

Central Services
Joan Araujo, Director

Engineering Services
Christopher Cooper, Director

Roads & Transportation
Christopher Kurgan, Director

Water & Sanitation
Joseph Pope, Director

Watershed Protection
Glenn Shephard, Director

September 14, 2021

Board of Supervisors
Ventura County Watershed Protection District
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Subject: **Approval of and Authorization for the Ventura County Watershed Protection District Director or His Designee to Execute a Cooperative Agreement with the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy for the Ventura River Watershed Giant Reed Removal Project; Supervisorial District No. 1, Watershed Protection District Zone No. 1.**

Recommendations:

1. Approve the attached Cooperative Agreement with the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC) to carry out the Ventura River Watershed Giant Reed Removal Project using regulatory permits obtained by the Ventura County Watershed Protection District (District).
2. Authorize the District Director, or his designee, to execute the approved Cooperative Agreement.

Fiscal/Mandates Impact:

There is no additional fiscal impact associated between OLVC and the District with this item.

Discussion:

OVLC intends to conduct the Ventura River Watershed Giant Reed Removal Project (OVLC Project) to remove approximately 23.1 acres of invasive giant reed (*Arundo donax*) from a portion of San Antonio Creek and a portion of the Ventura River in the Ojai



Valley, California. OVLC received funding from CALFIRE through the Ventura County Fire Department to perform this important invasive plant removal work.

OVLC requires a streambed alteration agreement (SAA) from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and a biological opinion from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to cover the work due to the location, the presence of sensitive species, and critical habitat for the federally threatened California red-legged frog (CRLF).

Upon past recommendations by CDFW and USFWS staff, OVLC approached the District regarding the possibility of entering into a cooperative agreement to use the SAA issued for the Ventura River Invasive Plant Removal and Ecosystem Restoration Project (also known as the V-11 Project) (SAA No. 1600-2015-0112-R5) and the biological opinions issued by the USFWS for the District's Routine Operation and Maintenance Program (08EVEN00-2012-F-0531, 08EVEN00-2015-F-0055, and 08EVEN00-2018-F-0330). The biological opinions are tied to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Individual Permit that was issued for the District's Routine Operation and Maintenance Program (SPL-2018-00040-AJS).

Since the OVLC Project will provide watershed protection, water conservation benefits, and assist in the overall goal to eradicate giant reed from the Ventura River Watershed, the District has agreed to allow OVLC to utilize the permits and biological opinions to complete the project, subject to the terms set forth in the referenced Cooperative Agreement (Exhibit 1) developed by the District and accepted by OVLC.

The District is currently in process of amending the CDFW SAA for the V-11 Project to include the new areas proposed for giant reed removal. The proposed methods of removal are the same as what is included in the existing SAA and the work is in the same watershed, which makes it a suitable permit to use for the OVLC Project. The District anticipates receiving the amended permit from CDFW in October 2021.

On August 2, 2021, the USFWS provided written acknowledgement and agreement that the OVLC Project fits within the scope of the Biological Opinion for the District's Routine Operation and Maintenance Program. On August 4, 2021, the USACE provided written acknowledgement and agreement that the OVLC Project fits within the scope of the USACE Individual Permit for the District's Routine Operation and Maintenance Program. The District will provide the regulatory agencies all notifications and reporting required by the permits.

The Cooperative Agreement requires that OVLC carry out the work in conformance with the District's best management practices and all provisions of the CDFW SAA Permit and USFWS Biological Opinions.



This item has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, and County Counsel. If you have any questions concerning this item, please contact Pam Lindsey at (805) 654-2036.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Glenn Shephard".

Glenn Shephard, P.E.
Director

Attachments:

Exhibit 1 – Cooperative Agreement for the Ventura River Watershed Giant Reed Removal Project with the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (with Exhibits A through C)

