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| <h1 style="margin: 0;">County Of Sonoma</h1> <h2 style="margin: 0;">Agenda Item</h2> <h3 style="margin: 0;">Summary Report</h3> | | | Clerk of the Board Use Only Meeting Date Held Until / / / / |
| | | | Agenda Item No: Agenda Item No: _____ _____ |
| Department: Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District | | | 4/5 Vote Not Required |
| Contact: Sara Press, Associate Open Space Planner | Phone: (707) 565-7360 | Board Date: 11/17/2009 | Deadline for Board Action: |
| AGENDA SHORT TITLE: Riddell Preserve Conservation Easement | | | |
| <p>REQUESTED BOARD ACTION: Resolution of the Board of Directors of the District approving the acceptance of the donation of a conservation easement; determining that the donation of a conservation easement over the 400-acre Riddell Preserve is consistent with the 2020 Sonoma County General Plan; authorizing the execution of a conservation easement; authorizing the execution of a certificate of acceptance; directing the preparation of escrow instructions; and making certain determinations pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act.</p> | | | |
| CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT - None. | | | |
| Explanation (if required): None. | | | |
| Prior Board Action: None. | | | |
| Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval: Do not adopt resolution. The donation of the conservation easement will not occur. | | | |

Background:

NOTE: Conservation Easement, Certificate of Acceptance and Notice of Exemption are on file with the Clerk of the Board.

SUMMARY

The District is proposing to accept the donation of a conservation easement over the 400-acre Riddell Preserve, a parcel owned in fee by LandPaths located in the Dry Creek area west of Healdsburg at 2575 Brack Road. In April 2007, the Riddell family donated the property to LandPaths subject to a series of deed restrictions developed to protect the land forever. One of the deed restrictions requires LandPaths to donate a conservation easement to a qualified land conservation organization within five years of the date of conveyance to LandPaths. In fulfillment of this requirement, LandPaths proposes to donate a conservation easement to the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District.

DISCUSSION

Property Characteristics

The 400-acre property primarily consists of core oak woodland with areas of core coniferous forests, including stands of mature second- and third-growth redwood. There is also open grassland with native bunchgrasses. Habitats on the property include steep ridges, small plateaus and knolls, saddles, seeps and springs. Two intermittent streams on the property drain to Crane Creek, a priority riparian corridor that contains steelhead salmonids. Crane Creek drains to Dry Creek, a priority riparian corridor that contains steelhead, coho, and chinook salmonids. A third stream on the property, Kelley Creek, also drains to Dry Creek. Improvements on the property include one access road, a cabin, a utilities shed, and a storage shed.

Project Significance

Owned by the Riddell family for nearly forty years, the property contains relatively undisturbed woodland and forest. LandPaths is developing the property into a nature-based preserve to enhance and protect forever the natural wild character, native wildlife species, and diverse plant habitats. A portion of the property is within a Scenic Landscape Unit, visible from Dry Creek Road. Additionally, the property drains to the Dry Creek priority riparian corridor.

Attachments:

- 1. Site Location Map
- 2. Resolution

On File With Clerk:

- 1. Conservation Easement
- 2. Certificate of Acceptance
- 3. Notice of Exemption

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than "Requested")

Vote:

Background (continued):

Project Structure

The conservation easement's purpose is to maintain and protect the natural resources on the property, preserve the scenic views, and provide educational opportunities. Educational uses include docent-led hiking, camping, nature study, and enjoyment of open space. One residence is allowed. Additional structures are allowed within limited areas adjacent to the existing access road and cabin as necessary for allowed uses provided they do not impact the natural resources on the property. LandPaths will develop a Restoration and Management Plan for the property, which will be subject to District review and approval prior to implementation.

Connecting Communities and the Land

The Riddell Preserve project fulfills several policies in the Water, Wildlife, and Natural Areas category of the District's Acquisition Plan, including the protection of lands with diverse plant communities that support multiple wildlife species; protection of lands with large, unfragmented oak woodland and forest areas; and protection of lands that are important for supporting healthy aquatic habitat in rivers and streams.

Expenditure Plan Consistency

On September 3, 2009 by Resolution No. 2009-014, the Board of Directors of the Sonoma County Open Space Authority determined that the acceptance of the conservation easement is consistent with the open space designations eligible for protection under the Expenditure Plan.

2020 Sonoma County General Plan

The Riddell Preserve is located in unincorporated Sonoma County and has a Resources and Rural Development zoning designation. The donation meets multiple goals of the Land Use Element and the Open Space and Resource Conservation Element of the 2020 General Plan, including: encouraging conservation of undeveloped land, open space, protection of water and soil quality, restoration of ecosystems, and minimization or elimination of the disruption of existing natural ecosystems and flood plains; protecting and enhancing the County's natural habitats and diverse plant and animal communities; and retaining the largely open, scenic character of important Scenic Landscape Units.

California Environmental Quality Act

The donation of a conservation easement over the Riddell Preserve is Categorically Exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15317 (to maintain open space); and alternatively pursuant to Sections 15325 (a) and (c) (to preserve and restore natural conditions).

Recommendation

The District's Interim General Manager recommends that the Board approves the resolution for the donation of a conservation easement over the Riddell Preserve.