

DATE: July 23, 2015

TO: Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board

FROM: Jennifer Thompson, Fiscal Manager

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 17: Consideration of a resolution to ratify a grant modification to the United States Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program to increase funding for the EcoVoices Program.

RECOMMENDATION: That the WCA Governing Board ratify a grant modification totaling \$52,000 with the United States Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program grant for administration, continued development and implementation of the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority EcoVoices program.

BACKGROUND: The Discovery Center has always been envisioned as a place where there are multiple ways to educate and inform students, families and the community about the San Gabriel Watershed. While the development of the education center is a key project, getting students, visitors and the community actively engaged in learning about the watershed is critical to our mission. Through a grant from the RMC in June 2012, staff launched the EcoVoices. After initial setup of the program in the beginning of 2013, students began visiting the Whittier Narrows Natural Area, location of the future Discovery Center. On Thursdays, throughout the year, students visit to take part in the EcoVoices program. The program's success has resulted in thousands of children in surrounding communities and school systems interacting and being exposed to ecosystem research and stewardship projects that include: watershed awareness, air quality, land use analysis, habitat enhancement, climate change modeling and green space development in a variety of outdoor research laboratories.

Students learn to investigate and interpret ecological and environmental concepts in an urban, community forest context. The curriculum incorporates inquiry and project-based teaching tools aligned with California State mandated requirements for environmental studies. One of the overarching goals of this project is to instill program participants with tools to protect the natural environment and water resources for future generations.

In May 2013, WCA staff on behalf of the SGRDCA sought funding from the United States Forest Service to assist in development and implementation of EcoVoices programming based on objectives of the Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program. In August 2013, the United States Forest Service awarded funding in the amount of \$50,000 to the WCA to assist in administration of the EcoVoices program and in June 2014 the WCA was awarded an additional \$35,000 under a modification to the grant.

As the successful EcoVoices program is expected to continue operating in FY 2015/16 and beyond, the WCA proposed and initiated a request for an amendment to the current grant agreement with the United States Forest Service. This amendment, namely specified as a "modification" by the U.S. Forest Service called for a continuation of the grant period through December 31, 2016 and requested an

additional \$52,000 for continued administration of the EcoVoices program for total grant funding of \$137,000, with \$85,000 already being approved in August 2013 and June 2014.

All of the outputs and objectives targeted in the original grant agreement will continue and have been adjusted accordingly and proportionately to correspond to the grant period extension and funding. The following are objectives, goals, outputs, and budget narratives for the grant modification:

1. Specific Activities

Goals:

- 1) To provide traditionally underserved students and youth access and exposure to natural areas and habitat.
- 2) Program participants will learn how to investigate and interpret ecological and environmental concepts.
- 3) Students will gain experience and understanding of scientific and project-based learning concepts.
- 4) Encourage and inspire youth so that they may become scientists or professionals in their communities and better understand the need to protect our urban forest areas and the natural environment.
- 5) Students will learn to understand the importance of the urban forest, and benefits both the urban and natural forest provide.

Objectives:

- 1) Local students and community youth will become aware of the need to contribute to the vitality of the watershed and the area's urban forests.
- 2) Increase participation in environmental science by over 1,800 K-12 grade students from underserved communities.
- 3) Over 1,800 students will engage in environmental education in the outdoors/natural environment.
- 4) Sufficient staffing (2 positions) for administrative and financial oversight of all aspects of program activities.
- 5) The Project Manager and EcoVoices program staff will conduct program outreach, make presentations and meet with local educational institutions, community organization and civic groups.

Administration:

- 1) Funding for project management and fiscal management for one year.
 - a) Manage all financial matters related to administration of grant funds.
 - b) Attend to all reporting requirements and ensure that the project is meeting projected baseline targets concerning program participation numbers.
- 2) Convene and facilitate all program coordination meetings.
- 3) Provide on-site logistical management.

Strategic Direction:

- 1) Conduct bi-monthly EcoVoices program coordination meetings will be serve as the vehicle to review, discuss, and guide the status and direction of the project.
- 2) Administer participant surveys weekly for program evaluation successful program status and to determine necessary adjustments.

Evaluation/Monitoring:

Analysis of weekly program participant surveys for the use of program measurements.

