

American River Ranch Parking Lot
City of Rancho Cordova

\$866,231.00

This proposal is to consider the allocation for a grant to the County of Sacramento for parking lot improvements at the American River Ranch in Sacramento County.

LOCATION

The project area lies within a seven-acre developed recreation land use area of the American River Ranch (Ranch) property, which is situated entirely within the American River Parkway (Parkway). Located in the northwestern half of the City of Rancho Cordova, between Folsom Boulevard and the American River at mile 15 within the Parkway, the 48-acre Ranch is devoted to agriculture, gardens, pasture, and other farm-related activities. Seven acres is devoted to education and interpretation of the Ranch through facilities such as a farm office, staff quarters, and a multi-purpose barn. The Ranch offers a rare combination of natural resources, infrastructure, and activities that help interpret the dynamic interplay between food, personal health, and the environment.

The proposed paved parking lot lies within the footprint of an existing 20,703 square foot unpaved lot, which is the main parking area for the Ranch. During major events, the adjacent field, outside of the Parkway boundaries is used for overflow parking.

At present, Soil Born Farms, a non-profit organization, operates the American River Ranch under lease with the County of Sacramento. The farm grows organic vegetables and fruit serving 80 community-supported agriculture members, stores, restaurants, and farm stands. Soil Born Farms' programs focus on promoting health and providing experiential learning opportunities for youth and adults, producing healthy food, improving access to healthy food for all, and modeling land and environmental stewardship. They also maintain partnerships with three area high schools and their Future Farmers of America programs. Soil Born Farms hosts regular interpretive, educational, and recreational activities including: daily student field trips, summer camps for youth, teacher trainings, community events, classes on environmental stewardship, horticulture, healthy eating for adults, restoration including Cordova Creek as a living laboratory, and agricultural training for beginning farmers. The California Native Plant Society, Sacramento Valley Chapter operates the Elderberry Farms Native Plant Nursery and Demonstration Garden, an all-volunteer native plant nursery, at the Ranch. The nursery hosts weekly volunteer work days and holds bi-annual native plant sales to the public.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The American River Ranch site is the last working ranch on the Lower American River with a history of agriculture dating back to the 1840s. It was purchased along with other property by the County in the formation of the American River Parkway in the 1960s. It was closed to the public up until 2008 when the Parkway Plan was updated. In 2008,

Soil Born Farms signed a lease to operate the American River Ranch and at that time the Ranch was made open to the public. Since then, with Soil Born Farms as Ranch operator, visitor use has increased dramatically. However, no improvements have been made to the one, dirt parking lot serving the site. From no public use in 2007 to an estimated 17,000 visitors in 2017, use of this area of the Parkway has grown dramatically over the last ten years, with no commensurate improvements made to public access. With substantial visitor use during events, in addition to regular, drop-in visitors, the existing, unimproved parking lot is inadequate. Vehicle circulation in the dirt lot causes dust to rise. Any visitor with an ambulatory issue can find it difficult to walk on the uneven surface. During the rainy season, the dirt lot becomes very muddy making access and egress difficult. Individual parking stalls cannot be striped in an unpaved lot making designation of ADA spaces infeasible and circulation inefficient.

The project proposes to pave a 20,703 square foot asphalt parking lot in the footprint of the existing, dirt lot. With paving, patrons with disabilities will gain use of ADA-compliant parking spaces and be able to walk on an even surface. Visitors will no longer experience mud and large puddles during wet winters. The Ranch operator will enjoy a facility that is more durable, resilient, and easier to maintain over the project lifetime. The paved lot is one key element of the American River Ranch Master Plan which guides the development of the facility. This plan was approved in 2014 and was amended into the American River Parkway Plan. Moreover, the parking lot project is essential to not only accommodating the current level of visitor use, but to facilitate expected visitor growth as other facilities in the Master Plan are built out, which includes an interpretive center building, farm kitchen, and barn.

In fiscal year 2015-2016, the City of Rancho Cordova initiated the Chase Drive 1B/Soil Born Farms project which included environmental compliance and design. The parking lot was one component of this larger, corridor project. The proposed parking lot was designed to have 57 paved parking spaces, including three ADA spaces, plantings, and a deer fence. The lot will include several small pedestrian islands that will use permeable pavers. Access to the lot will be controlled by an automatic sliding gate from the proposed American River Ranch Road.

