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**Staff Report**

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1. Introductions and Updates
2. Public Comment
3. Agenda Revisions
4. **ACTION:** Consider Approval of May 20, 2020 Executive Committee (EC) minutes (see attached)
5. **ACTION:** Amend Restoration Fund Spending Plan (see attached)

The FY2018 to FY2022 Restoration Fund Spending Plan, approved by the EC in the February 2017 meeting, outlined the breakdown of spending for the five-year period. We've done some restructuring of the Community Projects program and decided to increase the maximum funding amount for a single project from \$5,000 to \$10,000. With this increase, the decision was made to increase the total funding amount for the program from \$10,000 per year to \$15,000 per year. This would require an additional \$5,000 each for FY2021 and FY2022. Based on this change, staff are requesting an additional \$10,000 be added to the current Restoration Fund Spending plan for the Community Project program.

Staff recommends that the EC approve the proposed Restoration Fund Spending Plan.

6. **DISCUSSION:** Community Project Program update

Staff has spent the summer updating the guidance materials and reaching out to potential partners to make them aware of the funding opportunity. Staff has begun conversations on two potential projects:

- The Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District (CSLRCD) is interested in a project to increase habitat for pollinators and monarchs. The effort would include implementation to restore habitat as well as an education component for landowners and the general public. The approach for the education efforts depends on the specific parcel where restoration work occurs. If it is a publicly-accessible location, then permanent signage would be the likely approach. If it is a privately-owned parcel, then guided field tours would be the likely approach. The CSLRCD is already reaching out to landowners and is working to fine-tune their budget. Their eventual goal for beyond this Community Project is to create curriculum that could be used by local schools as part of their environmental science education program.
- Creek Lands Conservation (CLC) is interested in a project to improve the diversity of riparian corridor vegetation in the watershed. They have already coordinated with the CSLRCD and obtained permission to work on their properties, either the Los Osos Wetland area (formerly the Morrissey parcel) and/or the Chorro Flats area. The project would involve training volunteers to go out to these areas and use a program like iNaturalist to map the plants in the riparian corridor. Based on that information, the CLC would work to design a plant palette and have the appropriate plants propagated. Volunteers could help collect seeds from native plants to support the effort. The CLC would then coordinate volunteers to support a planting effort. Their longer term vision is to partner with the Estuary Program and the CSLRCD to expand the effort to include partners like State Parks. On the education front, they have a contract with

San Luis Coastal Unified School District to expand outdoor education for third to fifth graders, and they could see this effort fitting in with the fourth grade curriculum. In particular, they'd like to do some of this type of work near Los Osos Middle School on the parcel formerly referred to as Powell II. They see Community Project funding as seed money to support data collection and initial planning, and the next step would be to seek larger funding sources for an expanded effort.

We let both partners know that we will likely receive asks for more funding that we have to give out in November, so we asked them to consider what work can be done if they receive a partial award. We have not been approached by any additional partners expressing an interest in funding. We feel that this could be due to volunteer-based organizations being fairly dormant right now because of the COVID situation.

The next steps are that each of these partners will develop a brief Concept Proposal and submit it in mid-September. We will then seek expert review from our Technical Advisory Committees to determine the technical validity of the approach, whether the budget is realistic, etc. Based on this input, staff will make recommendations to the Bay Foundation and EC, and both of these groups will review and vote on these projects at their November meetings.

#### 7. **DISCUSSION:** Program Evaluation (PE) update

Throughout the summer, staff submitted materials, answered questions, and hosted Zoom meetings with EPA and program partners. EPA said they very much enjoyed getting to interface with partners to see how they work with the Estuary Program. The next step is for EPA to complete a draft of the PE letter. We then review the letter and discuss the possible items to highlight before the letter is finalized. The last time we went through this process in summer 2015, the PE letter was finalized in early 2016.

A big thank you to all of the partners who participated in the calls with EPA. The EPA folks greatly appreciated getting to meet so many of you and were very positive about our NEP's work and partnerships.

#### 8. **DISCUSSION:** Program Highlights

- **Eelgrass update:** Staff conducted three rounds of intertidal eelgrass planting in February and March of 2020, and Tenera conducted two rounds of planting via SCUBA in May. Monitoring shows that all transplants are doing well. The Estuary Program partnered with Cal Poly to develop a grant application for the National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant Program. This is a funding source for work in National Estuary Program study areas, but the funding is not limited to NEPs. Our proposal looks at building climate resilience through eelgrass restoration, and the project includes research efforts studying water quality, ocean acidification, hydrodynamics, and sediment transport. We should hear whether we are invited back for the full proposal stage in about two months.
- **Potential research partnership update:** We have also been working with Dr. Bwalya Malama and his lab on a potential effort to analyze creek and bay sediment for herbicides. He and his students hypothesize that the herbicides used in the watershed are carried through our creeks with winter storms and deposited into the bay where they have the potential to impact eelgrass. We are working with the research team to develop a sampling protocol, determine sampling locations, and select analytes. They hope to conduct a round of exploratory sampling this summer or fall, and their goal is to use this initial work to win funding to expand the effort.
- **Education & Outreach update:** Through the SLO Marine Protected Area (MPA) Collaborative, the Estuary Program received a grant to create coloring pages with 3-D augmented reality features.

The materials will promote awareness of MPAs and their impact. The contract was established with QuiverVision, and the work is underway. The content is expected to be complete in early 2021.

9. Adjourn to next meeting of November 18, 2020 at 4:00 p.m., to be held remotely via Zoom.

**Attachments:**

- Minutes from May 20, 2020 EC meeting
- FY2018 to FY2022 Restoration Fund Spend Plan