

*October 31, 2024***Subject: Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program Project Award Increase: Bloom Ranch****Reporting Period:** October 2024**Staff Lead:** Shanna Atherton-Bauer, Land Conservation Programs Manager, DOC

Recommended Action

Approve the staff recommendation to allocate an additional \$54,569 to the amount of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program award made in Fiscal Year 2018-19 (Round 5) to California Rangeland Trust because the appraised value came in higher than the awardee's estimated value for the Bloom Ranch conservation easement, as allowed by the Round 5 program guidelines dated Dec. 18, 2018.

Summary

The Round 5 program guidelines, dated Dec. 18, 2018, allow the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC) to award additional funding to a project if the appraised value of a project turns out to be higher than the estimated value provided in the original application. Applicants estimate the easement's value at the time of application and obtain an appraisal of the actual value after award. In some cases, market fluctuations or lack of comparable easement sales in the area can lead to the original estimated value that is too low. This can result in the applicant not having enough funding to complete the easement project. To address this issue, grantees may request an increase in the award amount of up to 5% with approval of SALC program staff, and up to 15% with approval of the Council.

Background

About the SALC Program

The Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) provides grants to fund agricultural conservation easements and local government plans to protect agricultural lands from conversion to more greenhouse-gas-intensive uses.

Background on the Award Increase Process

In FY 2018-19, the SGC awarded \$419,698 to the California Rangeland Trust to purchase an agricultural conservation easement on the 491.36-acre Bloom Ranch. California Rangeland Trust requests a 13%, or \$54,569, increase for the project because the acquisition appraisal was higher than the estimated value in the application.

The original award to California Rangeland Trust for the Bloom Ranch was made based on an estimated easement value of \$491,360, with SALC contributing 75%, or \$369,698. The final appraisal came back at \$735,000, or \$243,640 more than expected.



The ranch, located in Tuolumne County, will permanently protect 491.36 acres of rangeland property. The property consists of rolling hills with a mix of grassland, chaparral, oak woodland, and vernal pools, which provide habitat for wildlife. The property is one of five projects in an area that California Rangeland Trust is actively working to conserve to have a landscape-scale (more than 14,000 acres) conservation impact in the Sierra Nevada Region.

Funding for the increase would come from available non-allocated program funds.

Next Steps

Notify Grantee of the decision and process an amendment to increase the award.

Council Recommendation

Should the Council agree with Staff’s recommendation, the following motion language is suggested:

“I move that the Council approve the consent calendar.”

Attachments

Attachment A: Project Summary