

**SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
BOARD AGENDA LETTER**



Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
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Agenda Number:
Prepared on:
Department Name: Public Works/Water Agency
Department No.: 054-04-07
Agenda Date: 3/12/02
Placement: Administrative
Estimate Time:
Continued Item: NO
If Yes, date from:

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Phillip Demery, Public Works Director
John Patton, Planning & Development Director

STAFF CONTACT: Thomas Fayram, Deputy Public Works Director, Ext. 3436
Robert Almy, Water Agency Manager, Ext. 3542

SUBJECT: Application for EPA Wetlands Program Development Grant Funds,
First, Second, and Third Supervisorial Districts

Recommendation(s):

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Concur with an application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for Wetlands Program Development grant funds, to be made by the Project Clean Water and Planning & Development for development of a watershed planning and restoration framework for the South Coast of Santa Barbara County; and
- B. Direct staff to return with a specific contract with participating agencies for consideration by the Board if the proposal is accepted for funding by the EPA. (Grant selections will be made by April 30, 2002.)

Alignment with Board Strategic Plan:

The recommendation aligns with Goal No. 5: Maintain and Enhance the Quality of Life for all Residents.

Executive Summary and Discussion:

The Project Clean Water and Planning and Development, in partnership with the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, are requesting to apply for a grant of \$120,000 from the EPA for a multi-year project to support the development of a watershed planning and restoration program in the South Coast bioregion of Santa Barbara County, including all watersheds from the Gaviota Coast to Rincon. The work plan comprises the following tasks:

1. Development of a South Coast watershed planning framework, including a domain description and characterization of existing watershed conditions, as well as a menu of potential restoration techniques.

2. Development of a template for individual watershed plans in the South Coast area.
3. Improved Geographic Information System (GIS) capability to expedite development of baseline information for watershed plans and allow rapid evaluation of alternative land use and restoration alternatives.

The last element is particularly important since over 40 watersheds exist along the South Coast and differences among past biological surveys have prevented their incorporation in a GIS theme.

This project will be part of a unified effort to improve water quality in local creeks and the ocean known as Project Clean Water (PCW), which was implemented by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors in response to extensive beach closures in 1998. The goal of PCW is to determine the causes of, and solutions to, the bacterial contamination that caused these closures. PCW comprises City and County of Santa Barbara staff, and a broad spectrum of community stakeholders who have identified wetland and riparian restoration as one of the key solutions to local water contamination problems.

There is a strong interest on the part of both stakeholders and government agencies to establish a watershed restoration program; what is needed is a regional framework to evaluate and prioritize restoration and management issues, a more straightforward process for implementing landowner initiated projects and improvements to the County GIS system to track projects and document success.

When designed in such a way as to integrate the need for flood control with healthy riparian habitat in urban areas, riparian restoration with herbaceous aquatic species within the low flow region of the creek invert can provide water quality benefits by filtering sediments, reducing erosion, uptake of pollutants, pollutant filtering, storage and recycling of the nutrients. Re-establishment of plant habitat on banks and overbank areas reduces erosion and provides shading along the creek corridor to provide additional benefits that can help improve water quality in these watersheds. Riparian restoration can provide and improve wildlife habitat and, in some places, enhance recreational and aesthetic values.

A systematic, consistent and logical basis for making decisions relating to wetlands and riparian areas, particularly restoration projects is needed locally. This will allow limited public and grant funds for restoration efforts to be spent most efficiently. Creating a planning and restoration framework for South Coast watersheds will provide an important tool for establishing restoration objectives and priorities.

In addition, several County departments will be able to utilize the improved GIS database.

- The Flood Control District may be able to use this system to track the location and mitigation of Annual Plan projects.
- The Planning & Development Department will be able to use this GIS information to assess project alternatives in a watershed planning context.
- The Parks Department will be able to use this information for long term planning and insuring appropriate restoration of riparian areas on its parcels.

- Other local groups, such as the Santa Barbara Task Force of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project will be able to use this information for prioritizing and implementing watershed restoration projects.

This project will also complement ongoing and proposed projects within the County:

- The Hydrogeomorphic Assessment Guidebook, a creek function assessment tool developed through a grant from the EPA, contains useful background data for this watershed planning project.
- Planning & Development is currently applying for funding to update their GIS software and digitize overlays that delineate environmentally sensitive habitat. Both of these efforts will provide in-kind contributions for this current grant application.

Mandates and Service Levels:

Staff time will be required to coordinate implementation of this project, manage consultant contracts, supervise volunteers, and implement the public participation programs. This staff time will help meet the EPA's matching fund requirements. Staff participation in this project is also incorporated in the Project Clean Water work plan, which includes implementation of wetland restoration projects. Planning & Development would contribute in-kind contribution of staff time in the development of the watershed plan template and GIS upgrade.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

The proposed budget is shown below. EPA requires a non-federal match of at least 25% of the total project cost. Matching funds will comprise in-kind staff time, volunteer time, and program funds for upgraded computers. County funds used would include funds from Water Agency (one computer upgrade)/Project Clean Water (staff time and 2 computer upgrades) and the Planning & Development Department (staff time and computer upgrades). As shown in the anticipated budget, the match would be 29%. These funds are proposed in the FY 2002-03 budget.

If the EPA accepts this proposal, a more specific cost share proposal will be developed, and final costs will be brought to the Board in the form of a contract, probably in June 2002. The EPA anticipates that final grant selections will be made by April 30, 2002.

Proposed Budget & Timeline

Element 1: Regional South Coast Watershed Restoration Program	\$50,000
Element 2: Individual Watershed Plan Template	\$40,000
Element 3: GIS Capability building	\$80,000
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	\$170,000

Proposed cost share:	EPA Grant:	\$120,000
	Local Match:	\$ 50,000 (29%)
	TOTAL:	<hr/>
		\$170,000

Preliminary Project Budget

	Year 1: FY 02-03	Year 2: FY 03-04	Total by Department
Water Agency/ Project Clean Water Contribution	Funds: \$12,500 In-kind: \$12,000	Funds: 0 In-kind: \$4,000	Funds: \$12,500 In-kind: \$16,000
Planning & Development Contribution	Funds: \$12,500 In-kind: \$6,000	Funds: 0 In-kind: \$3,000	Funds: \$12,500 In-kind: \$9,000
Totals by FY	Funds: \$25,000 In-kind: \$18,000	Funds: \$0 In-kind: \$7,000	Total County Contrib. Funds: \$25,000 In-kind: \$25,000

Planning & Development has committed to investing \$12,500 in computer hardware and software for this project, as well as committing staff time at a cost of \$9,000. The Water Agency and Project Clean Water will also invest \$12,500 in computer hardware and software (which was already budgeted for FY 02-03), as well as at least \$16,000 in staff time, to complete the local match of \$50,000. Contributions of staff time by PCW staff will not impact the filing of the federally mandated NPDES Phase II permit by the March 2003 deadline.

Grant Project Timeline

Element	Tasks	Schedule
1: Regional South Coast Watershed Restoration Program	1: Stakeholder process	August 2002 – July 2003
	2: Restoration Techniques	
	3: Draft regional plan	
	4: Public input and final regional plan	
2: Individual watershed plan template	1: Draft template	December 2002 – August 2003
	2: Stakeholder review	
	3: Final template	
3: GIS capability building	1: Evaluate GIS planning needs	December 2002 – August 2003
	2: Develop linkages and tools	
	3: Test linkages and tools	

Special Instructions:

Direct the Clerk of the Board to send a minute order of this action to the Water Agency office, attn: Christina Lopez.