

Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: March 25, 2020

From: MITCH WEISS, Executive Director

Reference Number: 4.25, Action

Prepared By: Christine Gordon
Associate Deputy Director

Published Date: March 13, 2020

Subject: **Approval of the 2019 California Natural Resources Agency Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, Resolution G-20-36**

Issue:

Should the California Transportation Commission (Commission) approve the 2019 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program prepared and submitted by the California Natural Resources Agency (Resources Agency)?

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the 2019 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program that includes 11 projects on the Recommended for Funding List with the follow stipulations:

- The Commission expects that the funds allocated will be expended on a timely basis.
- For projects which include land acquisition, funding recipients are encouraged to reduce overall project costs by exploring the feasibility of acquiring easements rather than fee title when appropriate.
- Due to the uniqueness of the individual projects in this program, the Resources Agency should be especially diligent with the on-site inspection and auditing of the projects included in the program.

Background:

Section 164.56 of the Streets and Highways Code specifies that the Commission shall annually award grants to fund proposals that are included on a list prepared by the Resources Agency. The Resources Agency has developed procedures and criteria to evaluate and rank each funding proposal forming a multi-disciplined evaluation team to review applications and recommend projects for funding.

Any local, state or federal agency, or nonprofit entity may apply for and receive funding to undertake environmental enhancement and mitigation projects that are directly or indirectly related to the environmental impact of modifying existing transportation facilities or for the design, construction or expansion of new transportation facilities.

Projects eligible for funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Urban Forestry - projects designed to offset vehicular emissions of carbon dioxide.
- Resource Lands - projects for acquisition or enhancement of resource lands to mitigate the loss of, or the detriment to, resource lands lying within the right-of-way acquired for proposed transportation improvements.
- Mitigation Projects Beyond the Scope of the Lead Agency - projects to mitigate the impact of proposed transportation facilities or to enhance the environment, where the ability to effectuate the mitigation or enhancement measures is beyond the scope of the lead agency responsible for assessing the environmental impact of the proposed transportation improvement.

The Resources Agency reviewed 21 grant applications and recommends \$6,371,206 in funding for 11 projects (\$2,505,000 in Northern California for 5 projects and \$3,866,206 in Southern California for 6 projects). The funding available is from the following sources: \$6,700,000 from the Budget Act of 2019. The remaining funding balance of \$328,794 will be available for award as part of the 2020 grant cycle.

There are 10 projects not recommended for funding: 5 in Northern California and 5 in Southern California. The multi-disciplined evaluation team used the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program procedures and criteria to evaluate applications and recommended the most competitive project applications for award.

Each project recommended for funding has provided the Resources Agency evidence of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. The CEQA Lead Agencies have determined that 10 of the 11 projects are exempt from CEQA. A Notice of Determination was filed for the remaining one project and the CEQA Lead Agency has provided evidence of CEQA compliance for the project.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Resolution G-20-36
- Attachment B: California Natural Resources Agency Proposed 2019 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program Recommendations

**CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
APPROVAL OF THE 2019
ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION PROGRAM**

RESOLUTION G-20-36

- 1.1 **WHEREAS**, Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56 establishes the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program; and
- 1.2 **WHEREAS**, the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program provides funding annually for environmental enhancement and mitigation projects which are directly or indirectly related to the environmental impact of modifying existing transportation facilities or for the design, construction or expansion of new transportation facilities; and
- 1.3 **WHEREAS**, the California Natural Resources Agency (Resources Agency) is charged with evaluating proposals submitted for this program and providing a list of proposals recommended for funding to the California Transportation Commission (Commission); and
- 1.4 **WHEREAS**, the Commission is responsible to award funding for proposals which are included on the list prepared by the Resources Agency; and
- 1.5 **WHEREAS**, the Resources Agency has prepared a Projects Recommended for Funding list totaling \$6,371,206 for 11 projects, and that list has been reviewed by the Commission; and
- 1.6 **WHEREAS**, the funding available is from the following source: \$6,700,000 from the Budget Act of 2019; and
- 1.7 **WHEREAS**, the remaining funding balance of \$328,794 will be available for award as part of the 2020 grant cycle; and
- 1.8 **WHEREAS**, each project recommended for funding has provided the Resources Agency evidence of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance; and
- 1.9 **WHEREAS**, the CEQA Lead Agencies have determined that 10 of the 11 projects are exempt from CEQA. A Notice of Determination was filed for the remaining one project.
- 2.1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Commission approves the 2019 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, as indicated in the Projects Recommended for Funding list of projects (Attachment B); and

- 2.2 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that for projects which include land acquisition, the Commission encourages funding recipients to reduce overall project costs by exploring the feasibility of acquiring easements rather than fee title when appropriate; and
- 2.3 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that due to the uniqueness of the individual projects in this program, the Commission recommends the Resources Agency be especially diligent with the on-site inspection and auditing of the projects included in this program.



Attachment B

February 5, 2020

Susan Bransen
Executive Director
California Transportation Commission
1120 N Street, MS 52
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Bransen:

As provided in Section 164.56 of the Streets and Highways Code, the California Natural Resources Agency (Agency) has evaluated the 2019 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation (EEM) program grant applications and have listed these applications on the attached lists. Projects on the Recommended for Funding List meets the statutory requirements and contribute to the mitigation of the environmental effects of transportation facilities.

Agency recommends that the projects on the Recommended for Funding List be authorized to receive immediate funding. These recommendations were determined by a multi-disciplined evaluation team that reviewed each application and visited each project site. The list contains 11 projects with a total value of just under \$6.4 million from the 2019 appropriation of \$6.7 million. The balance of \$328,794 will be available for award as part of the 2020 grant cycle.

