



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:18-1476

Agenda Item Number: 9.

Agenda Date: 2/8/2018

In Control: City Council A Session

DEPARTMENT: Parks and Recreation

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Xavier D. Urrutia

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

Edwards Aquifer Protection Program - Conservation Easement Acquisition for Dripstone Ranch

SUMMARY:

Consideration of an ordinance authorizing payment in the amount of \$7,961,503.10 to Alamo Title Company as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement, due diligence and closing costs on the Dripstone Ranch, a 1,891.71 acre tract of land located over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone in Uvalde County.

This action 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 or conservation easements 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 2005 Proposition 1 program was an extension of the initial voter-approved Edwards Aquifer protection endeavor and was extended by voters in 2010 and renewed again in 2015. Changes in state legislation allowed watershed protection activities to expand outside of Bexar County.

The proposed purchase of a conservation easement on the Dripstone Ranch tract is located over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone in Uvalde County. The property was initially identified through use of the Scientific Evaluation Team's GIS Spatial Model and subsequent site visits identified favorable recharge features on the

properties which are located within prioritized watersheds. The Dripstone Ranch is located within the Frio River drainage basin which, combined with numerous caves, faults, and fractures, contribute to significant recharge of the Edwards Aquifer. The Edwards Aquifer Authority issued a geological assessment of the properties confirming that preservation of the Dripstone Ranch would provide very high water quantity and high water quality benefits for the City of San Antonio. Additionally, this particular property is the 23rd highest ranking property within the Scientific Evaluation Team's GIS Spatial Model out of 1,292 ranked properties.

If approved, inclusion of this property will increase the total protected lands under the City's aquifer protection program by approximately 1,891.71 acres for a total of 151,017 acres.

ISSUE:

This ordinance authorizes payment in the amount of \$7,961,503.10 to Alamo Title Company as escrow agent for title on a conservation easement, due diligence and closing costs on a 1,891.71-acre tract of land known as the Dripstone Ranch located in Uvalde County, Texas.

Acquisition of this property is consistent with policy for implementation of the Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project as approved by voters. The City Council-appointed Conservation Advisory Board reviewed and recommended the acquisition of these conservation easements at the November 29, 2017 meeting.

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 very high water quality and high quantity benefits and the opportunity to protect additional acreage within the Frio River watersheds.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This acquisition is a one-time expenditure in the amount of \$7,961,503.10. Funds for the acquisition of this conservation easement have been appropriated through Proposition 1 of the Edwards Aquifer Land Acquisition - 2015 Venue Projects fund included in the FY 2018 - 2023 Capital Improvements Program.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the acquisition of a conservation easement on the 1,891.71-acre tract of land known as the Dripstone Ranch for a total of \$7,961,503.10 under the Proposition 1 Edwards Aquifer Protection Venue Project.

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