



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Operations Committee/Board of Directors
Title: Wildland Fire Services Contract
From: Shaun Horne, Director of Watershed Resources
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: February 16, 2024

TYPE OF ACTION: Action Information X Review and Refer

RECOMMENDATION: Staff is requesting that the Operations Committee review and refer the proposed 'Wildland Fire Services' General Services Agreement (GSA) contract to a future Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors for award of contract to the lowest qualified bidder.

SUMMARY: The district is currently in year five of implementation of the Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP) that was adopted in 2019. During the course of conducting the BFFIP-driven vegetation Management Actions, the District has generated vegetation piles on the watershed that need to be burned off to achieve the vegetation management goals. Staff propose using a three year 'Wildland Fire Services' contract to provide certified wildland fire contractor crews with fire equipment necessary to help address the un-burned vegetation piles, as well as provide operational assistance for prescribed burn site preparation and post fire mop up operations.

Staff is requesting that the Operations Committee review and refer the Wildland Fire Services GSA contract for approval at a future regularly scheduled Board of Directors meeting for award of contract to the lowest qualified bidder and to authorize the General Manager to execute any and all future amendments to this contract, which is deemed necessary, so long as they do not exceed 10% in total of the contract amount.

DISCUSSION: In October of 2019, the District adopted the BFFIP, and associated Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), which describes actions the District will implement to reduce wildfire hazards and to maintain and enhance ecosystem function. Vegetation management under the BFFIP aims to reduce fuel loads, maintain fuelbreak infrastructure, preserve defensible space, and reduce invasive weed species. Vegetation management is conducted continuously throughout the year with the chief goal of reducing fuel loads and maintaining the watershed's biological diversity. For the past five years, watershed staff and contractors have successfully implemented vegetation management actions outlined within the BFFIP, some of which generate vegetative slash burn piles. For example, with respect to vegetation treatments described in the BFFIP under MA-21, 'Fuelbreak

Construction' and MA-23, 'Forest Stand Structure Improvement', as well as MA 24, 'Grassland and Oak Woodland Improvement', thirty or more slash debris piles per acre may result from conducting this work that ultimately need to be burned in order to reach the desired stand conditions.

Despite continued efforts by District staff and contractors to burn off the resulting BFFIP debris piles generated over the last five years, there still remain piles on the watershed that are in need of burning to complete the treatment. During the last five years, extended drought conditions and Bay Area Air Quality Management District restrictions have limited efforts to conduct pile burn operations. These constraints have contributed to the un-burnt vegetation debris piles on the watershed. Utilizing a licensed contractor with State certified firefighters and appropriate fire equipment will provide critical support to augment ongoing district burn pile operations.

The BFFIP also outlines prescribed burn treatments under MA-23, that District staff do not have the full capacity to implement independently. For example, for the 11-acre 2023 Rock Spring Prescribed Burn, staff relied on contractors to assist with site preparation and on Marin County Fire (MCF) to conduct the prescribed burn and provide post-fire patrol support. At the February 13th Board of Directors meeting, the Board approved a Memorandum Agreement between Marin County Fire Department (MCFD) and the District in an effort to support prescribed burn planning and implementation. This Wildland Fire Services GSA will provide additional resources for prescribed burn site preparation and for post-fire patrol on prescribed burns planned over the next three years. This is needed because post-fire patrol requires multiple days of overnight patrols to ensure the prescribed fire has been fully extinguished. As such, the Wildland Fire Services GSA will complement the MCFD Agreement and other BFFIP contractor work on the watershed.

PROPOSAL SELECTION PROCESS:

In February 2024, the District released a notice inviting bidders to submit proposals for a three-year Wildland Fire Services GSA. The notice was published in the local paper and posted on the District's external bid posting website to inform contractors of the opportunity. Sealed bids will be received and reviewed by the District and the lowest qualified bidder will be selected.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: The District as the Lead Agency, has prepared a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) pursuant to the provisions of CEQA for the Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP) which was adopted in 2019 and covers all work being proposed under the new 'Wildland Fire Services' contract.

FISCAL IMPACT: Staff estimate the cost to perform the Wildland Fire Services over three years, during FY24, FY25 & FY26, will total approximately \$1,035,000.00. To cover the first year's expense, during FY24, \$345,000.00 is currently budgeted within A1E07, Fund 20 -FY23 Capital, 'Green Infrastructure' (BFFIP) Contractors (D24005) and will be supplemented by grant funding as it is secured.

ATTACHMENT(S): None.