If you have any questions about the recommended projects or the process used to evaluate them, please call Carol Carter, Grant Program Manager at (916) 651-7588 or by email at carol.carter@resources.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Wade Crowfoot'.

Wade Crowfoot
Secretary for Natural Resources

Enclosures

1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311, Sacramento, CA 95814 Ph. 916.653.5656 Fax. 916.653.8102 <http://resources.ca.gov>



ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION GRANT – 2019 GRANT CYCLE

RECOMMENDATION

Approve grants for 11 projects totaling \$6,371,206

BACKGROUND

Under Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56(a), the California Transportation Commission (Commission) is charged with the responsibility of funding an annual Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation (EEM) Program administered by the California Natural Resources Agency (Agency) at the funding level provided in the State Budget.

The EEM Program awards grants to environmental enhancement and mitigation projects that are directly or indirectly related to the environmental impact of modifying existing transportation facilities or the design, construction, or expansion of new transportation facilities.

California Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56 (as amended in 2013, SB 99) provides for grants to be awarded in three categories:

- Urban Forestry: Projects designed to offset vehicular emissions of carbon dioxide.
- Resource Lands: Acquisition or enhancement of resource lands to mitigate the loss of, or the detriment to, resource lands lying within the right-of-way acquired for proposed transportation improvements.
- Mitigation Projects Beyond the Scope of the Lead Agency: Projects to mitigate the impact of proposed transportation facilities or to enhance the environment, where the ability to effectuate the mitigation or enhancement measures is beyond the scope of the lead agency responsible for assessing the environmental impact of the proposed transportation improvement.

Agency is responsible for developing and adopting guidelines (procedures and criteria) and determining eligibility, evaluating proposals, recommending projects for funding, and managing grants post awards. Agency's procedures and criteria contain a scoring mechanism to evaluate projects by assigning point scores to each project. Projects making the initial cut are then visited for further vetting. In accordance with the provisions of Section 187 and 188 of the Streets and Highways Code, Agency attempts to allocate 40% of the total amount recommended to projects in northern counties and 60% to projects in southern counties. The percentages vary slightly year to year depending on the pool of applications and competitiveness.

AVAILABLE FUNDING

Funds are available from the 2019 appropriation totaling \$6.7M. The balance of \$328,794 is available for next cycle (available for allocation until June 30, 2024.)

CEQA

Notice of Exemptions have been filed for 10 of the 11 projects recommended for funding. A Notice of Determination was filed by the County of Humboldt for the remaining project.

Categories:
 RL - Resource Lands
 UF - Urban Forestry

1/31/2020

**2019 Grant Cycle
 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Grant Program**

Projects Recommended For Funding (11)					
Applicant	Project Name	County	Category	N/S	Recommended \$
Chino Hills, City of	Strickling Nature Park Project	San Bernardino	UF	S	\$275,956
Lakeside's River Park Conservancy	75 Ac. Digenan Acquisition in the El Monte Valley	San Diego	RL	S	\$813,900
Laurel Canyon Land Trust	Let's Buy A Mountain Phase 3 (LBAM #3)	Los Angeles	RL	S	\$1,000,000
Norwalk, City of	City of Norwalk Median Revitalization Project Proposal	Los Angeles	UF	S	\$276,350
Palmdale, City of	City of Palmdale Avenue S Environmental Enhancement and Urban Greening	Los Angeles	UF	S	\$500,000
The Trust for Public Land	Caliente Creek Acquisition Project	Kern	RL	S	\$1,000,000
6 Southern Projects (61% Total Funding)					\$3,866,206
Arcata, City of	Arcata Community Forest Jacoby Creek Tract Expansion (Swaner - 114 acres)	Humboldt	RL	N	\$350,000
California Trout, Inc.	The Cochran Creek and Quail Slough Enhancement Project	Humboldt	RL	N	\$500,000
Redwood Coast Land Conservancy	Mill Bend Conservation Project	Mendocino	RL	N	\$845,000
Sonoma Land Trust	Sonoma Mountain Vernal Pool Preserve Acquisition	Sonoma	RL	N	\$510,000
Trinidad Coastal Land Trust	Strawberry Rock Redwood Forest Conservation Easement Acquisition	Humboldt	RL	N	\$300,000
5 Northern Project (39% Total Funding)					\$2,505,000
Total Recommended					\$6,371,206
Total Available/Roll Over To 2020 Cycle					\$328,794

**2019 Grant Cycle
Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Grant Program**

Projects Not Recommended For Funding (10)					
Applicant	Project Name	County	Category	N/S	Requested \$
Amigos de los Rios	Bassett School District Community Green Infrastructure Project	Los Angeles	UF	S	\$467,698
Baldwin Park, City of	Big Dalton Wash Trail Greening Project	Los Angeles	UF	S	\$294,526
Bear Yuba Land Trust	Nevada City School of the Arts Wetland Conservation and Living Classroom Project	Nevada	RL	N	\$549,500
Compton, City of	Alameda Transportation Corridor Urban Greening Beautification Project	Los Angeles	UF	S	\$452,250
Goleta, City of	Ekwill Street and Fowler Road Extensions Project	Santa Barbara	UF	S	\$375,642
Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County	Santa Rita Ranch Acquisition	San Luis Obispo	RL	S	\$970,000
San Mateo, City of	SR92/El Camino Real Interchange Landscape Improvements	San Mateo	UF	N	\$500,000
Truckee Donner Land Trust	Olympic Meadow Acquisition	Placer	RL	N	\$1,000,000
Truckee, Town of	Mclver Dairy Open Space Project	Nevada	RL	N	\$300,000
Not Recommended For Funding - Withdrawn					
Save the Redwoods League	Andersonia West Acquisition Project	Mendocino	RL	N	\$500,000