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Proposition 1 Grant Program Administrative Update

January 27, 2016

RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests that the Board receive updates and provide guidance as appropriate on the following topics.

BACKGROUND

Professional Review Panels for Full Proposals

Proposition 1, identifies funding for the Conservancy “for competitive grants for multi-benefit ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects in accordance with statewide priorities”(Sec. 79730 and 79731). To ensure projects solicited through the Prop. 1 grant program are technically sound, Section 79707(f) requires that evaluation of projects considered for funding include “review by professionals in the fields relevant to the proposed project”.

We anticipate full proposals being reviewed by a minimum of two professionals in the field(s) relevant to the proposed project. These reviewers will be independent and will not be members of the Conservancy Staff. We are currently working with the leadership of the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Delta Protection Commission, the Department of Water Resources, and the National Marine Fisheries Service to identify appropriate reviewers for the full proposals.

Per our Grant Guidelines, full proposals will initially be reviewed and scored by the Conservancy grant team according to the proposal evaluation criteria. The full proposals will then be reviewed by the independent professional review panel specific to that proposal. The professional review panel will provide an additional independent review of staff’s evaluation and scoring.

Proposition 1 Planning vs. Project Expenditures

At the November 20, 2015 Board meeting, the Board directed staff to work with Board members, Liaison Advisors and collaborative partners to develop scopes of work, costs and timelines for the NE Delta and Cache Slough regional restoration planning effort, and the 5 county agricultural analysis. The expectation is that the 10% of Prop. 1 identified for planning and monitoring would be used to fund these efforts. Ideally one or more of these planning efforts would begin this fiscal year resulting in a potential reduction of funding available for restoration projects. The Board will discuss possible scenarios to address this potential.

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Office Space Expansion

With the passage of Proposition 1, the Conservancy is hiring up to 4 additional staff to administer and deliver the grant program. This brings the total staff authorized in the FY15/16 appropriation to 14 with current space available for 10. The FY15/16 appropriation provides \$120,000 for space expansion and additional rent for the first year and \$19,000 for each of the next four years for increased rent.

In 2015, the Conservancy submitted a request for office expansion through the Department of General Services (DGS) Customer Request: Upgraded Information Sharing Environment (CRUISE) process to accommodate office space for increased staff. We are currently working with DGS to better understand how much space is needed and the cost of construction and rent for the new space. DGS is unable to provide estimates of these costs until they receive bids from potential contractors. The process of receiving bids will likely take several weeks. Staff will update the Board with options, cost, and next steps during the March Board meeting.

The Conservancy's three new staff members (hired in late 2015) are currently housed in existing space that is available due to vacant non-Proposition 1 positions. The Conservancy anticipates filling these non-Proposition 1 positions in the coming months which will leave the Conservancy without adequate space for all staff.

It is important to note that funding for the additional space is uncertain beyond FY19/20.

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