

# **STAFF REPORT**

## *City Council Consent Item*

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**DATE:** June 5, 2023

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Council Members

**FROM:** Katey Schmidt, Community Development Department

**THROUGH:** Merritt Perry, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** **Authorizing an Application for Grant Funds, for a Habitat Conservation Fund Grant for the Acquisition of a 6.25-Acre Parcel**

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Authorize city staff to submit a Habitat Conservation Fund grant application to California State Parks, and adopt Resolution 2023-15, authorizing the Fortuna City Manager to conduct all negotiations, execute and submit all documents, including, but not limited to applications, agreements, amendments, payment requests etc., which may be necessary for the completion of the project.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

In early 2022, the City was made aware of the potential to purchase a 6.25-acre forested parcel adjacent to a City-Owned forested parcel on Vancil Street and near Rohner Park. The proposed parcel for acquisition is shown on Exhibit A. The City received a “willing-seller letter” from the current property owners on March 22, 2022, and began the process of seeking grant funding for the purchase.

The proposed Vancil Forest parcel includes approximately 6.25 acres of second-growth redwood forest. Native redwood and Douglas fir trees are the predominant tree species, along with a variety of native shrub species such as salal, huckleberry, sword fern, and other native understory vegetation. Located across from Rohner Creek and Rohner Park, the Vancil Forest creates a scenic background from the park’s arena and ball fields. It makes up a significant portion of the viewshed from Rohner Park and many other vantage points, including downtown. The site slopes to Rohner Creek, which supports anadromous salmonids and other riparian species; retention of forestland will ensure drainage ways within the project site are protected from pollutants typically associated with residential development, such as sediment and silt, fuel, and oil from vehicles that wash down driveways. These protections will decrease future stormwater conveyance costs for the City compared to development that increases impervious surfaces. Acquisition of this parcel will protect these natural open spaces and habitats from development and provide the community with recreational opportunities such as hiking, bird watching, and other outdoor activities.

**HABITAT CONSERVATION FUND:**

The State of California enacted the California Wildlife Protection Act in 1990, which provides funds to the State of California for grants to local agencies to acquire, enhance, restore, or develop facilities for public recreation and fish and wildlife habitat protection purposes. The Habitat Conservation Fund allocates approximately \$2 million each year to cities, counties, and districts. Funding from several Fiscal Years is being combined for the upcoming cycle. The program requires a 50% match. Eligible projects include nature interpretation programs to bring urban residents into park and wildlife areas, protection of various plant and animal species, and acquisition and development of wildlife corridors and trails.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The Grantor will fund up to 50% of the acquisition costs. In addition to pursuing this grant, the City has submitted a United States Forest Service Community Forest grant application to fund the remaining 50% match. The City will not proceed without full grant funding for this project without council approval.

**RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:**

Adopt *Resolution 2023-15; A Resolution of The City Council of The City of Fortuna Approving the Application for Grant Funds From The Habitat Conservation Fund Program* and Appoint the City Manager to be the Authorized Signer. Consent agenda vote.

**Exhibits:**

- A. Location Map

**ATTACHMENT:**

- *Resolution 2023-15 – A Resolution of The City Council of The City of Fortuna Approving the Application for Grant Funds From The Habitat Conservation Fund Program*



**Exhibit A**



**City of Fortuna - Vancil Forest**

0 275 550 1,100 USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Map  
 Feet Section 35 of T.3.N., R.1.W.

- Proposed Acquisition - 6.25 Acres
- Existing City of Fortuna Parcels
- Future Easement Acquisition



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