

Date: September 8, 2021

Subject: Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program – Project Award Increase
Yates Ranch

Reporting Period: February 2021 – September 2021

Staff Lead: Virginia Jameson, Department of Conservation

Recommended Action

Approve the staff recommendation to award an additional \$68,175 in SALC funds to the California Rangeland Trust to support the purchase of an agricultural conservation easement on the Yates Ranch.

Summary

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.

The Round 5 program guidelines dated December 18, 2018, allow the Strategic Growth Council to award additional funding to a project in the case that the appraised value of a project turns out to be higher than the estimated value provided in the original application. Applicants estimate the value of the easement at the time of application phase and the appraisal takes place after award. In some cases, market fluctuations or lack of comparable easement sales in the area can lead to the original estimate value that is too low. This can result in the applicant without enough funding to complete the easement project. To address this issue, grantees may request an increase in award amount of up to 5% with approval of SALC program staff, and up to 15% with approval of the Council.

Background

In FY 18-19, the Strategic Growth Council awarded \$454,000 to the California Rangeland Trust to purchase an agricultural conservation easement plus \$50,000 for associated costs on the 505-acre Yates Ranch. California Rangeland Trust requests a 12%, or \$68,175 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 Yates Ranch was made based on an estimated easement value of \$606,000, with SALC contributing 75%, or \$454,500 plus \$50,000 in associated costs for a total grant award of \$504,500. The final appraisal came back at \$710,000. A 12% increase in the award would amount to \$68,175. The balance has been secured by the grantee via Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The project, which is located southeast of Wallace, will permanently protect 505 acres of rangeland property that also provides vernal pool, grassland, blue oak woodland habitat for wildlife. The property utilizes sustainable management practices that help reduce the impact of catastrophic wildfire to nearby communities.

Funding for the increase would come from available non-allocated program funds that have rolled over from previous award rounds.

Staff Recommendation

Approve the staff recommendation to allocate an additional \$68,175 to the amount of the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program award made in FY 18-19 (Round 5) to the California Rangeland Trust because the appraised value is higher than awardee's estimated value of a conservation easement on the Yates Ranch, as specifically allowed by the Round 5 program guidelines dated December 18, 2018.

Attachments

Presentation summary.

