



Board Report

File #: RES 17-101, **Version:** 1

Adopt a resolution to:

- a. Accept a Grant Award offer from the State of California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection for the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in the amount of \$182,366 for development of the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program in the non-coastal areas of Monterey County; and
- b. Authorize the RMA Director or Chief of Planning to accept, administer, and execute documents to secure these funds from the State of California Department of Conservation.

REF160008 - The County of Monterey and Thompson Farm (Ag Land Trust)

Agricultural Land Mitigation Program and Agricultural Conservation Easement Project Grant

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors adopt a resolution to:

- a. Accept a Grant Award offer from the State of California Department of Conservation Division of Land Resource Protection for the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) in the amount of \$182,366 for development of the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program in the non-coastal areas of Monterey County; and
- b. Authorize the RMA Director or Chief of Planning to accept, administer, and execute documents to secure these funds from the State of California Department of Conservation.

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION:

The State of California Department of Conservation (DoC) Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) program supports the State's greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals by making strategic investments to protect agricultural lands from conversion to more GHG intensive uses. Protecting critical agricultural lands from conversion to urban or rural residential development promotes smart growth within existing jurisdictions, ensures open space remains available, and supports a healthy agricultural economy and resulting food security.

The principal goal of the SALC program is to avoid increases in GHG emissions associated with the conversion of irreplaceable agricultural land to urban and rural residential development. The rationale for the State's investment is that minimizing conversion of farmland to urban land uses will prevent GHG emissions, by preventing sprawl development that in return would increase automobile emissions.

The SALC program provides for two types of grants which are available to public agencies and partners who are qualified to hold agricultural conservation easements:

1. Agricultural Land Conservation Strategies and Outcomes - Grants to counties, cities, and partners to design and implement a local or regional agricultural land conservation strategy that results in an outcome that reduces GHG emissions through the long-term protection of agricultural lands under threat of conversion by promoting regional growth within discrete boundaries.
2. Agricultural Conservation Easements - Grants to protect important agricultural lands under threat of conversion via permanent agricultural conservation easements (ACE or easements).

Monterey County 2010 General Plan Policy No. AG-1.12 provides for the development of an Agricultural Land

Mitigation Program. Policy No. AG-1.12 provides, in pertinent part:

AG-1.12 The County shall prepare, adopt, and implement a program that requires projects involving a change of land use designation resulting in the loss of Important Farmland (as mapped by the California Department of Conservation Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program) to mitigate the loss of that acreage. For such land to be annexed to incorporated areas, the County shall work in consultation with the cities to mitigate the loss of Important Farmland resulting from annexation. The program may include ratios, payment of fees, or some other mechanisms. Mitigation mechanisms established through this program shall be based upon a graduated value of the Important Farmland, with mitigation for loss of prime land having the highest agricultural value. The County shall support private, non-profit land trusts and conservation organizations to promote the policies of this General Plan, facilitate the implementation of the program, and to receive, by voluntary donation or purchase, development rights on any lands to be preserved as part of this program's implementation strategy....

On June 28, 2016, the Board of Supervisors ratified the action by the Monterey County Resource Management Agency Director to submit a grant application to the DoC in an amount up to \$182,366 with the County matching 20% or \$45,330 (cash match not to exceed \$12,183 and in-kind match of approximately \$33,147) to provide funding for the development of the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program, in order to implement 2010 General Plan Policy No. AG-1.12, and adopt DoC Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) Grant Program language. With this action, the Board also directed the RMA Director, or designee, to collaborate with the Ag Land Trust through the grant application process. See Attachment A for Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 16-189.

