



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/24/2025

File #: 25-745

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Resolution Authorizing the Signing and Submission of a Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation (SALC) Program Grant Application to the California Department of Conservation for Funding Allocation in the Amount of \$500,000 to Conduct a Natural and Working Lands Carbon Stock Inventory and Carbon Sequestration Feasibility Study to be Known as the Humboldt Natural and Working Lands Carbon Stock and Management Study

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt the attached resolution (Attachment 1) to take the following actions:
 - a. Authorize submittal of an application to the California Department of Conservation and for the SALC Grant Program in the amount of \$500,000; and
 - b. Authorizing and directing the Planning and Building Department Director (Attachment 2) to execute in the name of the County of Humboldt the application, the Standard Agreement, and all other documents required by the Department of Conservation for application to and participation in the SALC Program, while any amendments thereto may be executed after review and approval from the Office of County Counsel, Risk Management, and the County Administrative Office; and
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to return one fully executed, certified copy of the attached resolution to the Planning and Building Department for submission to the California Department of Conservation.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Plan.

Area of Focus: Sustainable Natural Resources & Infrastructure Stewardship

Strategic Plan Category: 5001 - Enhance climate adaptation landscapes and communities

DISCUSSION:

The Board of Supervisors is being asked to allow the Planning and Building Department to submit a grant to fund the proposed Natural and Working Lands Carbon Stock Inventory and Carbon Sequestration Feasibility Study to develop a better understanding of the existing and future carbon sequestration capacity in Humboldt County. The inventory will analyze and categorize existing natural and working lands and their naturally occurring carbon sequestration in forestlands, wetlands, grasslands, and agricultural lands. The focus of the feasibility study will be to identify Humboldt County's capacity as a carbon sink. The county's Draft Regional Climate Action Plan (RCAP) looks forward to 2045 with the objective of the entire county becoming carbon neutral. This would achieve one of the pre-2030 measures identified in the RCAP.

Humboldt County is rural, consisting largely of forest and agricultural lands and thus sequesters more carbon than it emits, but this

has not been quantified. In order to achieve long-term sustainability, it is important to not only reduce carbon emissions but also to understand and quantify carbon sequestration as a sustainability objective. This effort will create the initial understanding of carbon sequestration as a resource in Humboldt County so that future efforts can be developed and made to use carbon sequestration as an effective strategy to address climate change. This includes the protection and enhancement of agricultural lands. No agricultural lands will be converted to other uses with this project. The inventory and study will be developed in partnership with other local, state, and federal agencies, priority populations and tribes.

Humboldt County is approximately 2.3 million acres in area with 93% of land designated as natural and working lands (e.g. agriculture, forest, timberland, etc.). Much of the agricultural lands are forested, including woodlands intermixed with grasslands. These lands are held by a diverse ownership including large land holdings consisting of state and national parks, ranchers, timberland, tribes, and smaller land holdings that are forestlands and mixed forest/grasslands and grasslands. This inventory will begin by reaching out to these stakeholders to help shape the focus of the work and will re-engage the stakeholders as the final product is completed to take advantage of the knowledge of these land stewards. In addition, there are many people in Humboldt County who care deeply about the environment and will want to contribute to this effort.

The Natural and Working Lands Carbon Stock Inventory will build upon the 2017 Carbon Inventory Estimates for the North Coast Resource Partnership, and other available studies to establish a Humboldt County-specific Natural and Working Lands Carbon Stock Inventory and baseline. Work has already been done in this field, and one of the first tasks will be to establish a library of previous studies and a baseline to aid the county in pursuing state funding to protect the county's existing assets and receive credit for aiding the state's goals to protect natural working lands. In addition, this project will identify key areas where natural carbon sequestration is occurring, research historical and current management practices, and highlight opportunities to protect and expand these areas. A consultant will be hired to conduct this portion of the project.

