



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 9/26/2023

File #: 23-1274

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Public Works

Agenda Section: Consent

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Authorization for the Humboldt County Department of Public Works to Accept and Administer Funding Made Available Through the 2022 Defensible Space Assistance Grant Program

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize the Humboldt County Public Works Director, or a designee thereof, to execute a grant agreement with the California Fire Safe Council and any other documents, including, without limitation, professional services agreements, necessary to accept and administer funding made available through the 2022 Defensible Space Assistance Grant Program; and
2. Direct Public Works to return with a supplemental budget request to incorporate the grant funds into the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Grant funds from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (“CAL FIRE”), through the California Fire Safe Council, as part of the California Climate Investment Program.

DISCUSSION:

The County of Humboldt has been selected, as one of 11 statewide organizations, to receive grant awards for defensible space assistance projects designed to assist vulnerable populations (i.e., low-income, disabled, senior/elderly, disadvantaged), in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The Defensible Space Assistance Grant is part of California Climate Investments, a statewide program that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing GHG (“greenhouse gas”) emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment-particularly in disadvantaged communities. Activities funded under this program are consistent with those recommended in the Humboldt County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (“CWPP”). Staff Recommendations aim to support Humboldt County Public Works’ role in working towards achieving the Wildfire Preparedness goal of the CWPP Countywide Action Plan. Staff is requesting that the Board authorize the Humboldt County Public Works Director, or a designee thereof, to accept and

administer an award of \$500,000 to fund the implementation of the Southern Humboldt Defensible Space Project (“Project”). The execution deadline for the grant agreement is September 29, 2023.

The Project was identified by county staff, local fire safe councils, and local fire departments as important for public safety. It addresses the Humboldt County CWPP Plan Priority Action 3.2.3-1: “Collaborate to create defensible space for elderly and disabled residents who are not able to do this for themselves.” It addresses this critical need in economically disadvantaged, high/very high fire hazard severity wildland urban interface areas of Southern Humboldt. This project was also identified as a priority by the Ettersburg Fire Safe Council through a community outreach effort funded by a California Fire Safe Council Capacity Building Grant. County of Humboldt, Public Works, Natural Resource Planning staff will manage and implement the Project in partnership with the Briceland Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD); a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and volunteer fire department. The Project will build on the Federal Community Wildfire Defense Grant awarded to the BVFD to develop a Southern Humboldt Fuels Crew. It is estimated that the Project will be able provide defensible space assistance for approximately 90 - 120 homes, including detailed home risk assessments.

The Project will also provide funds to print a Spanish translation of the Humboldt County “Preparing Your Home for Wildfire” pamphlet and distribute them to target areas and audiences.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Expenditures (1720289 2118)	FY23-24	FY24-25 Projected	
Additional Appropriation Requested	\$300,000	\$200,000	
Total Expenditures	\$300,000		
Funding Sources (1720289 4510)	FY23-24 Adopted	FY24-25 Projected*	
State/Federal Funds	\$300,000	\$200,000	
Total Funding Sources	\$300,000	\$200,000	

**Projected amounts are estimates and are subject to change.*

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:

Acceptance of this grant made available by 2022 Defensible Space Assistance Grant Program will bring \$500,000 of state funding into the county to support continued work to reduce the vulnerability of rural communities to damage from wildfire. This grant was awarded after the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget was adopted. A future agenda item will transmit a supplemental budget request to increase appropriations in the Natural Resources Planning budget unit 1720289. Acceptance of the grant funds will not impact the Humboldt County General Fund.

The expense of preparing the application for funding will be covered by a fiscal year 2023-24 General Fund allocation in the Natural Resources Planning budget unit 1720289. One of the intended uses of the General Fund allocation was to research funding sources and write grant proposals.

STAFFING IMPACT:

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impact:

Acceptance of this grant will help maintain current Department of Public Works - Natural Resources Planning staffing levels. Activities planned through this funding will complement and expand upon existing programs currently funded through grants that are expiring.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports the following areas of your Board's Strategic Framework.

Core Roles: Create opportunities for improved safety and health

New Initiatives: Seek outside funding sources to benefit Humboldt County needs

Strategic Plan: N/A

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Briceland Volunteer Fire Department

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board may choose not to take the recommended action. However, this alternative is not recommended because of the community fire safety benefits that could be gained through the Project.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. California Fire Safe Council Grant Award Announcement

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A

File No.: N/A