



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-15-137
Meeting 15-24
September 23, 2015

AGENDA ITEM 7

AGENDA ITEM

Funding of the United States Geologic Survey Streamgaging Station on San Gregorio Creek

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "SMA".

Authorize the General Manager to enter into a contract with the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District, for an amount not-to-exceed \$27,950, to provide funding for the United States Geological Survey's Streamgaging Station on San Gregorio Creek.

SUMMARY

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) streamgaging station on San Gregorio Creek was established by the USGS in 1969 and has operated continuously, with several periods of interruption, since its establishment. Funding the streamgaging station has been an ongoing challenge since the USGS began reducing their funding contributions to gaging stations nationwide. Since 2009, the District has contributed funding towards the operation of this streamgaging station to ensure the uninterrupted operation and collection of streamflow data for San Gregorio Creek, an important creek for both steelhead and Coho salmon. In 2014, the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District (RCD) began a process to expand partner funding and seek longer-term funding commitments for the streamgaging station, however these efforts have not yet been successful in establishing long-term funding commitments. The USGS and RCD have requested the District provide funding to support operation of the streamgaging station through Water Year 2016 (ending in October 2016). Upon approval by the Board of Directors, the General Manager will enter into a contract with the San Mateo County RCD for \$27,950 to fund a portion of the costs for the operation of the San Gregorio Streamgaging station through a Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS. A portion of this funding may be reimbursed to the District if the RCD receives reimbursement for the streamgaging station costs through a grant from the State Water Resources Control Board.

DISCUSSION

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) streamgaging station #11162570, located on the Stage Road bridge crossing near the mouth of San Gregorio Creek, was established by the USGS in 1969 and operated continuously until September 1994. The Station was re-established in May 2001 and operated until September 2005. After an interruption for two years, the Station has operated continuously from July 2007 until April 30, 2015. In April of this year, the

streamgaging station was again suspended due to a lack of funding, however USGS left the equipment in place and continued to collect data but did not publish the data. The equipment was left in place with the hope that funding could be secured to continue to operate the gaging station.

Funding the streamgaging station has been an ongoing challenge since the USGS began reducing their funding contributions to gaging stations nationwide. Today, the majority of the stations rely on a state/local match to pay for the operational costs. USGS pays the full cost to operate and maintain only 10% of the stations throughout the country.

Midpen has historically voluntarily provided significant funding to support the operation of the Station on San Gregorio Creek. The table below summarizes the past funding provided by the District:

| Water Year | USGS Share | MidPen Share | Other Partner Share | Total Station Cost | Notes |
|------------|------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|
| 2009 | \$ 0 | \$13,800 | \$ 7,800 | \$ 21,600 | State grant funding was frozen, therefore Midpen stepped in to provide funding |
| 2010 | \$ NA | \$0 | \$ NA | \$ NA | Funding breakdown unknown for this year. Midpen did not contribute funds. |
| 2011 | \$ 8,950 | \$13,450 | \$ 0 | \$ 22,400 | JFA with USGS |
| 2012 | \$ 9,050 | \$ 6,775 | \$ 6,575 | \$ 22,400 | JFA with USGS |
| 2013 | \$ 6,850 | \$ 9,050 | \$ 4,500 | \$ 20,400 | JFA with USGS |
| 2014 | \$ 6,850 | \$10,000 | \$ 5,550 | \$ 22,400 | JFA with San Mateo County RCD and USGS |

The other funding partners in past years have been the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District (RCD), Peninsula Open Space Trust, American Rivers, Trout Unlimited, and San Gregorio Environmental Resource Center.

In 2014, the RCD took over the lead role in coordinating the partner funding for the streamgage, which is similar to a role the RCD provides in funding the streamgage in Pilarcitos Creek. In the last water year (2015, which ends on September 30), the RCD was not able to raise the necessary partner share to fund the streamgage (despite a continued \$10,000 funding pledge by Midpen). USGS continued to operate the station in the hopes that the funds would be raised to cover the costs for the station. The gaging equipment was left in place, again in the hopes that the funds would be raised to cover the costs for the 2015 water year.

In October 2015, USGS will remove the equipment from the gaging station if partner cost share funding is not provided. At that time, the Federal match funding for the station would also be withdrawn and would not be available for future years. This Federal withdrawal will raise the partner cost to operate the station by \$7,000 to \$8,000 per year. The funding required to reopen

and continue operating the station through water year 2016 is detailed in the table below. The funding required is indicated in the column titled 'Partner Match':

| Water Year | USGS Share | Partner Match | Total Station Cost | Notes |
|------------|------------|---------------|--------------------|--|
| 2015 | \$ 6,900 | \$ 13,700 | \$ 20,600 | Partners unable to fund station costs. |
| 2016 | \$ 7,200 | \$ 14,250 | \$ 21,450 | Payment due by Sept. 30, 2015 |

USGS has informed the partners that a total of \$27,950 is due by September 30, 2015 in order to continue to operate the station.

In order to continue the operation of this station, the General Manager recommends Midpen provide the funding to cover the funding gap. This will allow streamflow data to be collected through what is projected to be a strong El Nino winter. Additionally, USGS will be able to release the data collected since May 2015 when the station was taken offline. The San Mateo RCD has received funding through an Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan (IRWMP) grant for funding the streamgauge. This grant funding could be applied to the 2016 streamgauge costs, contingent upon agreement with the granting agency. However, this funding is not expected to be received by the RCD until after payment to the USGS is due. Therefore, the District will provide the funds for the 2016 water year costs, with the RCD working to reimburse the District contingent upon IRWMP grant funding approval of costs.

Midpen will continue to work with the San Mateo RCD to obtain a long-term funding agreement and funding commitments for the San Gregorio Creek streamgauge.

FISCAL IMPACT

Sufficient funds are available in the FY2015-16 Natural Resources Department budget to cover the \$27,950 contract amount.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

No Board Committee review was conducted for this item.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Funding to continue the operation of the stream gaging station on San Gregorio Creek is categorically exempt under section 15306 (basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities that do not result in major disturbances to an environmental resource) of the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval by the Board of Directors, the General Manager will enter into a contract with the San Mateo County RCD to fund a portion of the costs for the operation of the San Gregorio Streamgange through a Joint Funding Agreement with the USGS.

Responsible Department Head:

Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Department Manager

Prepared by:

Kirk Lenington, Natural Resources Department Manager