

American River Ranch Parking Lot Phase II
City of Rancho Cordova, Sacramento County

\$367,231.00

This proposal is to consider the allocation for a grant to Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks (Regional Parks) for Phase II of the American River Ranch Parking Lot project (Project) in Sacramento County.

LOCATION

The Project area lies within a seven-acre Developed Recreation 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 are 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.

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 workdays 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 Parkway in the 1960s. It was closed to the public until 2008 when the American River Parkway Plan was updated. In 2008, Soil Born Farms signed a lease to operate the 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. From 2008 when public use was initiated at the site, to an estimated 17,000 visitors in 2017, use of this area of the Parkway has grown dramatically over the last ten years.

In response to this popularity and the need to improve access to the Ranch, Regional Parks applied for funding under the August 2018 Proposal Solicitation Notice for the Lower American River Conservancy Program (LARCP) to make improvements to the existing, dirt parking lot. That proposal was recommended for funding by the LARCP Advisory Committee, but with reduced cost and scope of activities due to funding limitations of the grant cycle.

In August 2019, the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) approved the initial phase (Phase I) of the American River Ranch Parking Lot project. Phase I was created to grade and place gravel over the existing 20,703 square foot dirt parking lot, construct curbs and pedestrian pavers, grade and hydroseed a bioswale, construct permanent deer fencing, install an irrigation system, and place project partner signs onsite. The Phase I grant will help resolve problems with the existing dirt parking lot and provides independent utility to Regional Parks and the thousands of visitors to the site.

Following the award of the initial Phase I project, the current Project proposes a Phase II to install asphalt paving on the 20,703 square foot gravel parking lot, stripe 57 parking stalls including three Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant parking stalls, landscape the parking lot with native plants and nonnative edible plants grown for agriculture, and plant the bioswale with native vegetation to improve contaminant removal and infiltration. To the extent feasible, this Phase II would be sequenced to occur immediately following Phase I to gain cost savings on final designs, competitive bidding and construction.

Long-term management of the parking lot will be the responsibility of Soil Born Farms as it lies within their leased premises. If Soil Born Farms fails to perform maintenance duties, or should they choose not to renew their lease in the future, Regional Parks will become responsible for the Project’s maintenance, as landowner.

PROJECT FUNDING

Project Task	WCB	Non-WCB Funds*	Total Cost
Project Management	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$12,000
Final Specs & Permitting	\$45,000	\$0	\$45,000
Construction	\$283,231	\$5,500	\$288,731
Inspections & Project Close	\$34,000	\$14,000	\$48,000
Total	\$367,231	\$26,500	\$393,731

Project costs will be for project management, final engineer specifications and permitting, construction, landscaping, inspections and construction management.

* Non-WCB funds include in-kind contributions from Regional Parks.

CONSISTENCY WITH AMERICAN RIVER PARKWAY PLAN

American River Parkway Compliance Analysis was completed for the Chase Corridor1B/Soil Born Farms project, which included the current Project parking lot, on March 23, 2017. County staff wrote the analysis based on 65% plans, the most current plans available at that time, and presented it to the Regional Parks’ Recreation and Park Commission (RPC). The RPC voted for approval of the project with conditions,

including all plants used in planting plan must be native to the Parkway, aside from edible plants. A second American River Parkway Compliance Analysis was completed for the project, specifically for Phase I, on February 28, 2019, in accordance with Public Resources Code Section 5845.5 and the RPC provided a preliminary finding that the proposed project is consistent with the American River Parkway Plan at 65% drawings.

A third American River Parkway Compliance Analysis will be completed for the Project at the November 2019 RPC meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Advisory Committee of the Lower American River Conservancy Program recommend this project as proposed and recommend WCB staff present this project to the Wildlife Conservation Board for approval at a 2020 Board meeting.