote brush	70
Tunitas Creek Grazing Unit Tunitas Creek Open Space Preserve	Spot-spray herbicide on previously- mowed, medium-density coyote brush	35
	<b>Total</b>	212

**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

### Contractor selection

A Request for Bids (RFB) was issued on July 15, 2024 via BidSync. Legal notices were posted in the San Mateo County Times and a link to the solicitation was posted on the District website. Staff also directly contacted qualified firms about the RFB. One mandatory pre-bid site walk was held on July 31, 2024 with seven (7) contractors in attendance.

The District received one bid on August 14, 2024 and Ecological Concerns, Inc., of Santa Cruz, California was determined to be the lowest responsible and responsive bidder. Other potential bidders said they either did not have the capacity for the project or one of the required licenses: general contractor license class A or C-27 Landscaping Contractor's License, Pest Control Business License, and a Qualified Applicator License.

Contractor	Location	Bid Amount	Project Manager Estimate (\$102,740)
Ecological Concerns, Inc.	Santa Cruz, CA	\$460,096	+348%

### District's Estimated Cost and Explanation of Variance

This contract represents the District's largest-scale effort to date to reduce coyote brush encroachment into coastal grasslands on the San Mateo County Coast. District staff reached out to contractors elsewhere in the state during project development to estimate the costs of the management activities proposed in this project to look at similar brush removal projects. Staff received and used estimates for the number of hours per acre for brush mowing and spot-spraying and used those numbers to generate the total original estimated project cost of \$102,740. Ultimately, those preliminary estimates were substantially incorrect. After receiving the bid amount submitted by Ecological Concerns, Inc., (ECI), staff analyzed the District's own records and database and determined that the figures produced by ECI were consistent with the District's experience with other vegetation management projects. While those projects did not reflect the exact same type of brush removal, they likely better reflect working in the Bay Area, within the topography and site constraints of District lands, and following the District's contracting, certification, and insurance requirements. ECI has contracted with the District for other vegetation projects for similar rates. District staff are confident that the bid amount submitted by ECI is fair and realistic in order to accomplish the proposed activities on the District's Conservation Grazing Lands.

### Anticipated Annual Contract Amount in Future Years

Vegetation management work to support the Conservation Grazing Program will be prioritized and scheduled annually, at the discretion of the District, based on the needs identified by the District's Conservation Grazing Program Manager and Rangeland Ecologist. It is anticipated that the base work for each subsequent year will average \$525,000 per year.

### Contingency Amount

A contingency of 15% is recommended to address unexpected complexities in carrying out the work, such as: additional natural resource protection measures; limited accessibility to project sites for equipment and labor based on changing road and soil conditions; and the unforeseen need for special equipment. All the project sites have steep topography with slopes greater than 30%, constraining access and work zones. These factors can create delays and add costs.

## PRIOR BOARD ACTION SUPPORTING THE PROJECT

- **March 25, 2008:** Amendment of the Preliminary Use and Management Plans for Tunitas Creek Open Space Preserve; Incorporation of a Grazing Management Plan, Approval of a Categorical Exemption and Grazing Lease for Tunitas Creek Grazing Unit ([R-08-40, meeting minutes](#))
- **November 10, 2010:** Amendment of a Preliminary Use and Management Plans for Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Ranch Uplands; Incorporation of a Rangeland Management Plan, Approval of a Negative Declaration and Grazing Lease for Lobitos Ridge/Elkus Uplands ([R-10-99, meeting minutes](#))
- **August 22, 2012:** Authorization to Amend the Preliminary Use and Management Plan for Bluebrush Canyon Addition to the Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve to Incorporate a Rangeland Management Plan for the Bluebrush Canyon Grazing Unit, and Authorization to Approve a Grazing Lease for the Bluebrush Canyon Grazing Unit. ([R-12-80, meeting minutes](#)).
- **February 26, 2020:** Amendment of a Preliminary Use and Management Plans for Toto Ranch; Incorporation of a Rangeland Management Plan, Approval of a Negative Declaration and Grazing Lease for Toto Ranch ([R-20-09, meeting minutes](#))
- **November 10, 2021:** Adoption of a Preliminary Use and Management Plan for Johnston Ranch Uplands; Authorization to enter into a Lease and Management Agreement with POST and Assignment of Grazing Lease; and Determination that these actions are Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act; ([R-21-132, meeting minutes](#))
- **December 10, 2022:** Proposed phased purchase of the Peninsula Open Space Trust - Cloverdale Ranch Uplands properties, located along Cloverdale, Gazos Creek, Bean Hollow and Pescadero Roads and the Cabrillo Highway, in unincorporated San Mateo County, to create Cloverdale Ranch Open Space Preserve. ([R-22-140, meeting minutes](#))

## PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

## CEQA COMPLIANCE

Pursuant to Section 15168 of the CEQA Guidelines, the District has determined that the vegetation management and brush reduction activities as contemplated herein are within the scope of the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Integrated Pest Management Program, adopted by Board Resolution No. 14-37 on December 10, 2014.

## NEXT STEPS

If approved, the General Manager will execute a contract with Ecological Concerns, Inc. Final contract signature is subject to meeting all District requirements, such as having all required insurance and bonding in place. Work is estimated to commence in September 2024 for calendar

year 2024. Also, the District will evaluate contractor performance each year and consider whether to extend the contract annually for up to four total years.

Responsible Department Head:

Brandon Stewart, Land & Facilities

Prepared by/Contact person:

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