

**MEMORANDUM
DEPARTMENT OF FACILITY SERVICES
COUNTY OF PLACER**

To: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Date: JUNE 8, 2010

From: JD JAMES DURFEE / MARK RIDEOUT

Subject: NATURE EDUCATION FACILITIES GRANT – HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK

ACTION REQUESTED / RECOMMENDATION: Adopt a Resolution authorizing the Department of Facility Services to submit an application for grant funds in the amount of \$5,154,080 to the Proposition 84 Nature Education Facilities Grants Program funded by the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, and designate the Director of Facility Services as agent of the County to execute all documents necessary to complete the grant contract for the Nature Education Center at Hidden Falls Regional Park.

BACKGROUND: The County-owned 1,200-acre Hidden Falls Regional Park (Hidden Falls) is located west of Auburn, east of Lincoln and Sheridan, and north of the Ophir/Newcastle area. This property was assembled through two separate acquisitions, in 2003 and 2004, to support goals of the County's Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program. The Legacy Program was adopted by your Board in June 2000, and contains specific implementation measures for the Sheridan/Garden Bar Area, including: "create nature centers and interpretive trails to educate the public about agricultural operations, oak woodlands, vernal pools, creeks and grasslands."

In November 2006, California voters approved the Proposition 84 Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coast Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Prop 84). A portion of proceeds from the Prop 84 bond issuance, totaling \$93 Million, is designated for the Nature Education Facilities Grant Program (NEF Grant). To gather input on nature education facility needs in Placer County, the Parks Division convened the Hidden Falls Nature Education Forum (Forum). Members of the Forum include educators representing local school districts, Placer County Resource Conservation District, Placer Nature Center, Placer Land Trust, Maidu/Washoe and United Auburn Indian Community tribal representatives, Sierra Nevada Conservancy, REI Inc Outdoor School, Boy Scouts, California Conservation Corps, California Native Plant Society, and the Folsom Auburn Trail Riders Action Coalition.

Through a series of meetings held earlier this year, the Forum identified a variety of unmet educational needs, and staff worked with design consultants to define the features of a facility for Hidden Falls. The proposed project includes a 6,000 square foot nature education building with a commercial kitchen and classroom facilities, parking facilities and road improvements to enhance public access, overnight bunkhouses to accommodate school groups, self guided nature trails, interpretive kiosks and signage, and various outdoor gathering and learning areas. Reception to the center has been enthusiastic, particularly given the unique opportunity for overnight programs at Hidden Falls. As a result of this process, the Parks Division recommends that the County apply for a \$5,154,080 NEF Grant to construct a Nature Education Center and related facilities at Hidden Falls.

Staff determined that the County could make a very competitive grant application, in part because of the completed environmental permitting for Hidden Falls. On January 28, 2010, the Planning Commission took action to certify the Hidden Falls Environmental Impact Report and approve the Conditional Use Permit. These documents permit improvement of the next phase of Hidden Falls (979 acres), with project descriptions including the Nature Education Center, completion of the 30-mile public trail network, and additional public vehicle parking on the western side of the property. The majority of funding for the trail network, bridges and restrooms is in place, and staff projects a public opening of this remaining area of Hidden Falls in 2012.

The current funding structure for maintenance and improvements at Hidden Falls relies heavily on volunteer labor. Groups that regularly provide large numbers of individuals include the Boy Scouts, Folsom Auburn Trail Riders Action Coalition, LDS Church, REI Inc, and Sun City Lincoln Hills Hiking Club. The nature education center facilities could house volunteer groups for multi-day work events. As stated in the NEF Grant application, the County will not fund or conduct nature education programs. The grant would permit the County to provide a facility in which other organizations can offer these programs. Through ongoing discussions with Forum members and other local partners, Parks staff continues to facilitate their planning and development of nature education programming that could be delivered at the facility. Applications for the NEC Grant are due July 1, 2010, and if the County's application is successful, the grant contract performance period will end on June 30, 2017. Your Board's adoption of a Resolution is required to authorize the application for the NEC Grant funds.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE: Adoption of this Resolution by definition does not constitute a project as defined by Section 15378(b)(4&5) of the Public Resource Code. If successful, funds expended under the project description in this grant application would be consistent with the Hidden Falls Regional Park Project Environmental Impact Report certified by the Planning Commission on January 28, 2010.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact to the County when applying for the grant funds. If successful, \$5,154,080 in NEC Grant proceeds would entirely fund the design and construction of the Nature Education Center, and a portion of the staff time required to administer the grant. The NEC Grant would also pay for supporting amenities, including the parking facilities and on-site road improvements, which the County would otherwise ultimately construct on the property – a savings of approximately \$1.3 million. In order to minimize the impact on the General Fund, Parks will continue to utilize volunteer workers, and establish a fee structure to recover a portion of the operations and maintenance cost associated with the Nature Education Center. No County match funding is required for this grant.

ATTACHMENT: RESOLUTION

JD:MR:AF

CC: COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Before the Board of Supervisors
County of Placer, State of California

In the matter of: A RESOLUTION
APPROVING THE APPLICATION FOR
NATURE EDUCATION FACILITY PROGRAM FUNDS
FROM THE SAFE DRINKING WATER, WATER QUALITY
AND SUPPLY, FLOOD CONTROL, RIVER AND
COASTAL PROTECTION BOND ACT OF 2006
FOR THE HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK
NATURE EDUCATION CENTER

Resol. No: _____
Ord No: _____
First Reading: _____

The following RESOLUTION was duly passed by the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer at a regular meeting held _____, 2010 by the following vote on roll call:

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Signed and approved by me after its passage.

Attest:

Chairman, Board of Supervisors

Clerk of said Board

WHEREAS, the State Department of Parks and Recreation has been delegated the responsibility by the Legislature of the State of California for the administration of the Nature Education Facilities Program, setting up necessary procedures governing the Application; and

WHEREAS, said procedures established by the State Department of Parks and Recreation require the applicant to certify by Resolution the approval of application(s) before submission of said application(s) to the State; and

WHEREAS, the applicant will enter into a contract with the State of California to complete the HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK NATURE EDUCATION CENTER PROJECT;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Placer hereby: Approves the filing of an application for the HIDDEN FALLS REGIONAL PARK NATURE EDUCATION CENTER PROJECT and

1. Certifies that said applicant has or will have available, prior to commencement of any work on the project included in this application, the sufficient funds to complete the project should this grant be awarded; and

2. Certifies that the applicant has or will have sufficient funds to operate and maintain the project; and
3. Certifies that the applicant has reviewed, understands, and agrees to the General Provisions contained in the contract shown in the Grant Administration Guide; and
4. Certifies that this project is consistent with the applicable city or county, or appropriate planning document, as the case may be; and
5. Delegates the authority to the Director of Facility Services to conduct all negotiations, sign and submit all documents, including, but not limited to applications, agreements, amendments, and payment requests, which may be necessary for the completion of the project; and
6. Agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, ordinances, rules, regulations and guidelines.