The Carbon Sequestration Feasibility Study will assess existing management practices of inventoried lands, research and identify best management practices to enhance carbon sequestration capacity and use models to forecast potential carbon sequestration capacity of our natural and working lands. This information will be useful in creating a future model in a subsequent project and will promote best management practices of Humboldt's natural and working lands to support growth and expansion of the green jobs industry within the region. By promoting biodiverse forests, agriculture lands, and wetlands that are resilient to wildfire this project will support the dual goals of enhancing carbon sequestration and mitigating climate risks. A consultant will be hired to perform this work.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Funding for the SALC Grant Program is provided by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), an account established to receive Cap-and-Trade auction proceeds. The SALC program is part of the California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative funded through GGRF that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work, reducing GHG emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment - particularly in Disadvantaged Communities. The Cap-and-Trade program also creates a financial incentive for industries to invest in clean technologies and develop innovative ways to reduce pollution.

Revenue line for funding receipt is anticipated to be 1100282.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Expenditures (1100282)	FY25-26 Projected*	FY26-27 Projected*	FY27-28 Projected*
Budgeted Expenses	-	\$275,000.00	\$137,500.00
Additional Appropriation Needed	\$137,500.00	-	-
Total Expenditures	\$137,500.00	\$275,000.00	\$137,500.00

*Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.

Funding Sources	FY25-26 Projected*	FY2526-27 Projected*	FY27-28 Projected*
General Fund**	\$12,500.00	\$25,000.00	\$12,500.00
State/Federal Funds	\$125,000.00	\$250,000.00	\$125,000.00

Total Funding Sources	\$137,500.00	\$275,000.00	\$137,500.00
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**Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.*

***Required planning grant 10% match funding will come from existing staff support from the General Fund.*

Narrative of Financial Impact:

The total grant amount requested from the Department of Conservation is \$500,000 for the period of 2025-26 through 2027-28. Activities related to the grant will be budgeted in 1100 Department - 282 Division. Expenditure appropriations have not been included in the FY 2025-26 budget. If awarded, the Planning Department will return with a supplemental budget agenda item to authorize increased expenditures.

This grant is applicable to the Board's grant policy and a pre-grant questionnaire has been reviewed by the County Administrative Office. The grant budget includes \$330,000 in fully burdened staffing costs, 0% for indirect costs as these costs are not allowable, and the remainder \$170,000 for services and other allowable expenses. The fully burdened staffing rates include wages and benefits, as well as the employees' share of indirect or overhead costs. There is a total local match required in the amount of \$50,000. This is being provided with the use of \$50,000 as an in-kind match from the General Fund for Planning staff program activities.

STAFFING IMPACT:

This action solicits grant funds from the State of California. Existing planned expenditure for staff will count towards the required 10% match. Grant funds will partially pay for the annual salary and benefits of Long-Range Planning staff assigned to this project, who are currently paid from the General Fund. In addition, administrative support assigned to this Long-Range Planning project will be covered at nearly 100%

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The project will include engagement with a multitude of agencies and constituents to identify the best management practices and policies, incentives programs, and potential future priority conservation and restoration projects. The project may involve consultation and input from the Farm Bureau, the Humboldt Agriculture Department, the North Coast Resource Partnership, the UC Cooperative Extension, local public and private landowners, the Forest Advisory Committee, the Williamson Act Advisory Committee, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, the California Coastal Commission, Public Works Environmental Services, CalFire, the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, the incorporated cities, local Tribes, California State Parks, National Park Service, Redwood Coast Energy Authority, Schatz Research Energy Center, Humboldt Waste Management Authority, Cal Poly Humboldt, local businesses, local NGO's, and other applicable interested parties. The study will inform future planning projects that implement sustainable land practices to avoid carbon loss, sequester carbon, protect biodiversity, and support local economies.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board could choose not to secure these funds. This is not recommended as there is demand for safe housing, additional housing units, and home ownership in Humboldt County.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 - Draft Resolution

Attachment 2 - Letter of Designation

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Meeting of: N/A

File No.: N/A