Communication:

- 1) Develop, update, publish and distribute EcoVoices Program literature, including a press release, fact sheet, brochure and video.
- 2) EcoVoices Program presentations to educational institutions, community organizations and civic groups, including use of EcoVoices Program literature, PowerPoint media and video.
- 3) Eco Voices presentations to potential funding entities, including use of EcoVoices Program literature, PowerPoint media and video.

Outputs

Type of activity	Participants/org anizations assisted	No. of Pts.	No of Meetings/ Annually	Information Produced
Outreach to youth, schools, community organizations and civic groups	10-20 K-12 grade schools, 6 community organizations & civic groups	40	10-20 meetings, held 1-2 times monthly	Community education & collaboration opportunities involving the EcoVoices program
EcoVoices Environmental science expeditions in the natural environment	30 K-12 grade schools and 6 community organizations	1,800	30 expeditions, 2-3 times monthly	Environmental Science research & education on Urban Forestry concepts
EcoVoices Program coordination meetings	2-4	2-8	18 meetings, 1-2 times monthly	Discuss aspects of program status
Program evaluation Process	20 K-12 grade schools and 4 community organizations	180	20 evaluation gathering sessions, 1-2 times monthly	Survey of EcoVoices program effectiveness as measured by program participants
Water Quality Testing	30 K-12 grade schools & 4 community organizations	1,800	30 water quality testing sessions, 2-3 times monthly	PH, salinity, temperature, sulfate and nutrient testing
Participation in geological activities related to the San Gabriel River Watershed	30 K-12 grade schools and 4 community organizations	1,800	30 geological activity sessions, 2-3 times monthly	Create an alluvial flood plain, liquefaction activity & instruction on topographic mapping & watershed awareness, microscopic analysis of soil and rocks
Urban Forest-State of the Ecosystem survey, vegetation & bird identification, discussion on protecting the urban forest and watershed	30 K-12 grade schools and 4 community organizations	1,800	30 State of the Ecosystem surveys and activities, 2-3 times monthly	Microhabitat field investigation and data analysis, entomological analysis & observation, abiotic vs. biotic analysis, students gain concepts of environmental stewardship

2. Budget

Program/Project and Cost Items	Object Class Category	Proposed Federal Funds	Applicant Matching
Project Manager salary	Salary	110,000	
Fiscal Manager salary	Salary	10,500	
Mileage/gasoline for auto	Travel	5,937	
Communication device operation charges	Other	4,613	
Office supplies, business cards, printing costs	Supplies	4,249	3,000
Project Management Staff	Salary	700	49,000
Busing Transportation Costs	Travel	1,000	85,000
Total:		<u>137,000</u>	<u>137,000</u>

Fiscal Impact: The modification to the grant award from the United States Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry program is in the amount of \$52,000 for a total grant amount of \$137,000 with matching funds for the EcoVoices program expecting to be provided by grant funding that is secured by the San Gabriel River Discovery Center Authority. Acceptance of the modification, will allow for continuation of the SGRDCA's EcoVoices program. The FY 15/16 budget contains the portion of this grant that is expected to be utilized during the fiscal year; any unused grant value will be carried over into the next fiscal year budget until the grant agreement is expired.

July 23, 2015 – Item 17

RESOLUTION 2015-33

RESOLUTION OF THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO RATIFY A GRANT MODIFICATION TO THE UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY PROGRAM TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE ECOVOICES PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, The Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) has been established as a joint powers agency between the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District; and

WHEREAS, the Watershed Conservation Authority has further been established to focus on projects which will provide open space, habitat restoration, and watershed improvement projects in both the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers watershed; and

WHEREAS, this action will ratify a grant modification to the United States Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program to increase funding for the EcoVoices program; and

WHEREAS, the proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act; **NOW**

Therefore be it resolved that the WCA hereby:

1. **FINDS** that this action is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the WCA.
2. **FINDS** that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
3. **ADOPTS** the staff report dated July 23, 2015.
4. **RATIFYS** the grant modification to the United States Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program to increase funding for the EcoVoices program for a total grant amount of \$137,000.

~ End of Resolution ~

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Resolution 2015-33

Motion: _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
On July 23, 2015

Brian Mejia, Governing Board Chair

ATTEST: _____
Terry Fujimoto
Deputy Attorney General