Edible trees and plants are proposed for the lot, as well as native, ornamental plants, they include a Cherry tree, Pecan tree, European Olive tree, Dwarf Pomegranate, Upright Rosemary, Pineapple Guava, French Lavender, Taveres Limquat, and English Thyme. Several decorative plants and seeds are also proposed and will need to be native plants per the American River Parkway Advisory Committee feedback on the project given in 2017.

PROJECT FUNDING

Project Task	WCB Request Cost	Non-WCB Funds	Total Cost
Final Specifications & Permitting	\$75,000.00	\$0.00	\$75,000.00
Community Engagement	\$5,000.00	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
Construction & Inspections	\$778,231.00	\$0.00	\$778,231.00
Project Closure	\$8,000.00	\$0.00	\$8,000.00
Totals	\$866,231.00	\$0.00	\$866,231.00

Project costs will be for final engineer specifications and permitting, early community involvement, preparing and managing bid package, demolition and onsite construction, landscaping by Sacramento Regional Conservation Corps, County inspections, and recordation of as-built drawings.

CONSISTENCY WITH AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY PLAN

American River Parkway Compliance Analysis was completed for the Chase Corridor 1B/Soil Born Farms project and included the parking lot. County staff wrote the analysis based on 65% plans, the most current plans available at that time, and presented it to the Sacramento County Recreation and Park Commission (RPC) on March 23, 2017. The RPC voted for approval of the project with conditions.

A second American River Parkway Compliance Analysis will be completed for the project at the February 28, 2019, PRC meeting, in accordance with Public Resources Code section 5845.5.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff does not recommend this proposal advance to the Wildlife Conservation Board because of the limited funds available under this solicitation and the indication from the applicant that partial funding will not be accepted.

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Proposal #

2018004

Proposal Title:

American River Ranch Parking Lot

Description:

Pave and improve the one, dirt parking lot serving the American River Ranch. With substantial visitor use during events, in addition to regular, drop-in visitors, the existing, unimproved parking lot is inadequate. Vehicle circulation in the dirt lot causes dust to rise. Any visitor with an ambulatory issue can find it difficult to walk on the uneven surface. During the rainy season, the dirt lot becomes very muddy making access and egress difficult. Individual parking stalls cannot be striped in an unpaved lot making designation of ADA spaces infeasible and circulation inefficient. The project proposes to pave a 20,703 square foot asphalt parking lot in the existing location, a designated, proposed facility in the American River Ranch Master Plan (2014). The proposed parking lot will have 57 paved parking spaces, including three ADA spaces, plantings, and a deer fence. The lot will include several small pedestrian islands that will use permeable pavers. Access to the lot will be controlled by an automatic sliding gate from the proposed American River Ranch Road.

Provide Benefits to a Severely Disadvantaged Community?

Yes

Consulted with CCC/CALCC?

Yes. \$28,731.00 of SRCC services in budget.

Will Accept Partial Funding?

No

CEQA Status:

IS/MND filed 6/30/17

Consistent with the American River Parkway Plan?

TBD February 28, 2019

Reviewer Comments:

Reviewer 1:

Public access project that will enhance the condition of parking at the American River Ranch Interpretive Center. American River Parkway Plan (ARPP) amended to include this proposed facility as approved in the American River Ranch Master Plan. Recreation and Parks Commission approved the American River Ranch Master Plan and amended the ARPP, River Bend Area Map to include the parking improvements. Parkway Plan Analysis was conducted previously and presented to the County's Board of Supervisors. Project area within 7 acres of developed recreation land use area. Proposal thoroughly explains benefits to the parkway; improved access for the disabled and for educational programs, better management of area by ranch operator (Soil Born Farms [SBF]), better signage that communicates facilities, opportunities and partners, increased shade for visitors and habitat for wildlife. Parking lot, pedestrian islands, sliding automatic gate, deer fence, and plantings reviewed under the City of Rancho Cordova's

