

DELTA CONSERVANCY ATTACHMENT 2

Meeting Date: July 27, 2022

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Consideration of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Responsible Agency Findings and Award of Climate, Access, and Restoration (CAR) Grant Funds for Bees Lakes Habitat Restoration and Public Access Project Staff Recommendation

This agenda item presents for Board consideration a resolution to adopt Responsible Agency Findings based on the City of West Sacramento's Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and a recommendation to award Climate, Access, and Restoration (CAR) Grant Program funding for the Bees Lakes Habitat Restoration and Public Access Project.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Applicant	City of West Sacramento
Project ID	CAR02
Project Type	Implementation
County	Yolo
Funding Request	\$2,373,800
Total Project Cost	\$2,373,800
Funding Recommendation	\$2,373,800

RECOMMENDATION

Conservancy staff recommends that the Board consider the Final Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Bees Lakes Habitat Restoration and Public Access Project prepared by the City of West Sacramento as the Lead Agency in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, and adopt Resolution 2022-03 that makes CEQA Responsible Agency Findings that all necessary mitigation measures have been included in the project to eliminate any significant effects on the environment, and that no additional mitigation measures within the Board's authority are necessary.

Contingent upon the Board's adoption of Resolution 2022-03, Conservancy staff recommends that the Board approve up to \$2,373,800 in grant funding for the proposed project by the City of West Sacramento. Staff prepared the text below based on staff's best understanding of the information provided in the application and meetings with members of the City of West Sacramento project team. Conservancy staff followed the General Grant Guidelines, approved by the Conservancy Board in January 2022, in working with the applicant and assessing this proposal. Conservancy staff contacted local governments and districts, water agencies, and tribes via the local notification process to receive comments and ensure project support. Prior to entering into a grant agreement, staff will work with the applicant to further refine the project's scope of work.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The proposed Bees Lakes Habitat Restoration and Public Access Project will remove and control invasive species existing on the project site, reestablish native species within the disturbed area to enhance ecosystem function, install pond aeration devices to improve pond clarity and increase pond dissolved oxygen levels, and install a floating wetland island to improve water quality and provide protected waterbird habitat. The project will also build 1,395 linear feet of new trail and a 700-square foot viewing platform, creating safe and ADA-compliant access to a mature, riparian forest within the City of West Sacramento (City). If awarded, the funding will allow the applicant to finalize design plans, secure all permits, remove invasive species, plant native species, install pond aeration devices, install a floating wetland island, and construct the trail and platform along with an informational kiosk and educational signage to increase knowledge of Bees Lakes ecological characteristics.

The applicant initially submitted elements of the proposed project under the Conservancy's Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 grant programs. To reduce duplicative efforts, the applicant withdrew their Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 grant proposals and submitted a single cost-effective, comprehensive, and multi-benefit project proposal for CAR funding. As a shovel-ready project with both ecological and public access benefits, Conservancy staff felt this project was ideally suited for CAR funding.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

This implementation effort is considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act. On January 21, 2021, the City of West Sacramento, as the lead agency under CEQA, submitted a Notice of Determination based on the results of an Initial Study that found potential significant project impacts on biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, transportation, and tribal and cultural resources; determined all of the identified impacts can be reduced to insignificant levels through implementation of Mitigation Measures outlined in the Initial Study; and prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project to satisfy the requirements of CEQA. Conservancy staff, in fulfilling the Conservancy's role as a responsible agency, have reviewed these documents and findings, and staff recommends that the Board make Responsible Agency Findings concluding that all necessary mitigation measures have been included in the project to eliminate significant effects on the environment.

COST SHARE

The cost share amount is zero percent of the project budget. Although the applicant will not contribute cost share, it is notable that they have secured considerable commitments of time, labor, donations, and monetary support for the project.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE AND LOCAL PRIORITIES

The project is consistent with and links to multiple actions and priorities outlined the Conservancy's governing statute, the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, and the Delta Plan. The project will provide protection and enhancement of habitat and habitat restoration; increase opportunities for tourism and recreation in the Delta; improve water quality; protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, agricultural, cultural, historical, and living resources; promote environmental education; and enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

LOCAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The proposal demonstrates local support and includes a resolution of support from the project's county's Board of Supervisors. The applicant submitted letters of support from the West Sacramento City Council, the West Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, and the Yolo Habitat Conservancy.

Additionally, the project was developed through a collaborative public process that was funded through the Conservancy's Cycle 3 Proposition 1 grant program. The applicant developed a stakeholder advisory group that included local landowners, Reclamation District (RD) 900 representatives, marina owners/operators, environmental organization representatives, site users, developer representatives, equestrian advocates, cyclists, academics, and wildlife viewers. The advisory committee provided input on project goals and a preformed a detailed analysis of the preferred alternative which was approved by the West Sacramento City Council in January 2021.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The applicant submitted elements of the proposed project under the Conservancy's Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 grant programs. To reduce duplicative efforts, the applicant withdrew their Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 grant proposals and submitted a single cost-effective and comprehensive project proposal for CAR funding. Conservancy staff determined that all elements of the proposed project are ideally suited for CAR funding. By funding through CAR, the result is a shovel-ready and multi-benefit project that will benefit the Delta ecosystem and community.

Prior to entering a grant agreement, the applicant shall coordinate with Conservancy staff and the Delta Stewardship Council to apply for and receive a Delta Plan Certification of Consistency for this project.

BACKGROUND

Chapters on September 23, 2021, the Budget Act of 2021 (Senate Bill 170, Item 3875-101-0001 of Section 2.00) provided the Delta Conservancy with \$5,250,000 for projects that support climate resilience, community access, and natural resource protection activities (collectively known as Climate, Access, and Restoration (CAR) Funding). Of the total, \$4,987,500 is available for projects.

SUGGESTED MOTION LANGUAGE

Two separate motions are required.

Move to adopt Resolution 2022-03, which makes CEQA Responsible Agency Findings that all necessary mitigation measures have been included in the Bees Lakes Habitat Restoration and Public Access Project.

Move to award funding up to \$2,373,800 to the City of West Sacramento from the Climate, Access, and Restoration (CAR) Grant Program for the Bees Lakes Habitat Restoration and Public Access Project.

CONTACT

Martha Ozonoff, Community Projects Supervisor

Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy

martha.ozonoff@deltaconservancy.ca.gov

(916) 375-2088

FIGURE 11.1 MAP OF THE BEES LAKES HABITAT RESTORATION AND PUBLIC ACCESS PROJECT AREA

