



Legislation Text

File #: 22-1049, Version: 1

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: David Morrison - Director of Planning Building and Environmental Services
REPORT BY: Jamison Crosby, Natural Resources Conservation Manager
SUBJECT: Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and Funding Options for GSP Implementation

RECOMMENDATION

SET MATTER 1:45 PM

Director of Planning, Building and Environmental Services requests that the Napa County Groundwater Sustainability Agency (NCGSA):

1. Authorize staff to begin contract negotiations with three provisionally selected candidates to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG); and
2. Receive an update on effort to explore funding options for Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) Implementation and provide direction to staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As indicated in the Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) adopted by the NCGSA in January of 2022, the TAG is an important part of implementation and will meet regularly to track progress, synthesize available data, and inform participating agencies and the public through regular reporting of implementation activities, the status of Sub-basin sustainability. On February 8, 2022 staff received direction from the NCGSA to take immediate action to form the TAG.

Working with counsel and the County Executive Office, staff developed and released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Technical Advisory Group candidates on March 7, 2022. The deadline for submitting Statements of Qualification (SOQs) was April 1, 2022. SOQs were received from 12 candidates by the deadline and all candidates were interviewed by a panel including representatives from PBES, Luhdorff and Scamanini Consulting Engineers (LSCE), and Concur Inc. Staff have provisionally recommended three

candidates to serve on the TAG: Dr. Monica Cooper, Dr. Matt Kondolf, and Dr. Julie Chambon. Staff requests the GSA's approval to begin the contracting process.

PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS

1. Staff Report
2. Public Comment
3. Motion, second, discussion and vote on item.

FISCAL & STRATEGIC PLAN IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact?	Yes
Is it currently budgeted?	Yes
Where is it budgeted?	Org 2720000
Is it Mandatory or Discretionary?	Mandatory
Is the general fund affected?	Yes
Future fiscal impact:	Analysis of future fiscal impact is pending
Consequences if not approved:	Potentially jeopardizes implementation of the GSP
County Strategic Plan pillar addressed:	Vibrant and Sustainable Environment

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQ Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

On February 8, 2022 staff received direction from the NCGSA to take immediate action to form the TAG.

The core charge of the TWG is to provide well-informed, practical recommendations to the NCGSA as they carry out GSP implementation, taking into account the best available scientific information and best practices in groundwater management.

Activities of the TAG will include:

- Analyzing data collected at representative monitoring sites during GSP implementation;
- Evaluating new studies and research as they may apply to the sub-basin;

- Provide input on monitoring data gaps, rationale for addressing the gap areas, and potential opportunities to coordinate monitoring efforts with other programs; and
- Reviewing workplans, recommending priorities, and assessing when GSP triggers and thresholds may be exceeded and the appropriate actions that should be taken in response.

Working with counsel and the County Executive Office, staff developed and released a “Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Technical Advisory on Group Candidates to Support Napa County Groundwater Sustainability Agency”. The RFQ was widely distributed and posted to the County’s procurement website on March 7, 2022: Procurement • Napa County, CA • CivicEngage (countyofnapa.org). Staff also publicized the RFQ by email to members of the former Groundwater Sustainability Plan Advisory Committee (GSPAC) and the Watershed Information and Conservation Council and GSP Interested Parties lists.

Prospective candidates were required to submit a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) including a letter of interest, curriculum vitae and at least one letter of recommendation. The deadline for submitting SOQs was April 1, 2022. 12 candidates submitted their SOQs by the deadline.

TAG candidates were evaluated based upon their:

- Education;
- Qualifications;
- Experience with the relevant scientific disciplines identified in the RFQ (e.g., hydrogeology); and
- Experience working with collaborative, interdisciplinary projects and panels, especially as related to public policy development and/or implementation.

On the basis of a review of each candidate’s SOQ, 12 candidates were invited to participate in a 50 minute oral interview. Interviews were conducted between April 22 and 29, 2022 by staff and members of LSCE and Concur. On the basis of the oral interviews and review of SOQs, staff recommend the following three candidates to serve on the TAG:

1. Dr. Julie Chambon, Geosyntec Inc.
2. Dr. Monica Cooper, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Cooperative Extension
3. Dr. Mathias Kondolf, University of California, Berkeley

These candidates are provided for NCGSA’s approval and with the request that staff be given direction to immediately commence the contracting process. In coming weeks, staff will also develop bylaws for the TAG and present these to the GSA in June with a resolution to formally create the TAG and appoint the members approved by the GSA today.

Funding Options for GSP Implementation

Implementing the GSP will be an ongoing challenge for the County both in terms of effort and cost. During the

first year of implementation alone, four (4) workplans will be drafted, an advisory group will be convened and meeting regularly, and 4 new dual completion monitoring wells will be drilled. The ongoing drought may involve the implementation of management actions and/or compliance with new State requirements, such as the Governor's recent Executive Order. Staff estimate the cost for the first year will be approximately \$1.3 million. Cost estimates for subsequent years are being developed and are estimated at \$1.3 million to \$2.4 million per year.

In addition to the costs for staffing and GSP implementation, there will be costs for responding to future comments from the Department of Water Resources (DWR) on the adopted GSP and making any necessary revisions or amendments, as well as the start of the next GSP 5-year update beginning in 2025. Grant funds will be pursued to offset these costs wherever feasible, but are unlikely to pay for all of the above expenditures. For these and other reasons, staff requests direction to immediately begin investigating options for developing a funding mechanism to support GSP implementation activities.

On February 8, 2022 staff presented four available options for funding GSP implementation:

1. County General Fund (current condition);
2. Special Tax approved by the voters;
3. Special Assessment approved by the voters: and/or
4. Fee.

Staff recommended Option 4, which would create a fee to support GSA activities, and received direction from the NCGSA to evaluate fees and to return with additional information. Since February, staff has been in contact with Kristen Lowell Inc., currently under contract with the County to develop fee assessments for a number of departments including the Agricultural Commissioner.

Ms. Lowell will develop a scope of work and cost estimate to assist the NCGSA in considering Option 4, which will be presented to the NCGSA at a regular meeting in July 2022. Outreach to the public will be of paramount importance in pursuing any funding option and staff's July presentation will include a discussion of how outreach to the public will be accomplished.