



Legislation Text

File #: 23-1568, **Version:** 1

Chief Administrative Office, Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience, recommending the Board consider the following:

- 1) Accept a grant award under the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program for the Weber Creek Project, Phase I, in the amount of \$1,404,532.50 for a term of June 28, 2023 to June 27, 2026;
- 2) Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to accept, on behalf of the Board, the Weber Creek Project, Phase II, grant funds anticipated to be awarded in 2025 contingent upon the completion of Phase I activities, for the remaining \$23,462,517.50 and remaining term of the grant; and
- 3) Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer, serving as the County's Authorized Agent, to execute any grant related documents for Phases I and II including, but not limited to, amendments that do not increase the required County match commitment, requests for payment, reports, and all other associated documents necessary to secure the grant funds and implement the approved project.

FUNDING: Federal Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Funds (90%), California Wildfire Mitigation Program Joint Powers Authority Funds (5%), and General Fund County Match (5%).

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND

The United States Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides grant funding through its Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) for projects that reduce the impacts from natural disasters, including wildfires. The State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) is California's administrator for FEMA's HMGP funding.

On March 22, 2022 (File No. 22-0491, Item No. 33), as part of a presentation and conceptual approval of the Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience (OWPR) under the Chief Administrative Office, the Board approved and designated \$3,375,000 of excess contingency funds to be used as the local matching funds required for a grant through FEMA's HMGP to conduct a demonstration project focusing on defensible space, home hardening, and hazardous vegetation removal activities in a section of the Weber Creek drainage south of Highway 50, a high-risk area of the County. The sub-application was submitted in March 2022 following the Board's approval and designation of the 25% matching funds required, with a total project cost of \$13.3 million.

During the sub-application process and following communication with CalOES, the County was invited to amend its application to participate in the California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP) Pilot Project in lieu of the originally requested FEMA HMGP project. This CWMP is a pilot program organized by CalOES and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and is funded in coordination with FEMA to support California homeowners with protecting their property from wildfire damage through defensible space and home retrofitting. While still primarily funded under HMGP, the change to a CWMP project increased the amount of eligible grant funds to approximately \$25 million, reduced the County's match requirement to 5%, and expanded the scope of work for the Weber Creek Project (Project).

On July 25, 2023, OWPR received notification from FEMA that Phase I of the Project was approved in the amount of \$1,404,532.50 with an effective start date of June 28, 2023. The remaining grant funds totaling \$23,562,517.50 for the Phase II of the Project will be awarded by FEMA upon the successful completion of Phase I activities, including programmatic review and Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) approval, which is anticipated to be completed by February 2025.

Under this CWMP grant, the County will manage a program to perform defensible space and retrofit measures on existing residential homes in the Project area, which is an area identified with high risk of fire severity and is located within a wildland-urban interface area. This Project area includes parcels within and outside the limits of the City of Placerville spanning approximately 850 acres and contains a total of 525 dwelling units. Due to the size, scope, and duration of the Project, it has been broken out into two (2) phases. An overview of each Project phase is provided below.

Weber Creek Project - Phase I

Phase I of the Project will include public outreach efforts to engage and educate homeowners within the Project area about the program, a review to homeowner applications to ensure eligibility criteria is met and applications are submitted, completion of home assessments to identify the recommended defensible space and retrofit measures for each property based on risks and exposures, developing defensible space and home hardening scopes of work for each property, and completing the Environmental and Historic Preservation compliance review for the Project area. It's anticipated that Phase I of the Project will be completed through a combination of County staff, consultants, and contractors.

Weber Creek Project - Phase II

Through the completion of Phase I activities above, Phase II of the Project will include the physical work to implement the specific defensible space and home hardening components of the Project along with any associated permitting and interim inspections. Upon completion of these activities, this phase will also include site specific final assessments, property closeouts, photographs, and any other required Project closeout documentation. The majority of work under Phase II will be completed by outside contractors with project management and coordination to be handled by County staff.

ALTERNATIVES

The Board may choose not to accept this grant funding and therefore, forfeit the \$1,404,532.50 in grant funding for Phase I of the Project as well as the remaining \$23,462,517.50 in grant funding allocated for Phase II.

PRIOR BOARD ACTION

See Discussion/Background above.

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Chief Administrative Office, Central Services

CAO RECOMMENDATION / COMMENTS

Approve as recommended.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no increase to Net County Cost associated with the acceptance of this grant. The Board previously approved and allocated \$3.375 million (25%) in local matching funds for this grant during

the initial application process. With the revisions to the Project and grant noted above, the matching funds required were reduced to 10% of the total Project cost. Also with this revision, the CWMP JPA is funding half of the local matching funds required, bringing the County's final match requirement to 5%, which is \$1,243,352.50. The County's match requirement under this Phase I award is \$66,882.50, with the remaining match requirement of \$1,176,470 to be required upon award of Phase II.

The entire project match amount was approved in the FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget. Any unspent funds will be carried over to Fiscal Year 2024-25. The reimbursement for grant expenses incurred will be provided by FEMA on a quarterly basis.

The Department is in the process of further planning the project activities and evaluating resource needs, but it's anticipated that work under this Project will also require the addition of staff. The Department will work with Human Resources to determine the appropriate classifications and return to the Board with a staffing recommendation to consider at a later date.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

N/A

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT

Good Governance and Public Safety: The acceptance of this grant funding and the completion of the Weber Creek Project is consistent with these Strategic Plan Goals through the development of resources to identify and pursue additional revenue including local, state, and federal funding for new and existing projects as well as mitigating the risk of wildfire through defensible space and home hardening in this Project area.

CONTACT

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