

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: February 23, 2023

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area Riparian Vegetation Planting Reimbursement Program

Recommended Action: Approve a reimbursement program to award one-time grants in an amount not-to-exceed \$300 per eligible applicant to plant and maintain native riparian vegetation on areas immediately adjacent to Soquel Creek and Noble Gulch, and find the project is exempt from CEQA under CEQA Guidelines Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects.

Discussion: In an effort to incentivize and promote sustainable development, water conservation, and storm water pollution prevention, the Commission on the Environment has developed and recommended the attached Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) Riparian Vegetation Planting Reimbursement Program (Program) for approval by City Council.

In summary, the Program offers a reimbursement of up to \$300 per parcel immediately adjacent to Soquel Creek and Noble Gulch to plant native riparian vegetation on areas. The program requires pre-approval to verify applicant eligibility for reimbursement. The applicant is responsible for all project costs above the approved reimbursement amount. Project plants must be from the approved native plantings list included in the application. All rebate funds are to be reimbursements to the approved applicant and will be dispersed after the submission of required documentation. Public Works staff will review applications and award reimbursement funds.

Staff proposes the Program be funded by Green Building Funds for FY22-23. Per Capitola Municipal Code Section 15.18.080, Green Building Funds may be used for incentive programs, materials, and supplies to promote sustainable development, water conservation, and storm water pollution prevention. Staff will assess the program effectiveness evaluate the continuation of the program for FY23-24.

The program was drafted over several months and on February 1, 2023 the Commission unanimously recommend the City Council establish the Program and fund the program and promotional material with Green Building Funds.

Fiscal Impact: The Program will result in a maximum expense of \$40,000 from the Green Building Fund. Each of the 125 eligible parcels may apply for a maximum \$300 reimbursement. The actual expense amount will depend on Program participation.

Environmental Determination: Approval of this reimbursement program is not a project under Section 15060(c)(2) of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Guidelines because approving a grant program is an administrative activity that will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. Alternatively, the planting of trees and maintenance of native vegetation constitutes a small restoration of habitat and is thus exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15333.

Attachments:

1. Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) Riparian Vegetation Planting Reimbursement Program

Report Prepared By: Jessica Kahn, Public Works Director

Reviewed By: Julia Moss, City Clerk;

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager