



**Consideration of Award of Proposition 1 Grant Funds for Little Franks Tract Invasive Weed Removal and Restoration Project
Staff Recommendation**

This agenda item presents for Board consideration a recommendation to award Proposition 1 Grant Program funding for the Little Franks Tract Invasive Weed Removal and Restoration Project.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Applicant	Contra Costa Resource Conservation District
Project ID	2204
Project Type	Implementation
County	Contra Costa
Funding Request	\$427,706
Total Project Cost	\$475,226
Funding Recommendation	\$427,706
Score	87/100

RECOMMENDATION

Conservancy staff recommends that the Board approve up to \$427,706 in grant funding for the Little Franks Tract Invasive Weed Removal and Restoration Project proposed by the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District conditional upon successful resolution of equipment purchases requirements and weed removal methodology. Staff prepared the text below based on staff’s best understanding of the information provided in the application. Conservancy staff and the Professional Review Panel consisting of the following agencies: California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Water Resources, Delta Protection Commission, and the Delta Stewardship Council, have scored this proposal against the established criteria. Conservancy staff contacted local governments and districts, water agencies, and tribes via the local notification process to receive comments and ensure project support. Prior to entering into a grant agreement, staff will work with the applicant to further refine the project’s scope of work.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The proposed Little Franks Tract Invasive Weed Removal Project will test and identify workable solutions to remove invasive weeds, improve habitat value, and prevent further spread of invasive weeds in the Franks Tract State Recreation Area and nearby restoration sites. Little Franks Tract is a smaller part of the Franks Tract State Recreation Area, located on the northwest side of the Recreation Area between Bradford Island, the Webb Tract, and Bethel Island (see Figure 9.2). Proposed target species include, but are not limited to, *Cortaderia selloana* (pampas grass), *Arundo donax* (giant reed), *Rubus armeniacus* (Himalayan blackberry), *Phragmites* spp. (common reed), or *Cynara cardunculus* (artichoke thistle). Management of the State Recreational Area is challenging because the majority of the area, except part of the proposed project site located on the surrounding levee, is underwater and

is only accessible by air or boat. In partnership with the California Department of State Parks and Recreation, the applicant will work to determine the extent of the invasive plant problem and outline and test a potential path to addressing the long-term invasive weed issue in the larger Franks Tract region. By removing the invasive weeds and replanting with natives, the applicant plans to return ecosystem function to the area and increase habitat value. This project will remove invasive species and promote native plant re-establishment, enhancing habitat, protecting, and improving water quality and quantity, and restoring Delta plant habitats along levees. This project that will inform future projects to address the extensive invasive weed problem at Little Franks Tract.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

This implementation effort is considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). On June 21, 2022, Contra Costa County Resource Conservation District, as the Lead Agency under CEQA, submitted a Notice of Exemption, finding the project categorically exempt from CEQA because it is a small (less than five acres) habitat restoration project (California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 15333). As a CEQA responsible agency for this exempt project, the Conservancy Board need take no further CEQA actions. The NOE has been filed with the State Clearinghouse and can be accessed at this link: <https://ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/2022060462>.

COST SHARE

The cost share amount is 11 percent of the project budget. The applicant will provide cost share match of \$7,350 for fuel for boat transportation and \$5,000 for California Conservation Corps services. California State Parks, the landowner for this project, will provide \$40,170 of in-kind services through staff time from a Senior Environmental Scientist, an Environmental Scientist, and a Forestry Aide to assist in completion of project deliverables.

ALIGNMENT WITH STATE PRIORITIES

The project is consistent with specific actions and priorities identified in Proposition 1, California Water Action Plan, Conservancy's governing statute, Conservancy's strategic plan, Delta Plan, state, and regional plans. This project will provide multi-benefit ecosystem restoration improvements to invasive weed laden sites that provide little habitat value.

LONG TERM VIABILITY

The proposal addresses long-term management. California State Parks will perform long-term management of the project site after the funding period. The project will culminate in a long-term management report that will recommend, based on the discoveries through this project, the most successful strategies for treatment, and removal of invasive weeds.

LOCAL SUPPORT

The proposal demonstrates local support. The applicant plans to engage with various stakeholders, and they do not believe the project will negatively affect local land uses. The applicant provided letters of support from California Department of Water Resources, Reclamation District 2137, California State Parks, Friends of the Marsh Creek Watershed, Ironhouse Sanitary District, and Bethel Island Municipal Improvement District.

SCIENTIFIC MERIT

The proposal describes the scientific basis and incorporates the best available science into the project. The proposal describes efforts to develop an adaptive management approach consistent with the Delta Plan's adaptive management framework. The proposal notes climate impacts and benefits and mentions a mechanism for incorporating climate change considerations into the project. All invasive weed management techniques are determined through the Weed Control User Tool, a decision support tool created by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation, the California Invasive Plant Council and the University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The applicant proposes to purchase a boat and motor that will require additional consideration to meet applicable state policy and laws. The applicant shall work with Conservancy staff to resolve issues regarding equipment purchases prior to entering into a grant agreement with the Conservancy.

The project would include identification and utilization of the most appropriate methods for weed control within the Project area. Some project reviewers indicated that the use of herbicides on the site to remove invasive weeds may be infeasible, or require additional CEQA review, if the treatment area contains species of concern. The grant agreement will specify that only mechanical removal of invasive species would be used in locations where species of concern are present.

SUGGESTED MOTION LANGUAGE

Move to award funding up to \$427,706 to the Contra Costa Resource Conservation District from the Proposition 1 Grant Program for the Little Franks Tract Invasive Weed Removal and Restoration Project conditional upon the items noted in the Additional Considerations section of the staff recommendation.

CONTACT

Trevor Fox PhD, Environmental Scientist
Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy
trevor.fox@deltaconservancy.ca.gov
(916) 375-2088

FIGURE 9.2. LITTLE FRANKS TRACT INVASIVE WEED REMOVAL AND RESTORATION PROJECT AREA

