



STAFF REPORT

To: ESCOG Joint Powers Authority
From: Elaine Kabala, ESCOG Staff
Subject: Contract Amendment No. 1 to CDFW Grant Q2196015 Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Agreement

Meeting date: February 28, 2024

Prepared on: February 21, 2024

Attachments: A) Contract Amendment No. 1 to CDFW Grant Q2196015 Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Agreement

BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

At the February ESCOG meeting, the Board provided direction to staff to request a grant agreement amendment from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to reallocated unspent funding under the current CDFW Proposition 1 grant award to fund additional environmental planning tasks, specifically expansion of the Eastern Sierra Communities and Climate Resiliency Project into the Mono Basin.

Staff has negotiated an amended scope of work and budget with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to accommodate this work.

ANALYSIS:

The amendment proposes to use excess funds to expand the existing scope of work to include early environmental planning tasks toward expanding the ESCCRP (Part I- acres around Mammoth Lakes) northward into adjacent acres in the Mono Basin (ESCCRP Part2). This expansion would effectively double the ESCCRP planning footprint and address additional needs for source water protection and other co-benefits in the Mono Basin, a watershed of substantial environmental significance in the region and for the City of Los Angeles and equally important the homelands of the Mono Lake Kutzadika'a people.

Specifically, this agreement amendment seeks to expand the scope of work in three areas. First, the requested amendment will modify subtask 3.3 – Silvicultural Assessment by specifying the deliverables and shifting completion of the task from the USFS to ESCOG's subcontractor

Whitebark Institute. This amendment with ESCOG's subcontractor Whitebark Institute was previously considered and approved by the ESCOG Board.

Second, the project seeks to expand the footprint of environmental planning beyond the initial study area in the upper Owens Watershed, now 58,000 acres northward to include a significant portion of the western Mono Basin, that could potentially add another 50,000 acres to the ESCCRP Part 2 via a second effort of planning. Land ownership in the Mono Basin differs substantially from the Upper Owens which is dominated by Federal Ownership. There are approximately 10,000 acres of non-federally owned lands that will require CEQA or an equivalent environmental compliance process to advance vegetation management needs to help protect communities and other valuable high value resources in the project area. The expanded scope below begins to address those additional planning needs for the northward expansion to the Mono Basin.

The request includes the addition of two subtasks to accomplish additional planning work: Subtask 3.8 – NEPA pre-development tasks and Subtask 3.9 - CalVTP Supplemental Studies for CEQA compliance. Finally, the amendment requests to extend the project timeline from March 15, 2025 to December 31, 2026 to allow for completion of the expanded scope of work.

There is no budget increase requested as part of this amendment request. All scope expansion items are contingent upon schedule extension. The requested scope of work expansion resulting in delivering CEQA documents for Lee Vining and Mono City is contingent upon a budget increase to both environmental planning tasks and the Inyo National Forest subcontracts. The budget allocation for ESCOG's current subcontractor to provide environmental planning tasks can be accommodated within the Environmental Planning line item, however facilitating the Inyo National Forest's (INF) participation will require shifting \$210,000 from environmental planning to the INF Subcontract line item. This budget shift is necessary to support the development of proposed actions and other federal actions in partnership with INF.

BUDGET IMPACTS:

The amendment extends the terms of the agreement, allowing ESCOG to more fully utilize awarded funds. No increases are proposed by this amendment.

LEGAL REVIEW:

ESCOG Counsel Grace Chuchla has reviewed this item and found that it complies with the law.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the ESCOG Board approve Contract Amendment No. 1 to CDFW Grant Q2196015 Eastern Sierra Pace and Scale Agreement