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project titled Chase Drive 1B/Soil Born Farms project. Permits include: CVFPB encroachment permit, hydraulic study (maybe), ACOE 408 review, City of Rancho Cordova grading permit. Permit apps will be submitted should funding be awarded. Any issues with parking lot post-construction, SBF's maintenance manager will address and resolve. SBF employs 28 employees, five of which perform maintenance duties. Sac Regional Parks will maintain site in the event SBF does not renew lease. Proposal does not describe type of maintenance anticipated or if fiscal budget will accommodate improved facility and needed/anticipated maintenance. Pavers being used for the pedestrian islands within the parking lot, which will allow some amount of groundwater infiltration to continue. CALCC work dates on consultation form do not align with Appendix B Timeline, and schedule seems to be a bit ambitious and does not take into account any delays in permitting, or environmental constraints. Budget unclear if plantings, mulch, and soil amendment are part of construction line items. Not sure what the \$60,000 for County inspections includes; Scope of Work does not go into sufficient detail to substantiate this high dollar amount. MND discusses consultations that occurred for AB 52, mitigation measures agreed to include "The City of Rancho Cordova shall retain a qualified archaeologist and invite the consulting tribe to provide a tribal representative to monitor all project ground-disturbing activities at depths greater than 12 inches below the present ground surface." It's unclear if this mitigation measure was accounted for in the budget. However, the MMRP of the MND states that most mitigation measures will be responsibility of the City of Rancho. This could have been recorded as in-kind City match, but it is unclear if City will put this burden on project proponent (County). Numerous letters of support from Native Plant Nursery volunteers and SBF group participants.

Reviewer 2:

Will monitor changes in visitor rates resulting from project; lease requires maintenance; county staff also available for maintenance.

Reviewer 3:

The proposal does not indicate the number of current parking spaces the dirt lot currently provides, the number of days that mud or dust impact use of the parking lot or access to the Soil Born Farms or Eldeberry Farm facilities, whether the ADA spaces could be more effective if they were built closer to the Soil Born Farm buildings or on higher ground, or whether re-grading the dirt parking lot to improve drainage and installing permeable parking surfaces (gravel, others) were considered. The grant proposal indicates the parking lot would be paved, but does not indicate the pavement would be permeable. The plan does include permeable pedestrian paths, but the plan indicates the parking surface would also be permeable. This inconsistency should be resolved or clarified. The proposal describes the benefits that will accrue from the project in general terms, but does not provide a sufficiently clear description of the magnitude of problems the existing situation presents and how much of a difference the project would make in overcoming those problems. It is hard to tell what the increment of benefit the project would provide to the parkway, as compared to existing conditions. The Ranch Master Plan indicates that a natural pond will be included in the project to capture stormwater and the parking lot surface will be permeable. It does not appear these features are actually included in the project. The project does indicate permeable pedestrian paths will be installed, but does not provide specifics as to what extent the paths will enable infiltration or reuse of stormwater. It is likely the stormwater benefits of the pedestrian paths will be minimal if those paths are to function for pedestrian uses unless specific stormwater infiltration features are included. The most compelling part of the project is increased ADA access. It is not clear from the proposal whether better ADA access could be provided by adding the three ADA parking spots on a smaller paved area on the higher elevation ground closer to the Soil Born Farms barn and achieving sufficient mitigation of dust and mud by re-grading the parking lot and

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possibly adding drainage piping and gravel of other materials at significant cost savings. These comments are not meant to question the project design the County and Soil Born Farms choose to pursue, but rather to evaluate whether this is a cost-effective investment of LARCP funds given the expense of the project and the project’s relative benefits. It would also be helpful to know if the project will result in more parking spaces. The County and the City of Rancho Cordova are well qualified to implement this project.

Reviewer 4:
None.

Project Location: City of Rancho Cordova		Funds Requested: \$866231	
Applicant: Sacramento County		Match Funds: \$0	
Project Type: Planning & Implementation		Total Project Cost: \$866231	
Average Score: 77.38			
Technical Review Scores			
Reviewer 1: 82	Reviewer 2: 80	Reviewer 3: 64.5	Reviewer 4: 83