

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

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TO: Commissioners and Alternates

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SUBJECT: Staff Report and Recommendation on Sediment Grant Facilitator Contract
(For Commission consideration on July 20, 2023)

Summary and Recommendations

The staff recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract for facilitation services from The Catalyst Group for \$40,000 to support the Commission's work on the Sediment for Wetlands Adaptation Project (SWAP) funded by a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Wetlands Program Development grant (EPA grant) to increase beneficial sediment and soil reuse for habitat restoration and adaptation in the Bay Area. The contract will fund The Catalyst Group's work over six to eight months with BCDC staff and the project core team to co-design a collaborative stakeholder process, develop a stakeholder workshop, assist in development and review of workshop materials, facilitate the workshop, and assist in development of a Sediment for Wetlands Roadmap following the workshop. The staff further recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to amend the contract as necessary, including revising the amount or duration of the agreement, so long as the amendment does not involve substantial changes to the services provided.

Staff Report

As the Commission is aware, wetlands provide transitional habitat between estuarine waters and uplands, absorb flood waters, and buffer the impact of waves along the shoreline. Human activity caused the loss of approximately 80 percent of the wetlands that once rimmed San Francisco Bay. In the 1990's, the Bay Area mobilized to begin the process of restoring subsided baylands. A portion of the sediment dredged for navigation in the Bay has been beneficially reused to successfully restore the elevation of subsided wetland areas, such that vegetation can quickly establish, but more of this dredged sediment could be used beneficially. Sediment dredged from Bay tributaries and flood protection channels can contribute to restoration of wetlands and be used for other sea level rise adaptation purposes, as can sediment trapped in upper watersheds, behind reservoirs and dams, and soil excavated during construction projects.

In 2021, the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) issued a momentous report, "Sediment for Survival," which estimated that between 450 and 650 million cubic yards of sediment and soil would be required to restore and sustain the Bay's wetlands through 2100. This report further



mobilized stakeholders from different sectors to address this urgent need. The shortage of sediment will have detrimental effects on the region's ability to restore habitats, and the ability of tidal marshes in the Bay to keep pace with sea level rise.

To address the need for sediment and soil to support wetland restoration and climate change resilience in the Bay, Commission staff applied for and was awarded the EPA grant, and a subsequent Ocean Protection Council grant. The grants propose to address regional demands for reuse of sediment and soil in wetland restoration projects through (1) a results chain analysis which will create a coalition of stakeholders with actionable tasks to support additional sediment use at wetland restoration sites, (2) policy improvements in a San Francisco Bay Plan amendment and issue documents, and (3) a financing strategy to support the use of sediment in restoration projects. This three-phase project will occur over a three-year period and outcomes will build on the output from each phase. On March 17, 2022, the Commission voted to accept these funds and undertake the proposed work. This contract is to hire the facilitation and collaborative process team supporting the development of a results chain analysis, a stakeholder workshop, and a Sediment to Wetlands Roadmap.

As part of these grants, Commission staff has created a core project team of partners including SFEI, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture (SFBJV), San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board), and California State Coastal Conservancy (SCC). SFEI and SFBJV are named and funded partners in the EPA grant, providing expertise, consultation, planning, and product and policy advice and review. The Water Board and SCC are contributing staff time to this effort as well, specifically focused on the Results Chain Analysis and helping to prepare a Sediment to Wetlands Roadmap but are not receiving grant funding. Also, part of this effort is a dedicated Commissioner Working Group that will, together with the project core team, explore the regional needs for sediment and soil reuse, potential sources, and mechanisms for connecting the sediment needs to the sources.

The Catalyst Group brings extensive facilitation, collaboration, strategic planning, and stakeholder engagement experience to this project. They also have experience in policy development across a broad array of applicable fields, such as ecosystem restoration, natural resource management, sea level rise, climate adaptation, infrastructure, and flood protection. Their previous projects include the Delta Public Lands Strategy, Sites Reservoir Project Authority, Knightsen Wetlands Restoration Project, Delta Levees Investment Strategy, numerous collaborative negotiations, and other strategic planning processes.

Staff Recommendation

The staff recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract with The Catalyst Group for \$40,000 to work with BCDC staff and the project core team to co-design a collaborative stakeholder process, develop a stakeholder workshop, assist in development and review of workshop materials, facilitate the workshop, and assist in developing a Sediment for Wetlands Roadmap document following the workshop over six to eight months, from August 1, 2023 (or upon approval, whichever is later) through April 15, 2024. The staff further recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to amend the contract as necessary, including revising the amount or duration of the agreement, so long as the amendment does not involve substantial changes to the services provided.

