



County of Monterey

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Board Report

File #: 23-605, Version: 1

a. Approve and authorize the Housing and Community Development Director or Interim Director or designee to execute Amendment 1 to Grant Agreement WC-1947CA between the County of Monterey and the Wildlife Conservation Board for the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) Project (REF 140048) floodplain restoration design and implementation to increase the grant agreement amount of \$2,500,000 by \$4,736,000 for a total grant agreement amount of \$7,236,000.

PRIOR CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) ACTION:

Approval of contract amendments and grant agreements is not a Project under CEQA. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the CRFREE Project was certified by the Board of Supervisors on January 20, 2020. The CRFREE Project was approved, and the corresponding Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) was adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 15, 2021.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

a. Approve and authorize the Housing and Community Development Director or Interim Director or designee to execute Amendment 1 to Grant Agreement WC-1947CA between the County of Monterey and the Wildlife Conservation Board for the Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement (CRFREE) Project (REF 140048) floodplain restoration design and implementation to increase the grant agreement amount of \$2,500,000 by \$4,736,000 for a total grant agreement amount of \$7,236,000.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

The Carmel River Floodplain Restoration and Environmental Enhancement Project (CRFREE Project) is a comprehensive effort to improve flood control and restore native riparian habitat, floodplain habitat, and hydrologic function to a portion of the lower floodplain along the Carmel River. Key aspects of the CRFREE Project are to: 1) Create notches in the levees along the south bank of the lower Carmel River, 2) Restore the south lower Carmel River floodplain, and 3) Build a causeway along Highway 1, restoring connectivity between the lower Carmel River Floodplain and the south arm of the Carmel Lagoon. The CRFREE Project was supported by Federal and State agencies, is entirely grant funded with over \$56 million in grant funds awarded or pending from 10 funding sources (Attachment C).

On February 11, 2020, the County of Monterey accepted a \$2.5 million grant for floodplain restoration design and implementation from the State of California, Natural Resources Agency, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), through Grant Agreement No. WC-1947CA between the WCB, County of Monterey, Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT), California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) (Attachment A).

On March 20, 2023, County staff requested an augmentation of \$4,304,653 from WCB to cover a funding gap for CRFREE floodplain restoration, and a timeline extension to December 31, 2026. In response to this request, the WCB will bring proposed Amendment 1 to the WC-1947CA grant to their Board on August 24, 2023, for approval to increase funding by \$4,736,000 to a total grant amount of \$7,236,000. Of the total WCB grant award, \$6,983,344 remains unspent. Proposed Amendment 1 to WC-1947CA is included as Attachment B. Approval of this recommendation will authorize the Director of HCD to sign proposed Amendment 1 to WCB

Grant Agreement No. WC-1947CA to increase the Grant Agreement amount of \$2,500,000 by \$4,736,000 for a total Grant Agreement amount of \$7,236,000.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

WCB, BSLT, California Department of Parks and Recreation and MPRPD concur with this recommendation regarding proposed Amendment 1 to Grant Agreement WC-1947CA between the County of Monterey and WCB et al.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Environmental review is complete for the CRFREE Project. The Project EIR was certified by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Monterey (Board) during a public hearing on January 20, 2020. The Project was approved by the Board on June 15, 2021, pursuant to Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 21-163. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, lead agency for the floodplain restoration portion of the project, issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on October 30, 2020. NEPA review was completed on April 23, 2021, when Caltrans, in its capacity as the lead federal agency for the causeway portion of the Project, issued a FONSI.

FINANCING:

HCD staff time to support the CRFREE Project is included in the FY2023-24 Adopted budget for HCD Unit 8543, Appropriation Unit HCD002. Based on the November 2022 Design Engineer's estimate, CRFREE is expected to cost approximately \$55.48 million to complete the final design, construction, and restoration efforts. CRFREE is to be entirely grant funded. The County and BSLT currently hold \$20.9 million in unexpended grant funds for the project pre-construction, construction, and monitoring. An additional \$35.8 million has been requested from various state and federal agencies, and this pending funding is in various stages of consideration or award (Attachment C). The County and BSLT will continue to work to raise additional funds to meet the full Project cost, as necessary. CRFREE is budgeted in Capital Project Fund 404, Unit 8564.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

If approved, this action supports the Board of Supervisors' Strategic Initiatives for Administration and Infrastructure. The Project will provide sustainable physical infrastructure and associated flood risk reduction and habitat benefits to promote the safety of area residents and visitors.

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

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Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Principal Planner

Approved by: Craig Spencer, AICP, Acting HCD Director

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

Attachment A - WCB Grant Agreement No. WC-1947CA

Attachment B - Proposed Amendment 1 to WC-1947CA

Attachment C - CRFREE grant summary

