



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Legislation Text

File #: 23-958, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Aviation

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Emergency Removal of Tree Clusters at Murray Field Airport (EKA)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize Director of Aviation to execute the attached Construction Agreement (Attachment 1) for the removal of tree clusters at Murray Field Airport (EKA), and all subsequent amendments, not to exceed \$22,080, after review by County Counsel, Risk Management, and County Administrative Office;
2. Authorize the Director of Aviation to use sole source procurement for the removal of trees at EKA; and
3. Find that tree removal is exempt from environmental review, pursuant to Section 15269(b) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (Attachment 2).

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Aviation Enterprise Fund (3530)

DISCUSSION:

The County of Humboldt operates the Murray Field Airport (EKA) by and through its Department of Aviation. Aircraft utilize nighttime approaches at the EKA Airport to safely navigate to/from the airport during inclement conditions, such as fog and other low-visibility conditions. Life flight emergency flights to/from the EKA airport are the primary flights conducted at EKA during nighttime hours. These approaches are currently not allowed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) due to obstruction impacts from approximately 10 trees, in four tree clusters, located on the EKA Airport property.

In April 2022, the Natural Resources Management Corporation (NRM) conducted a site assessment to determine the best course of action to abate the tree obstruction. On May 20, 2022, the Natural Resources Management Corporation (NRM) issued a Murray Field Obstacles and Tree Abatement

Recommendations report (Attachment 3) finding that the four obstacle tree clusters obscure the EKA Airport flight path. The NRM prescribed that the obscuring trees should be removed and fully replaced with low stature vegetation.

Over the past year, the Department of Aviation has worked closely with County Counsel to identify the proper process to obtain necessary permits and waivers for the tree removal. Subsequently, the Department of Aviation worked to secure a coastal development permit and on June 9, 2023, the California Coastal Commission issued the department a Notice of Permit Waiver Effectiveness (Attachment 3).

The EKA Airport tree removal was evaluated for compliance with the CEQA and determined that the project described herein falls under Categorical Exemption Section 15269(b), Class 1 (c), emergency projects. Class 1 (c) exemptions consist of Emergency repairs to publicly or privately owned service facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety or welfare. Emergency repairs include those that require a reasonable amount of planning to address an anticipated emergency. There are no unusual circumstances or historical resources that would make this exemption inapplicable. Accordingly, the Department of Aviation recommends that the Board of Supervisors authorize the Director of Aviation to execute the attached Construction Agreement and find that the project is exempt from environmental review pursuant to Section 15301 of CEQA Guidelines.

Tree removal from the EKA Airport became an emergency need when the California Redwood Coast - Humboldt County Airport (ACV) commenced nighttime closures on June 5, 2023, for a long-overdue runway and electrical rehabilitation project that will continue through December 15, 2023, and eliminating life flights from using the ACV Airport for nighttime flights when certain meteorological conditions are present during this time.

The Department of Aviation found only one qualified marine tugboat operator licensed to work out of Humboldt Bay with a barge large enough to meet the demands for the tree removal: Zerlang and Zerlang Marine Services (ZZMS). Sole source procurement is the purchase of goods and/or services where limitations on the supply source, necessary restrictions in specifications or standardizations, quality considerations, or where it has been determined that the goods and services are reasonably available from one and only one vendor, allowing for an exception to the competitive procurement process. Services outlined in ZZMS' quote includes removing four tree clusters and planting coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) plants to prevent erosion. The cost for services outlined in ZZMS quote totals \$22,080 (Attachment 5).

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Estimated cost for the tree removal is \$22,080. This cost has been budgeted for FY23/24 and will be paid for using CARES Act Grant Funding previously allocated to the Department of Aviation. For this reason, there is no impact on the General Fund.

STAFFING IMPACT:

N/A

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework priority of managing our resources to ensure sustainability of services and provide community-appropriate levels of service.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

County Counsel
City of Eureka
California Coastal Commission

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Your Board may choose not to authorize the Department of Aviation to execute a contract for the tree removal at the EKA Airport. However, this alternative is not recommended as without necessary tree removal, life-saving flights cannot use the EKA Airport for emergency nighttime response during certain periods of the ACV runway and electrical rehabilitation project.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Construction Agreement
Attachment 2: CEQA Notice of Exemption
Attachment 3: Murray Field Obstacles and Tree Abatement Recommendations Report
Attachment 4: California Coastal Commission Notice of Permit Waiver Effectiveness (dated 06/09/23)
Attachment 5: Zerlang and Zerlang Marine Services Quote for Tree Removal

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A
Meeting of: N/A
File No.: N/A