



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: March 3, 2021

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

EL MONTE RIVER VALLEY – APPROVE RESTORATION AND FACILITIES IMPROVEMENTS FOR APPROXIMATELY 98 ACRES OF LAND IN LAKESIDE (DISTRICT: 2)

OVERVIEW

On February 10, 2021 (01), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved the acquisition of approximately 98 acres (Property) from the Helix Water District (Helix). The Property was identified for purchase because it would benefit the community of Lakeside by providing opportunities for future trail connections, development of future recreational facilities, and retention of existing equestrian and youth sports field uses. The main channel of the San Diego River crosses the property and onsite habitat includes coastal sage scrub, riparian scrub, riparian forest, as well as disturbed and developed areas. The acquisition of the Property would provide an opportunity for future trail connections between existing County park facilities and the San Diego River Park (SDRP) Regional Trail and Flume Trails to the east.

However, general cleanup, repairs, and other facilities improvements will be needed for the Property prior to its use by the public. At the February 10 Board meeting, the Board indicated their support for appropriating additional funding to ensure that the newly acquired parcels will be restored in full.

Today's request is to authorize additional project costs for the El Monte River Valley Property toward clearing debris and vegetation, and make improvements to a little league sports complex. We urge your support.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER AND SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON

1. Find that today's action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15301, 15302, and 15304 of the State CEQA Guidelines and require that any uses beyond existing uses of the property be contingent upon CEQA compliance.

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2. Establish appropriations of \$6,441,000 in Contributions to Capital Outlay Fund, Operating Transfer Out, based on available prior year General Fund fund balance to provide funding to Capital Project 1024372, El Monte River Valley; and establish appropriations of \$6,441,000 in the Capital Outlay Fund for Capital Project 1024372, El Monte River Valley, based on an Operating Transfer In from the General Fund (4 VOTES).

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are not included in the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Operational Plan. If approved, this request would result in additional project costs of \$6,441,000 in Capital Project 1024372, El Monte River Valley. The funding source is available prior year General Fund fund balance.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

On September 16, 2020 (12), the Board of Supervisors (Board) directed staff to develop an acquisition plan to assess the purchase of approximately 98 acres (Property) from the Helix Water District (Helix) and, if negotiations with Helix were successful, return to the Board no later than December 9, 2020 with recommendations. On December 9, 2020 (9), staff returned to the Board with an update and presented options for improving the property if staff is successful in negotiating an acquisition. The Board established appropriations to purchase, clean up and make baseline improvements to the Property for safety and directed the Clerk of the Board to set a hearing to consider the acquisition on February 10, 2021. The Property is identified as portions of Assessor's Parcel Numbers 392-050-47 and 392-060-43 and is in the El Monte River Valley in the unincorporated community of Lakeside. It is situated south of Willow Road on both sides of Ashwood Street. It is adjacent to Cactus County Park and is approximately one-third of a mile from Louis A. Stelzer Park and three-quarters of a mile from the future \$18 million Lakeside Equestrian Park. Currently the Property has two equestrian use areas, a three-field little league complex, and open space areas.

On February 10, 2021 (01), the Board authorized the Director, Department of General Services to execute all escrow and related documents necessary to complete the purchase and to take all actions necessary to administer the three existing leases that will be assigned to the County as part of the proposed purchase of the property.

However, general cleanup, repairs, and other facilities improvements will be needed for the Property prior to its use by the public. At the February 10 Board meeting, the Board indicated their support for appropriating additional funding to ensure that the newly acquired parcels will be restored in full.

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Some of the restoration action items may include, but are not limited to: add accessible paths of travel, replace broken picnic tables and bleachers, repair faulty utility infrastructure, restoration of the disturbed areas behind the ballfields, and rehab the grass field to make the ballfields playable. There could be further options to include permanent Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) restrooms, a concession stand that meets County Health Codes that allow lessees to cook food on site, and renovated grass fields with water efficient irrigation systems. The proposed restoration and facilities improvements will be a benefit to the community of Lakeside, and provide opportunities for future trail connections, development of future recreational facilities, and retention of existing equestrian and youth sports field uses.

Today’s request is to authorize additional project costs for the El Monte River Valley Property toward clearing debris and vegetation, and make improvements to a little league sports complex. We urge your support.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

Today’s action to appropriate funding for Capital Project 1024372, El Monte River Valley, is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15301, 15302, and 15304 of State CEQA Guidelines. Section 15301 is appropriate because the property includes existing trails, little league fields, and equestrian facilities. These uses may continue and the proposed appropriations will fund operation, repairs, maintenance, or minor alterations upon County acquisition of the property. Section 15302 is appropriate because additional reconstruction or replacement of existing facilities will be conducted on the same site as the existing ballfield and equestrian facilities and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the existing facilities. Section 15304 is appropriate because initial stewardship activities may include replacing fencing and signage, which may require minor land disturbance. None of the exceptions to the exemptions described in Section 15300.2 prohibit the use of the categorical exemptions for the proposed project and there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project involves unusual circumstances, including future activities, resulting in or which might reasonably result in significant impacts which threaten the environment.

Any uses of these appropriations beyond existing uses, operation, maintenance, repair, preliminary habitat restoration, or general cleanup and rehabilitation of the property will be subject to environmental review. However, there are no development plans currently in existence beyond the existing uses and facilities, and any potential impacts from future projects would be too speculative to analyze at this juncture. Should the County decide to construct a trail or complete other actions that would meet the definition of a “project” pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378, the County will comply with CEQA requirements for the project at that time.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

The Helix property supports the Sustainable Environments/Thriving Initiative in the County of San Diego’s 2021–2026 Strategic Plan by fostering an environment where residents engage in recreational interests by enjoying parks, open spaces, outdoor experiences, and civic activities that enrich their quality of life and contribute to building a region that is thriving.

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Respectfully submitted,

Handwritten signature of Nathan Fletcher in black ink.

NATHAN FLETCHER
Chair, Fourth District

Handwritten signature of Joel Anderson in black ink.

JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District

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AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET

REQUIRES FOUR VOTES: Yes No

WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED

Yes No

PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:

February 10, 2021 (1) Board allocated funds to acquire the approximately 98 acres for the Helix Water District; December 9, 2020 (9) Board received a County staff assessment of 98 acres offered by Helix Water District and an update on negotiations with the district, established additional appropriations up to \$2,923,260 for the acquisition and start-up costs, and directed staff to proceed with efforts to acquire the Property and set a hearing to consider acquisition of the Property; September 16, 2020 (12) Board allocated \$500,000 in District Two Neighborhood Reinvestment Program funds and directed staff to develop an acquisition plan to purchase approximately 98 acres from the Helix Water District to keep these lands in public ownership and retain the lease and current uses on subject properties, and if negotiations with the water district are successful, return to the Board no later than December 9, 2020.

BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:

N/A

BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:

N/A

MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:

N/A

ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):

N/A

ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Districts 4 and 2, Board of Supervisors

OTHER CONCURRENCE(S): Department of Parks and Recreation

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