



Leticia Saenz <leticia.saenz@co.hidalgo.tx.us>

Re: MOU copy?

1 message

Robert Vina <robert.vina@da.co.hidalgo.tx.us> Wed, Sep 21, 2022 at 10:27 AM
To: Leticia Saenz <leticia.saenz@co.hidalgo.tx.us>
Cc: "mendoza, jennifer" <jennifer.mendoza@co.hidalgo.tx.us>, "rodriguez, alicia" <alicia.rodriguez@co.hidalgo.tx.us>

Good Morning Ms. Saenz,
This office reviewed the Community Forest Restoration and Education MOU between the County (Pct. 4) and American Forests and at this time approves as to the form of the MOU.

Please let us know if you have any questions.
Respectfully,

Robert Viña III
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On Wed, Sep 21, 2022 at 9:46 AM Leticia Saenz <leticia.saenz@co.hidalgo.tx.us> wrote:

Hi, Bobby-
Please review and approve as to form the MOU (attached hereto). I have placed an agenda item for approval by CC on 09/27/22, stating with approval for Commissioner Torres to sign the MOU...



COMMUNITY FOREST RESTORATION AND EDUCATION MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between
American Forests & Hidalgo County Precinct 4

I. Background

This Community Forest Restoration and Education Memorandum of Understanding is made and entered into between American Forests and Hidalgo County Precinct 4 (“Precinct” or “Precinct 4”) for the purpose of forming a voluntary partnership to plan and conduct a community forest restoration at the Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Endowment Center and/or surrounding county-owned lands (site). This partnership will facilitate scientific planning, tree/forest planting and maintenance, advocacy and awareness in support of greater Resilient Forests at the site and throughout the Precinct.

II. Vision for Community Forest Restoration in the Precinct

The goal of this project is to facilitate a stronger connection between the community members of the Precinct and the native forests of the Rio Grande Valley, Texas (RGV). These woodlands, or “thornforests”, provide critical green infrastructure that improve quality of life by lessening the impacts of climate change and corresponding health-related illnesses, dramatically improving air quality, increasing positive behaviors, and providing economic incentives for both community resilience and biodiversity conservation throughout the larger RGV region.

III. Priority Actions

The Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Community Forest Restoration and Education Partnership (“Partnership”) will utilize American Forests’ project expertise to pursue a native forest restoration on approximately 1-acre of county-owned land in the Precinct. Concurrently, the project will also facilitate on-site education on conservation-related topics using American Forests’ subject matter expertise. Partners will focus on several different aspects of the project including:

1. **Community stakeholder input** - The social, public health and environmental benefits of forests provide impact to both individual people and governmental services on many levels. The Precinct and American Forests will collaborate and invite further collaboration with neighborhood and community groups, nonprofit organizations, professionals, academic researchers and county, state, tribal and

federal agencies also wanting to contribute to the concept of Resilient Forests within the precinct. For this project, each partner will invite stakeholder input from individuals representing community groups to help plan certain aspects of the community forest, including but not limited to: trail placement and specific tree species siting.

2. **Forest Site Designation & Preparation** – Forest restoration is a long-term process and requires that considerations be made early in the planning process to designate a planting site that can facilitate long-term forest health while serving the best interests of the community. Precinct 4 will work with American Forests to designate an ideal 1-acre space on county-owned land in/around the Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Endowment Center to site the forest and provide community access per Precinct rules and regulations.
3. **Public Tree Planting Event** – Partners will cooperate with one another to host a 1-day planting event at the site where the public-including students, community stakeholders and other supporting organizations-will be invited to participate in the forest planting.
4. **Forest Maintenance** – American Forests will work with the Precinct to develop a list of best management practices (BMP's) to promote successful forest establishment and longer-term care. This maintenance will ensure that the site's forest remains beneficial to both native biodiversity (e.g., providing nesting locating for birds) and the community (e.g., maximizing ecosystem service values in floodwater retention, non-consumptive recreational use and educational literacy opportunities). Partners will cooperate to provide periodic weeding and other practices to reduce invasive plant establishment at the planting site after forest establishment.
5. **Education and Outreach** – Public awareness of forest restoration in the RGV is very limited. Without educating community members on forest benefits and related topics there is limited value to this project and, by extension, to the expectation that the region's imperiled thornforest ecosystem will survive into the future. Partners will work together to facilitate a series of educational offerings at the Hidalgo County Precinct 4 Endowment Center. The curriculum for these offerings will be made available on a recurring basis and be developed utilizing American Forests' expertise in association with local institutions of higher learning.
6. **Communicating and Replicating** – The long-term value of this project and others like it will only be sustainable if the benefits are widely shared and made known. Partners will identify strategic opportunities and milestones and use the commercial and proprietary broadcast, print and electronic media resources available to them to promote visitation of the project site.
7. **Funds Management** – The funding necessary to complete the project will be managed by American Forests and, when/if necessary, will be disbursed to partners by American Forests. In collaboration with the Precinct, American Forests will manage the forest site preparation, planting and joint forest maintenance activities at the site. These activities may include work provided by contractors.

IV. Commitments

This Memorandum of Understanding reflects a commitment among the parties to work toward the vision and purpose described above. This Memorandum of Understanding is an affirmative expression of each

partner's intent to collaborate by putting forth their best, professional efforts and does not obligate or restrict the activity of any Partner in any way.

American Forests and the Precinct each commits to the following:

1. Identifying one representative with whom the responsibility and authority for participation in the Partnership is primarily vested. Day-to-day responsibility may be delegated and shared, as is appropriate and efficient, but one person will be designated to represent each organization in leadership and decision-making activities.
2. Utilizing organizational or agency professional expertise and in-house resources to advance the vision and purpose of the Partnership within the scope of existing funding to support such work at any given time.
3. Provide each signatory to this agreement with an affirmative statement of partnership or permission to use the organizational logo of the other signatory to reference or promote the project.
4. The effective date of this Memorandum of Understanding shall commence on the date of the last counter-signature and conclude **on the last day of September 2024**. The agreement may be extended for a period of up to five additional years by written consent of both partners.
5. Any party may withdraw from this Memorandum of Understanding prior to its termination by notifying the other party in writing.

This Community Forest Restoration and Education Memorandum of Understanding is made and entered into on behalf of American Forests and Precinct 4 on the date indicated.

James A. Daley III (date)
President & CEO
American Forests

Ellie Torres (date)
Commissioner
Hidalgo County Precinct 4