COUNTY OF MARIN

MARIN COUNTY PARKS
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- OPEN SPACE DISTRICT
- REGIONAL PARKS & PATHWAYS
- COMMUNITY PARKS
- LANDSCAPE SERVICES

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March 13, 2018

Board of Supervisors
3501 Civic Center Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO AUTHORIZE PRESIDENT TO EXECUTE AGREEMENT GRANTING MARIN AGRICULTURAL LAND TRUST $1,731,850 IN MEASURE A FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM FUNDS FOR PURCHASE OF AN AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION EASEMENT OVER MCISAAC RANCH

Dear Board Members:

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Authorize President to execute grant agreement for APN 121-010-07.
2. Authorize an increase of $1,731,850 in Measure A Fund 2560 expenditure appropriations within the Farmland Preservation subprogram (6402) through use of available Measure A Fund balance (2560).

SUMMARY:

Marin County Parks has received an application from Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT) requesting $1,731,850 in Measure A Farmland Preservation Program funds to purchase an agricultural conservation easement over the 527-acre McIsaac Ranch located near the north bank of Nicasio Reservoir, approximately five miles by road from Nicasio. The subject property (Assessor Parcel 121-010-07) is used for commercial agriculture and is currently used for grazing replacement heifers and dairy cattle. The ranch has been leased by the McIsaac family from an absentee landowner for more than 137 years. Protection of the ranch would add to a large swath of permanently protected ranches encompassing approximately 26,507 acres and stretching from Chileno Valley to San Geronimo Valley.

The appraised fair market value of the easement is $3,427,000. MALT's grant request represents fifty percent of the total purchase price plus fifty percent of administrative costs associated with acquisition of the easement. MALT will be contributing the remaining $1,731,850 from its own funds for purchase of the easement.

Ranch properties in West Marin face a very high risk of conversion to exclusive residential development, which increases building density, road construction and other activities that threaten agriculture and natural resource values. The J. McIsaac Ranch is zoned ARP-40, is not yet protected with a Williamson Act contract, and was recently put up for sale and marketed to investors for multi-estate development. A

longtime MALT supporter stepped in and purchased the ranch to allow it to be sold to an agricultural buyer who wishes to sell the property to the McIsaacs so that they can continue their longstanding tradition of ranching on the property. Without the sale of this easement, the McIsaacs will not have the ability to make the purchase, and the ranch could fall into the hands of investors as the current owner is unable to hold the property for an extended period of time.

Staff considers grant applications for funding from the Measure A Farmland Preservation Program on a first-come, first-served basis, and evaluates the merits of proposals based on criteria contained in the Marin County Agricultural Land Conservation Program. The creation of this program was authorized by your board on January 31, 2012. Additionally, as approved by Marin voters in 2012, twenty percent of Measure A funds are mandated to be used for the protection of Marin County farmland at risk of subdivision and development in order to preserve Marin's working farms and ranches.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There will be no increase to General Fund Net County Cost as a result of your Board's actions, as the purchase is fully funded through Measure A Funds. If approved, expenditure appropriations within Measure A, Fund 2560, Farmland Preservation Grant Program, will be increased by $1,731,850 and fully offset by a reduction in available prior year fund balance that is committed for the purpose of farmland preservation (2560-320525).

REVIEWED BY:

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

Senior Open Space Planner Craig Richardson the principal author of this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Chamberlain
Assistant Director