In August of 2016, the DoC notified the RMA Planning department that it had received the Strategy and Outcome grant award through the SALC program. As previously mentioned, the goal of the SALC program is to reduce or avoid GHG emissions through the protection of agricultural land resources via the purchase of agricultural conservation easements or by enacting local strategies that result in permanent agricultural land protection. In order to be considered for the grant to fund the development of the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program, the County had to partner with a non-profit agency to place agricultural property into an ACE. The County found a partnership with the Ag Land Trust to place the Thompson Farm, which consists of a 129.42 acre parcel situated at the intersection of McFadden Road and Highway 183, two miles west of the City limits of Salinas in Monterey County (APN Nos. 227-063-004-000 and 414-012-001-000) into an ACE.

The subject property is commonly known as the "Thompson Farm" and is owned by EMD, Inc. and William O. Garin Family Limited Partnership, who are willing land owners in support of placing the 129.42 acre agricultural parcel into an ACE. Now that the grant has been awarded, the County could receive up to \$182,366 to fund the development of an Agricultural Land Mitigation Program. The Ag Land Trust has separately applied for grant funds through the SALC program to acquire agricultural conservation easements. Therefore, staff is requesting that the Board accept the grant award offer and authorize the RMA Director or Chief of Planning to execute anticipated grant funding documents once the DoC has transmitted them to the County.

CEQA

The acceptance of this grant award offer would be exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15262, because the project involves only a planning study for possible future actions that the Board of Supervisors has not approved, adopted, or funded. An initial study will be completed once the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program is drafted.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The Agricultural Commissioner's Office and the Ag Land Trust collaborated in the completion of the County of Monterey and Ag Land Trust (Thompson Farm) Agricultural Land Mitigation Program and Agricultural Conservation Easement Project Grant Application. These agencies, as well as the Agricultural Advisory Committee, will be involved in developing the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program.

Due to late submission of this board report, the CAO Budget and Analysis Division was not provided adequate time to fully review for potential fiscal, organizational, policy, or other implications to the County of Monterey.

FINANCING:

In August of 2016 the DoC notified the RMA Planning department that it had been awarded with a SALC grant in the amount of \$182,366. The grant will provide funding for staff costs associated with the development of the Agricultural Land Mitigation Program in accordance with General Plan Implementation. This is a quarterly reimbursable grant, which withholds ten percent (10%) of the invoiced amount until the completion of the project. The project period for this grant is anticipated to begin in July 2017 and extend into FY 2017-18 and FY 2018-19, not to exceed 24 months in accordance with SALC program requirements.

The grant requires a cash match of \$12,183 and in-kind match of \$33,147. Match contributions may be provided throughout the grant term and are not required to be set-aside in advance. Staff anticipates the cash match will be met by procuring interpretation, printing, mailing and postage services, which staff expect to absorb within the General Fund 001, Planning Appropriation Unit RMA001 over the next two fiscal years.

The FY 2017-18 Recommended Budget does not include appropriations or related revenue for the SALC grant. Staff will return to the Board of Supervisors after the FY 2017-18 budget is adopted to request appropriations before commencement of this project.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

The principal goal of the SALC program is to avoid increases in GHG emissions associated with the conversion of irreplaceable agricultural land to urban and rural residential development. Preservation of agricultural land has an economic value to the County. It also has a benefit to public health by reducing the potential of pollutants in the air through the avoidance of increases in GHG emission.

Check the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives:

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

Prepared by: Jacqueline R. Onciano, RMA Chief of Planning ext. 5193

Reviewed by: John Guertin, Deputy Director, RMA

Approved by: Carl P. Holm, AICP, RMA Director

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

- Attachment A Draft Resolution
- Attachment B Board of Supervisors Resolution No. 16-189

cc: Front Counter Copy; Carl Holm; John Guertin, Jacqueline R. Onciano; Nadia Amador; Christina McGinnis, Agricultural Commissioner; Mary Grace Perry, Office of the County Counsel; Thompson Farm - EMD, Inc. and William O. Garin Family Limited Partnership; Ag Land Trust (Sherwood Darington); The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Michael DeLapa, Executive Director); John H. Farrow; Janet Brennan; Project File REF160008.