



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:16-4016

Agenda Item Number: 13.

Agenda Date: 8/4/2016

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Parks and Recreation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Xavier Urrutia

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

Edwards Aquifer Protection Program - Conservation Easement Acquisition for Bludworth Ranch

SUMMARY:

This ordinance authorizes payment in the amount of \$2,339,409.96 to Chicago Title Insurance Company as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement, due diligence and closing costs on an approximate 1,713-acre tract of land known as the Bludworth Ranch located in Uvalde County, Texas for the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program, a Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue funded Project as approved by voters in November 2010. This ordinance also authorizes the execution of necessary documents to accomplish said acquisition.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The purpose of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Program is to obtain property rights by fee simple purchase, conservation easements or donations of land over the sensitive zones of the Edwards Aquifer. This program was initiated in May 2000 when voters approved Proposition 3, a 1/8-cent sales tax venue up to \$45 million for the acquisition of lands over the Edwards Aquifer for parks and watershed protection. Proposition 3 ran from 2000 through 2005 and was limited to Bexar County.

The Proposition 1 program is an extension of the initial voter-approved Edwards Aquifer protection endeavor and was extended by voters in 2010 and renewed again in 2015. Due to a change in the state legislation the scope was narrowed to watershed protection and activities expanded outside of Bexar County.

The proposed purchase of a conservation easement on the Bludworth Ranch is located over the Recharge Zone in Uvalde County. This property initially was identified through use of the Scientific Evaluation Team's GIS Spatial Model and subsequent site visits identified previously undocumented faults and other favorable recharge features on the property. The Bludworth Ranch largely exists outside of the flood plain and is located entirely within the Sabinal River drainage basin which is an important recharge contributor to the Edwards Aquifer. Approximately one mile of the Sabinal River runs through the western boundary of the ranch, and the property significantly contributes to surface water recharge due to the number of faults along the river. The Edwards Aquifer Authority issued a geological assessment of the site confirming that preservation of the Bludworth Ranch would provide both high water quality and quantity benefits for the City of San Antonio. This ranch is adjacent to other Edwards Aquifer protected properties and would result in the protection of over 4,100 acres of contiguous land within the Sabinal River watershed.

ISSUE:

This ordinance authorizes payment in the amount of \$2,339,409.96 to Chicago Title Insurance Company as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement including due diligence and closing costs on a 1,713-acre tract of land known as the Bludworth Ranch located in Uvalde County, Texas. The Conservation Advisory Board has reviewed and recommended the acquisition of this conservation easement. Acquisition of this property is consistent with policy for implementation of the Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project as approved by voters in November 2010. Inclusion of the Bludworth Ranch would increase the total of protected lands under the City's aquifer protection program by approximately 1,713 acres.

ALTERNATIVES:

An alternative would be to defer acquisition until a later date subject to the property owner's willingness to sell real estate interests and future market conditions. Additionally, other properties could be targeted for acquisition foregoing this conservation easement and losing the high water quality and quantity benefits and the opportunity to add to the contiguous acreage of land already under protection in the Sabinal River watershed.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This acquisition is a one-time expenditure in the amount of \$2,339,409.96. Funds for the acquisition of this conservation easement have been appropriated through Proposition 1 of the Edwards Aquifer Protection Sales Tax fund included in the FY 2016-2021 Adopted Annual Capital Budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the acquisition of a conservation easement on this 1,713-acre tract of land known as the Bludworth Ranch for a total of \$2,339,409.96 under the Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project.

The Contracts Disclosure Form required by the Ethics ordinance is attached.