



Board Report

File #: RES 21-174, **Version:** 1

Adopt a resolution to:

- a. Support the Ag Land Trust's agricultural conservation easement proposal to the State of California Department of Conservation Farmland Conservancy Program (DoC) for 210 acres of the Hitchcock-Gill Farm; and
- b. Support the Ag Land Trust's application for grant funding from the DoC for the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement over the Hitchcock-Gill Farm totaling 210 acres (APN 145-181-009) situated approximately 1.5 miles west of Chualar, on the eastern side of Old Stage Road, and to place said parcels into an agricultural conservation easement to conserve priority agricultural land resources; and
- c. Direct the Housing and Community Development (HCD) Director or Chief of Planning to collaborate with the Ag Land Trust in the grant application process.
- d. Find that the proposed action is categorically exempt per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15317 and/or CEQA Guidelines Section 15317(b).

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Action: Categorically Exempt per CEQA Guidelines Section 15317 (Open Space Contracts or Easements) and/or CEQA Guidelines Section 15325 (Transfer of Ownership in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources, Section 15317(b) - Acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas to allow continued agricultural use of the areas.)

Planning File No. REF210028

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Support the Ag Land Trust's agricultural conservation easement proposal to the California Department of Conservation Farmland Conservancy Program (DoC) for 210 acres of the Hitchcock-Gill Farm; and
- b. Support the Ag Land Trust's application for grant funding from DoC for the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement over the Hitchcock-Gill Farm totaling 210 acres (APN 145-181-009) situated approximately 1.5 miles west of Chualar, on the eastern side of Old Stage Road, and to place said parcels into an agricultural conservation easement to conserve priority agricultural land resources; and
- c. Direct the Housing and Community Development Director (HCD) or Chief of Planning to collaborate with the Ag Land Trust in the grant application process.
- d. Find that the proposed action is categorically exempt per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15317 and/or CEQA Guidelines Section 15317(b).

SUMMARY:

The Ag Land Trust has applied to the California Department of Conservation (DoC) for grant funding from the Farmland Conservation Program for the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement over the Hitchcock-Gill Farm totaling 210 acres (APN 145- 181-009) (sometimes referred to as "Farm" or "property") situated approximately 1.5 miles west of Chualar, on the eastern side of Old Stage Road, and to place said parcel into an agricultural conservation easement to conserve priority agricultural land resources. The goal of the Farmland Conservation Program is to conserve important agricultural land resources that are subject to conversion pressures via the purchase of agricultural conservation easements or by enacting local strategies that result in permanent agricultural land protection. The Ag Land Trust proposes to acquire an agriculture conservation easement on 210 acres of the Hitchcock-Gill Farm (APN 145- 181-009) located approximately 1.5 miles west of

Chualar on the eastern side of Old Stage Road (Attachment A).

The Ag Land Trust has requested that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution of support for the Ag Land Trust to include in their application to the DoC for grant funding to purchase a conservation easement on the Hitchcock-Gill Farm.

Public Resources Code Section 10251 provides that applicants for an agricultural conservation easement shall meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

Public Resources Code Section 10251.

Applicants for an agricultural conservation easement or fee acquisition grant shall meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

- (a) The parcel proposed for conservation is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The land is also in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural production.
- (b) The applicable city or county has a general plan that demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. This commitment shall be reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the plan, as they relate to the area of the county or city where the easement acquisition is proposed.
- (c) Without conservation, the land proposed for protection is likely to be converted to nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future.

The Farm proposed for an agricultural conservation easement is expected to continue to be used for, and is large enough to sustain, commercial agricultural production. The Farm is also in an area that possesses the necessary market, infrastructure, and agricultural support services, and the surrounding parcel sizes and land uses will support long-term commercial agricultural production.

The Monterey County 2010 General Plan demonstrates a long-term commitment to agricultural land conservation. This commitment is reflected in the goals, objectives, policies, and implementation measures of the General Plan. The application for the purchase of the proposed agricultural conservation easement is compatible with the 2010 Monterey County General Plan. Moreover, without conservation, the Farm proposed for protection is likely to be converted to nonagricultural use in the foreseeable future.

The proposed action, to support the Ag Land Trust application for grant funding for the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement is categorically exempt per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15317 (Open Space Contracts or Easements) and/or CEQA Guidelines Section 15325 (Transfer of Ownership in Land to Preserve Existing Natural Conditions and Historical Resources, Section 15317(b) - Acquisition, sale, or other transfer of areas to allow continued agricultural use of the areas).

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVMENT:

The request from the Ag Land Trust for the Board of Supervisors to adopt a resolution of support for the Ag Land Trust application for grant funding for the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement over the Hitchcock-Gill Farm was reviewed by Housing and Community Development (HCD) in consultation with the Monterey County Agricultural Commissioner's Office (MCAC). The MCAC supports the Ag Land Trust application for grant funding for the purchase of the proposed agricultural conservation easement as said proposal promotes the agricultural sector of Monterey County.

FINANCING:

There is no anticipated negative impact to the General Fund as a result of supporting the Ag Land Trust's application for grant funding for the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement over the Hitchcock-Gill Farm.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

In accordance with the 2010 Monterey County General Plan, Agricultural Element, Goal AG-1, the long-term protection, conservation, and enhancement of productive and potentially productive agricultural land is encouraged.

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

- Economic Development
- Administration
- Health & Human Services
- Infrastructure
- Public Safety

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Approved by: Erik Lundquist AICP HCD Director

The following attachments are on file with the Clerk of the Board:

Attachment A - Vicinity Maps Hitchcock-Gill Farm

Attachment B - (Proposed) Resolution of Support for the Ag Land Trust Application for Grant Funding for the Purchase of an Agricultural Conservation Easement over 210 acres of the Hitchcock-Gill Farm

Attachment C - Ag Land Trust Resolution No. 2020-05 authorizing the proposed transaction for the purchase of an Agricultural Conservation Easement over the Hitchcock-Gill Farm

cc: Front Counter Copy; Erik Lundquist; Craig Spencer; Nadia Garcia, Management Analyst - Agricultural Commissioner's Office; Mary Grace Perry, Deputy County Counsel - Office of the County Counsel; Cheryl DeMars, Chief Executive Officer - Ag Land Trust; Sherwood Darington, Director of Conservation - Ag Land Trust; David Gill - Hitchcock-Gill Farm; Michael D. Cling - Michael Hitchcock Children's Trust; HCD Project File No. REF210028