Los Angeles County
Department of Regional Planning

Planning for the Challenges Ahead

Richard J. Bruckner
Director

October 11, 2016

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

AUTHORIZATION TO ACCEPT A GRANT AWARD FROM THE WINDWARD FUND'S CONSERVATION 2.0 PROGRAM IN SUPPORT OF THE ANTELOPE VALLEY REGIONAL CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK (FIFTH SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT) (3-VOTES)

SUBJECT

Recommendation to authorize the Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (Director of Planning) to accept and implement a grant award under the Windward Fund's Conservation 2.0 Program to support the development of the Antelope Valley Regional Conservation Framework (RCF).

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:

Authorize the Director of Planning, or his designee, to accept grant funding of $18,500 from the Windward Fund for the purpose of supporting development of the Antelope Valley RCF, and to execute all necessary documents to administer the grant.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approval of the recommendation will enable the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (Department) to accept grant funding from the Windward Fund to support the development of the Antelope Valley RCF.

The Los Angeles County General Plan, adopted by the Board of Supervisors (Board) on October 6, 2015, emphasizes the concept of sustainability, and identifies "excellence in natural resource management" as one of five guiding principles. The Antelope Valley Area Plan, adopted by the Board on June 16, 2015, as the community-based plan for the Antelope Valley area, is a component

of the Los Angeles County General Plan and also places a strong emphasis on effective conservation and management of environmental resources.

These conservation goals and policies are implemented through a combination of programs identified in the plans. These include long-established programs such as Significant Ecological Areas (SEA) as well as future implementation programs such as Transfer of Development Rights, Mitigation Land Banking Program and Open Space Master Plan, Open Space Land Acquisition Strategy, and Habitat Conservation Plan.

An RCF is a non-regulatory tool intended to serve a number of beneficial purposes. Notably, an RCF could facilitate advance mitigation for large-scale public or private development projects, including solar energy facilities and transportation infrastructure. Under pending state legislation (Assembly Bill 2087), conservation actions implemented in accordance with an RCF could be used to obtain credits to fulfill a project's mitigation requirements, subject to approval by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the local permitting agency. Use of an RCF for such purposes would be strictly voluntary and at the discretion of individual project proponents. However, by providing a basis of scientific data and analysis from which to draw, an RCF could streamline the process of locating areas suitable for mitigation, while also improving environmental outcomes through a more comprehensive, coordinated approach.

The Antelope Valley RCF would support the County's conservation and sustainability efforts by identifying wildlife and habitat conservation needs and priorities in north Los Angeles County through a science-based approach. The Antelope Valley RCF is one of three RCFs currently being developed as part of a state-wide effort to pilot a new, flexible tool for conservation planning. The Desert and Mountains Conservation Authority is the local sponsor for the Antelope Valley RCF, and the Department has been participating in the RCF's development in an advisory capacity. The Antelope Valley RCF builds on the work of the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan, a project led by several state and federal agencies, as well as the County's SEA Program.

The funds provided through this grant would ensure that Department staff could participate in the development of the Antelope Valley RCF and receive the benefits of the collaboration with other state and local agencies without incurring costs to the County nor diminishing the County's ability to adapt this information through its own future habitat management planning as set forth in the County General Plan.

The acceptance of the grant will not commit the County to the adoption of any plan, policy, or project.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

Participation in the development of the Antelope Valley RCF promotes the County's Strategic Plan goals of Operational Effectiveness/Fiscal Sustainability (Goal 1), Community Support and Responsiveness (Goal 2), and Integrated Service Delivery (Goal 3) by developing a framework that will effectively respond to economic, social, and environmental challenges; will be well aligned with the County's ongoing sustainability initiatives as set forth by the Board and as adopted in the County General Plan; and will support existing efforts and create new opportunities to enhance the health of the environment and the County's unincorporated communities.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

Participation in the development of the Antelope Valley RCF will not result in any new significant costs to the County. The funds will be used to support personnel costs and operating expenses.

Funding is not currently included in the Department's FY 2016-17 budget; therefore, a mid-year budget adjustment will be submitted to the Chief Executive Office during FY 2016-17.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

All documents required for the acceptance of the awarded grant will be subject to approval by County Counsel prior to execution by the Director Planning.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

The acceptance of the grant is not a "project" for which review is required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 15384(b)(4) of the CEQA Guidelines excludes from the definition of a "project" the "creation of government funding mechanisms or other government fiscal activities which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment." The acceptance of the grant will allow the County to participate in the development of the RCF, including any necessary environmental review pursuant to CEQA. The acceptance of the grant will not commit the County to the adoption of any plan, policy, or project, and will not result in any physical impact on the environment.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Participation in the development of the Antelope Valley RCF will improve planning and services to the public by supporting implementation of goals and policies in the Los Angeles County General Plan and Antelope Valley Area Plan, as well as the County's sustainability initiatives.

Should you have any questions, please contact Susan Tae, Section Head, Community Studies North Section, at (213) 974-6476 or stae@planning.lacounty.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

RICHARD J. BRUCKNER
Director

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Enclosures

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Chief Executive Officer
Health Services
Parks and Recreation
Public Health
Public Works