Request for Approval to Execute a Grant Agreement for the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project

Staff Report

This agenda item requests that the Board authorize the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy (Conservancy) to enter into a grant agreement with Ducks Unlimited to implement the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Board authorize the Conservancy to enter into a grant agreement, not to exceed $2,026,814, with Ducks Unlimited to implement the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project.

DESCRIPTION

At the July 30, 2018 Board meeting, Conservancy staff indicated that they would bring a subsequent recommendation to the Board if the grant agreement was not executed by October 31, 2018. The grant negotiation process took longer than expected and the grant agreement was not completed by the deadline. Therefore, Board approval is needed before the Conservancy can enter into an agreement. The project remains viable, ecologically significant, and can be completed within the amended budget.

BACKGROUND

The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project is an implementation project with the goals of enhancing habitat for migrating waterfowl and other species, improving agricultural sustainability and wildlife friendly agricultural practices, and increasing public access opportunities at the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area. The project will create 220 acres of wetland and improve water management on 1,250 acres of existing wetlands and 540 acres of agricultural land. The Board reserved $2,000,000 for the project at the May 25, 2016 Board meeting, as part of the Conservancy’s first Proposition 1 grant cycle. Funding was reserved contingent upon the completion of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process and approval of Responsible Agency findings by the Conservancy’s Board; the Board gave the grantee the deadline of March 2017. Due to delays with the CEQA process, caused by problems coordinating between the different State funders and the need to respond to comments, the Board extended the deadline twice: until July 2017 and again until January 2018. The grantee completed the CEQA process, and the Board made its Responsible Agency findings and awarded funding on January 24, 2018. During the grant agreement negotiation process, Conservancy staff determined that the project would require additional funding to cover costs associated with permitting. At the July 18, 2018 Board meeting, the Board awarded a budget
amendment to cover the increased permitting costs; and requested that the project be brought back before the Board if a grant agreement was not executed by October 31, 2018.

SUGGESTED MOTION LANGUAGE:
Move that the Board authorize the Conservancy to enter into a grant agreement, not to exceed $2,026,814, with Ducks Unlimited Inc. to implement the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area Habitat and Drainage Improvement Project.

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