



bay restoration commission

STEWARDS OF SANTA MONICA BAY

santa monica bay restoration commission / 320 west 4th street, ste 200; los angeles, california 90013
213/576-6615 phone / 213/576-6646 fax / santamonicabay.org

SMBRC Governing Board Meeting: February 21, 2008

To: Governing Board
From: Shelley Luce, Executive Director
Subject: Project Proposals for Proposition 12 Funding (Agenda Item #9)

Recommended Action

No action is requested. This agenda item is for discussion only.

Executive Summary

The SMBRC Governing Board adopted a Proposition 12 Priority Project List at its April 2007 meeting. At that time, staff was directed to work with potential grantees to develop projects for funding using SMBRC's Prop 12 funds. Staff has worked with several potential grantees from the Prop 12 Priority Project List, and has also developed other relevant project concepts as appropriate, according to the goals of the Bay Restoration Plan and the spending requirements of Prop 12. Staff has developed the following list of projects for the Board's information and discussion. The seven projects total \$2.4 million and would be presented for the Board's final consideration at the April 2008 Governing Board meeting.

Project Description

Summaries of the seven proposed projects are provided below. The projects are presented in a group and in summary form at this time, for the purpose of providing information and soliciting feedback from the Governing Board. Projects will be presented as individual agenda items for the Board's consideration under our Proposition 12 grant program at our April 2008 Governing Board meeting.

1. Ballona Creek watershed studies

Amount: \$600,000

Grantee: Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation

Numerous data and information gaps have been identified in the Ballona Creek watershed. Three studies are proposed to fill those data gaps. As grantee, the SMBRF will direct all three projects and perform some of the work in-house, and will contract out other portions of the work where appropriate. The three studies are described below.

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i. *An historical ecology study of Ballona Creek watershed. (\$300,000)* This project will define the unique watershed characteristics that shape the Ballona Creek system and help guide future restoration work. Specifically, the study will use historical research and GIS mapping techniques to identify historical reference points in the watershed; identify factors that influence landscape change, including land use, climate, floods and fires; clarify the factors controlling local habitats and how they change over time; and help define restoration and management options. The historical research and GIS mapping conducted under this project be reported in a publication similar to the report produced by SCCWRP, Cal State Northridge, and USC for the San Gabriel River watershed.

ii. *Development of water budget for Ballona Creek watershed. (\$175,000)* This project will identify water inputs and outputs for the watershed, including mapping natural springs and identifying natural flows in storm drains and stream channels. The information will help guide restoration planning, and result in projects that produce the greatest water quality and habitat improvement benefits. When completed, the water budget will help planners understand where to place water treatment facilities and other BMPs to ensure greatest benefit from treating contaminated runoff rather than treating the cleaner, natural flows. This project will help agencies to meet TMDL requirements in a more efficient and cost effective manner.

iii. *Development of Ballona Greenway planning documents. (\$125,000)* This project will complete the Ballona Greenway Plan that was initiated by the Ballona Creek Watershed Task Force. The Task Force identified and completed preliminary designs for priority Greenway projects. The outcome of this project will be final designs for portions of the Greenway including landscape guidelines for a Ballona-specific plant palette. This project has proceeded in close consultation with the MRCA and Baldwin Hills Conservancy on their pocket park and bike path beautification plans.

2. Rindge Dam Removal Feasibility Study

Amount: \$300,000

Grantee: California Department of Parks and Recreation

State Parks and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) have been studying the various alternatives for removal of Rindge Dam, the furthest downstream fish migration barrier in Malibu Creek. The Dam completely blocks the movement of endangered southern steelhead trout, which would otherwise have access to several miles of excellent spawning habitat upstream of the dam. It also causes severe sediment imbalances leading to excess erosion and deposition problems upstream and downstream of the dam.

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The USACE requires an additional \$300,000 to complete their feasibility study of the dam removal. Completion of the study will make the actual work of removing the dam eligible for federal funding. Without this study, the costs of dam removal would be borne entirely by state and local entities. The Bay Restoration Commission has previously contributed over \$300,000 toward this study. Staff feels that in order to ensure completion of the study and eventual fruition of our investment in this project to date.

3. SEA Lab Beach Bluffs Restoration

Amount: \$200,000

Grantee: SEA Lab

The proposed project will build upon a successful SMBRC-funded beach bluff habitat restoration project by restoring an additional three acres of bluff. The project location was identified in the SMBRC-funded Beach Bluffs Restoration Project (BBRP) Master Plan and is one of four top priority restoration sites due in part to its proximity to other native plant habitat supporting the federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly, and the availability of large areas that are relatively undisturbed by foot traffic. The project will increase the ecological values of the bluffs and dunes through the removal of exotic vegetation such as iceplant, and replanting with native species such as dune buckwheat. It will contribute to the recovery of the El Segundo blue butterfly, provide habitat for unique and rare plants of the El Segundo dunes, increase biological connectivity between remnant populations of dune species, and support more diverse bird, reptile, and arthropod communities.

