

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY BOARD AGENDA LETTER



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Agenda Number:
Prepared on: 6/11/02
Department Name: Public Works
Department No.: 054
Agenda Date: 6/25/02
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time:
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Phillip M. Demery, Director
Public Works Department

STAFF Mark Schleich, Deputy Director, ext. 3603
CONTACT: Leslie Wells, Program Manager, ext. 3611

SUBJECT: Baron Ranch Management Contract
Third Supervisorial District

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve the attached two-year contract with Ag Land Services for the management of Baron Ranch, to commence July 1 2002 and end June 30, 2004, for an amount not to exceed \$302,400.00.

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation(s) are primarily aligned with Goal No. 2. A Safe and Healthy Community in Which to Live, Work, and Visit.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

The County purchased the Baron Ranch in 1991 primarily to serve as a buffer to the Tajiguas Landfill, located in the canyon immediately to the west of Baron Ranch. Located approximately 30 miles west of Santa Barbara, Baron Ranch is a working avocado and cherimoya ranch. The County has managed the property with the following long-range goals in mind; maximizing net-revenue to offset the purchase, maximizing long-term agricultural productivity, and incorporating agricultural best management practices.

In March 1997 the County went through a competitive process to identify a qualified agricultural management company to manage the Ranch. Ag Land Services was identified as the most qualified applicant, and in May 1997 the County entered into a one-year contract with Ag Land Services for management of the property. That initial contract was amended in June 1998 for two years, and again in

June 2000 for an additional two years. At that time, your Board directed staff to put the management contract back out to bid in Spring 2002.

In March 2002, a Request For Proposals was sent to some 17 potential management firms. Three proposals were received in response, and a review panel consisting of Public Works (Solid Waste), and General Services (Real Property) staff, and Mr. George Goodall, a retired UC cooperative farm advisor with 40 years of experience in avocado and semi-tropical fruit, reviewed and evaluated the proposals. Criteria included prior experience managing avocado and cherimoya, including pollination, pruning and fertilization, management of irrigation systems, experience with weed and pest management, experience with long-term ranch management planning, the harvesting and marketing of avocado and cherimoya, cost control, utilization of best management practices, and favorable references. Based on the results of the review, staff is recommending that the County renew its contract with Ag Land Services.

During its first five years managing the Baron Ranch, Ag Land Services has made several improvements to managing the groves and implementing best management practices, including improvement of the fertilization regime, taking steps to limit and control pest infestations, upgrading the irrigation system, canopy management (pruning and thinning of the groves), and general site clean-up. Staff has maintained a good working relationship with the Ag Land Services team during the past five years.

This contract provides provisions for all cultural costs related to the avocado and cherimoya, including irrigation maintenance, parts and supervision, fertilization, pruning and thinning of the groves, weed and rodent control, erosion control measures, light road maintenance, and coordination and supervision of harvesting for a two-year period. The proposed budget for FY 2002/2004 represents a significant reduction over the current year's budget for a variety of reasons. Over the past several years, Ag Land Services has engaged in an aggressive canopy management program designed to increase long-term productivity, and increase harvesting efficiency. Heavy pruning represents a significant cost which no longer needs to be included since Ag Land Services believes that an appropriate amount of heavy pruning has now been completed. Another cost saving has been realized in providing beehives for pollination. Ag Land Services has an arrangement with a beekeeper, which provides an adequate number of hives each year without charge. Other reductions have been realized in supervision, ranching equipment and implements, drainage maintenance, and pest control.

Mandates and Service Levels:

No changes to mandates and service levels are anticipated at this time.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Contract amount is not to exceed \$302,400.00 for the two-year term. Crop revenue for the period FY 2002/2003 and FY 2003/2004 is estimated to be \$600,000.00, which will be used to cover the management contract (Fund 1930, Department 054, Program 1950, Project 190000).

Special Instructions:

Please send a copy of the Minute Order and a signed and dated copy of the contract, if approved, to Georgia Navarro & Leslie Wells in Solid Waste & Utilities Division of the Public Works Department.

Concurrence

Auditor Controller
County Counsel