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R-24-93  
Meeting 24-21  
November 14, 2024

**AGENDA ITEM #4**

To: Board of Directors  
Open Space Authority

From: Andrea Mackenzie  
General Manager

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**SUBJECT**

Receive Update on Contracting with Vendor SWCA for the Coyote Valley Conservation Area Master Planning Project

**REVENUE/COST**

Work on the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan is included in the Fiscal Year 2024/25 budget. There is no cost associated with this update.

**BACKGROUND**

Coyote Valley is a remarkable natural and rural landscape between the cities of San José and Morgan Hill. Located at the narrowest point between the Santa Cruz Mountains to the west and the Diablo Range to the east, the valley serves as a critical landscape linkage for the region's wildlife, connecting over 1.1 million acres of primate habitat in the mountain ranges. The valley itself is notable for its unique valley-floor habitats, wildlife, scenic beauty, recreational areas, farmland, and water resources.

Since 2017, the Authority and its partners, the Peninsula Open Space Trust ("POST"), and the City of San José have permanently protected over 1,500 acres of valley floor land in Coyote Valley. The Authority is currently leading the creation of the Coyote Valley Conservation Areas Master Plan ("CVCAMP"), a science-based and community-informed plan focused on the future restoration and use of these recently protected valley floor lands in North and Mid-Coyote Valley. In addition to site-planning these protected lands, CVCAMP is also studying the role they play within the context of the larger 17,200-acre Coyote Valley Conservation Program Area established by the State of California via State Assembly Bill (AB) 948 in 2019.

To assist with the creation of CVCAMP, the Authority issued a request for proposals (RFP), and, in September 2021, the Board adopted a resolution (R-21-56) that authorized the General Manager to enter into a contract with SWCA Environmental Consultants to provide professional services for CVCAMP. The master contract was signed with SWCA in December 2021.

The CVCAMP team divided the project into nine major planning phases to be completed in 2027. In late 2022, the CVCAMP team completed Phase 1: Project Start-Up; this phase focused on SWCA-team onboarding, review and synthesis of past studies, and the completion of a data-gaps analysis report. In 2023, the CVCAMP team completed the bulk of Phase 2: Understanding Coyote Valley. This phase focused on filling data gaps identified in Phase 1 via a robust suite of technical studies and site assessments. In summer of 2024, SWCA finalized a report titled "Understanding Coyote Valley Existing Conditions Summary Report" that summarizes the findings of Phase 2. The Authority then led a

successful round of Understanding Coyote Valley community outreach with open houses in Morgan Hill, San José, and online. The remainder of 2024 was to be focused on evaluating opportunities and constraints, creating guidelines for a successful landscape linkage, and developing preliminary restoration and use scenarios for the CVCAMP lands.

## **DISCUSSION**

In May of 2024, SWCA began internal restructuring of the team supporting CVCAMP, prompted by the departure of SWCA's project manager assigned to CVCAMP. SWCA's water resources team lead for CVCAMP then departed in July.

Through the summer, Authority Staff continued to work with SWCA to restaff and restructure the team. However, following the departure of additional key SWCA staff in August, SWCA proposed assigning a new team for the CVCAMP project. Authority Staff reviewed this proposal. However, Authority Staff and SWCA ultimately agreed the best course of action would be to close out the master contract. SWCA has agreed to wrap-up in-progress tasks by the end of the calendar year.

Staff is currently drafting new RFPs for CVCAMP and plans to recommend new consultants for Board approval in early 2025. To streamline future implementation of CVCAMP, these RFPs will be structured to serve not only planning and conceptual design work associated with CVCAMP, but also detailed design and engineering of the first phase of capital projects that are recommended by CVCAMP. The team hired via these RFPs will also likely be used to advance the Laguna Seca Steppingstone Project and other near-term studies and restoration projects in Coyote Valley.

CVCAMP progress has been delayed by approximately six months. The timeline for the procurement process to hire new consultants is still being finalized and will result in some additional delays. CVCAMP is currently between phases whereby the existing conditions phase (Phase 2) has recently concluded with late summer/early fall "Understanding Coyote Valley" public engagement and the visioning phase (Phase 3) is ready to advance. This timing allows the Authority to apply knowledge gained from Phase 2 and bring on a new team that is finely tuned to address the specific opportunities and constraints identified thus far. Authority Staff are also working with our partners to advance preliminary visioning work internally, prior to hiring a new consultant team, to minimize delay to the overall project.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

This report is for informational purposes only and does not require Board action.

Prepared by:

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