April 22, 2014

Board of Supervisors
County of Marin
3501 Civic Center Drive
Marin County Civic Center
San Rafael, California 94903

SUBJECT:  REQUEST TO ACCEPT REPORT ON THE MEASURE A FARMLAND PRESERVATION MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION:
Accept report.

SUMMARY:
The County of Marin (County) has been engaged in agricultural land preservation and protection efforts for more than four decades through the promotion of Williamson Act contracts, the development and defense of A-60 zoning, and other activities. Marin’s agricultural lands provide innumerable benefits to local communities and the region. The Marin County Agricultural Land Conservation Program (County Program) was approved by the Board of Supervisors on January 31, 2012 to formalize the County’s long-standing commitment to agricultural preservation by amending Marin County Parks’ Agricultural Policies to include Policy AG5. Policy AG5 states “The department shall develop and administer an Agricultural Land Conservation Program to promote, support, and engage in measures to permanently protect agricultural lands in Marin.”

With the passage of Measure A on November 6, 2012, annual funding became available to support the County Program through a Farmland Preservation Program (Measure A Program) that extends for nine years. Twenty percent of Measure A annual revenues (estimated at $2,000,000 per year) have been and will be set aside to “protect Marin County farmland at risk of subdivision and development and preserve Marin’s working farms and ranches.” At least 90 percent of this amount is allocated to a) purchase of perpetual agricultural conservation easements and b) purchase of additional real property interests on land already encumbered by agricultural
conservation easements, through voluntary transactions with landowners. A Parks, Open Space, and Farmland Preservation Expenditure Plan attached to Marin County Ordinance 3586 includes additional information about this Measure A Program and other expenditures allowable under Measure A (see Attachment A; Ordinance 3586 and Expenditure Plan).

Measure A Program matching grant funds support the County Program and are issued in accordance with the Expenditure Plan, Measure A Program grant application materials, and all County Program guiding documentation. The Measure A Program is the funding mechanism for the County Program (see Attachment B; County Program). Each year, any unspent tax revenues will be rolled over for use in the following fiscal year; not to exceed ten years beyond the expiration of Measure A.

Marin County Parks' staff created a competitive grant application process to provide Measure A Program matching funds to qualified land conservation organizations such as the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (see Attachment C; Form of Grant Application). Staff will consider funding requests on a first-come first-served basis and guide applicants through the application process, after which staff will apply the project selection guidelines contained in the County Program (Attachment B, page 3, item VII B) to determine whether to recommend a grant agreement to your board. Final authority to approve a grant agreement and to disburse funds rests with your board (see Attachment D; Grant Agreement form).

Staff expects to present the first funding request to your Board in early May 2014.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no impact to the General Fund. Funding for the matching grants described above is provided by Marin County Ordinance 3586.

REVIEWED BY:

[ ] Dept. of Finance   [ X ] N/A
[ X ] County Counsel   [ ] N/A
[ ] Human Resources   [ X ] N/A

External Affairs Coordinator Kevin Wright is the principal author of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Ronald Miska
Deputy Director

RM:KW:kbl