4. Downspout Disconnect Program

Amount: \$1,000,000

Grantee: City of Los Angeles

The goal of this project is to significantly reduce the amount of storm water runoff within targeted areas bounded by Jefferson, Hauser, and Adams Boulevards and Fairfax Avenue in the Ballona Creek watershed within the City of Los Angeles (there are approximately 600 residential property owners and numerous commercial properties within the target area). This will be accomplished by implementing a Downspouts Retrofit program which will provide incentives to residents and business owners to reroute roof runoff from the stormwater collection system to on-site areas via redirecting runoff to existing landscaping, installation of planter boxes and other retention devices. The program will include a public outreach campaign explaining retrofit guidelines and brochures describing the benefits of participation. The pilot program, if successful, will have a much broader application within the City of Los Angeles, especially in areas with limited storm drain capacity and flood-prone locations.

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5. Site Survey and Habitat Assessment for the Recovery of the California Red-Legged Frog

Amount: \$100,000

Grantee: California Department of Parks and Recreation

The California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*) (CRF) was designated as Federally Threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) on June 24, 1996. The FWS species recovery plan lists and prioritizes recovery actions deemed necessary to recover the species to sufficient numbers to warrant delisting over all or parts of its historic range.

The Angeles District of California State Parks (CDPR) is seeking grant funding to complete two critical action items in the recovery plan. The CDPR will conduct focused CRF surveys and habitat suitability assessments for over 40,000 acres of land within core habitat area in the Santa Monica Mountains. The surveys will delineate sites that currently support the CRF, identify habitats that have high habitat connectivity and increased opportunities for dispersal between frog populations, as well as the potential to support an eventual reintroduction of the species. The survey protocols include multiple site visits during both day and night and during both the wet and dry seasons.

6. Stone Canyon Creek Restoration

Amount: \$100,000

Grantee: Santa Monica Baykeeper

The Santa Monica Baykeeper, UCLA's Facilities Department, and the UCLA Institute of the Environment will coordinate the removal of non-native vegetation and the planting and care of native understory plants and trees along a 65 m x 20 m stretch of Stone Creek. This site was part of previous small scale 1.5 year restoration effort. The effort removed vegetation from 0.36 acres of the site. This effort will build upon previous restoration efforts by conducting continued weeding of invasive vegetation, maintenance of existing plants, planting of new native vegetation, and the replacement of exotic trees with native species. The Santa Monica Baykeeper proposes a three year period of ongoing maintenance of the site to allow the native vegetation to become established enough to suppress any remaining non-native and/or invasive vegetation from the restoration area. Additionally, the restoration effort will be expanded to approximately 0.25 additional acres of area along Stone Canyon Creek making the total area restored along Stone Canyon Creek approximately 0.60 acres. Restoration participants will include students, neighborhood volunteers, and children from University Elementary School.

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7. Green Solutions Project Phase II

Amount: \$150,000

Grantee: Community Conservation International

Phase I of the Green Solutions Project provided quantification and identification of urban lands within LA County that are needed for conversion to pervious surface, multi-benefit projects (park, recreation, wetlands and natural lands) to help meet water quality improvement goals and regulatory requirements (TMDLs) through the infiltration or treatment of stormwater before it reaches Santa Monica Bay. Products from Phase I include a series of GIS-based maps depicting publicly-owned parcels within the Santa Monica Bay watershed, along with their size and general land uses.

Phase II will refine coarse parcel data for selected land use categories (vacant, elementary, middle and high schools, colleges and developed and undeveloped open space) to a parcel-specific basis. The analysis will be used to estimate suitability and availability for projects as well as treatment area. Hydrology and other parcel attributes will be analyzed to determine suitability for stormwater infiltration/treatment and to develop a ranking matrix to screen and prioritize candidate parcels for water quality project implementation. Concept designs will be developed for five high-ranking priority parcels.

Environmental / Public Benefit Implications

Environmental and public benefits will be discussed in detail for each project when final proposals are presented for the Board's consideration.

Environmental Analysis

Environmental analysis will be provided in detail for each project when final proposals are presented for the Board's consideration.

Budget/Financial Impact

The budget impact of these projects will be discussed in detail when final proposals are presented for the Board's consideration. In summary, if all projects are approved, a total of \$2.4 M of SMBRC's remaining Prop 12 funds would be used to fund the projects.

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