



Board Agenda Item 41

DATE: November 4, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBMITTED BY: Steven E. White, Director
Department of Public Works and Planning

SUBJECT: Retroactive MOU and Landowner Access Agreement with Sierra Resource Conservation District (SRCD)

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

- 1. Approve and authorize the Chairman to execute a Retroactive Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Sierra Resource Conservation District (SRCD) for projects at County parks including but not limited to enhancement, habitat restoration, and conservation, effective September 9, 2025, until terminated with 60 days written notice by either party.**
- 2. Retroactively approve and authorize the Director of Public Works and Planning to sign the Landowner Access Agreement to allow SRCD to utilize State Wildlife Conservation Board funds for habitat restoration at China Creek Park and future SRCD projects requiring Landowner Access Agreements.**

Approval of the first recommended action will allow the County and SRCD to enter into an MOU agreement, which provides SRCD the ability to utilize County park spaces to focus on natural resources and conservation activities. Additionally, approval of the second recommended action, will allow for the execution of the Landowner Access Agreement. With the Landowner Access Agreement, SRCD can begin working on proposed projects and expend State grant funds at China Creek Park to promote land, air, and water conservation practices, including but not limited to habitat restoration by enhancing existing habitat, restoring and establishing native vegetation, removing invasive species, and developing and implementing a park management plan. China Creek Park is an undeveloped park, and the County provides minimal maintenance, and no habitat restoration projects at this site. Maintenance is currently being done by the Sequoia Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) through an MOU, but they have minimal funding to provide proposed enhancements. This item pertains to a location in District 5.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION(S):

Your Board may choose not to approve the recommended actions. If not approved, SRCD will not be able to utilize grant funds for habitat restoration at China Creek Park. The County will forego approximately \$100,000 of state grant funds for proposed habitat restoration projects. Future projects with SRCD will not be possible without an established MOU, further preventing acceptance of funding and resource opportunities through SRCD. County park spaces will not be enhanced through these opportunities.

RETROACTIVE AGREEMENT:

This MOU and the Landowner Access Agreement are retroactive due to the need for SRCD to begin expending grant money on projects in China Creek Park before the expiration of those grants and the time

needed to bring this item to your Board according to agenda deadlines.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no expected Net County Cost associated with the recommended actions. SRCD will utilize funding from the State Wildlife Conservation Board - Climate Resilience Through Habitat Restoration grant program. SRCD will continue to seek out additional grant opportunities for future projects at County park spaces.

DISCUSSION:

SRCD is a Special District of the State of California with a focus on natural resources and conservation activities operating within its District boundaries inside of Fresno County. SRCD has been seeking suitable public spaces to invest State and Federal conservation funding to achieve the greatest public benefit. The purpose of SRCD is to conserve land, air, and water resources, and their mission is to take resources and coordinate them at the local level to meet the present and future needs of the local land user.

The Department of Public Works and Planning, Resources Division, Parks Unit (Department), has a responsibility for maintenance, safety, land management planning and operations, to meet standards for public safety and access. The Department has resource constraints for enhancing and maintaining public park spaces. The Department and SRCD have shared interests and objectives related to the conservation of natural resources, land management, and public access of natural spaces within Fresno County. The Department and SRCD desire to move forward towards exploring opportunities to work together for development and long-term impact for the protection and enhancement of County park spaces.

SRCD has secured a grant through the State Wildlife Conservation Board and has expressed interest in partnering with the County and other stakeholders to utilize state grant funds at China Creek Park for habitat restoration. Proposed projects include, but are not limited to, invasive species removal, fire fuel reduction including prescribed burns, cultural/ceremonial burns, installation of wildlife friendly fencing, installation of educational and directional signage, education and outreach, and park management and grazing management plan development. Available grant funds for these projects are approximately \$100,000; funding that otherwise would not be appropriated to China Creek Park through the annual budget requests. SRCD has also expressed interest in applying for future State and Federal grant funding opportunities and utilizing County park spaces as locations for grant implementation. Determination of projects to be carried out at County parks will be jointly decided by the Department, SRCD, various stakeholders, and may be subject your Board's approval depending on project significance. Future compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and/or National Environmental Policy Act will be the responsibility of SRCD.

The Department currently has an active MOU with CNPS for maintenance of China Creek Park, established in January 2018. SRCD will work closely with the Department, CNPS, and other stakeholders to implement a habitat restoration program and maintenance plan. CNPS is fully in support of working collaboratively with SRCD and welcomes the resources and funding SRCD can provide.

The Department has chosen not to use the standard commercial general liability insurance requirements of \$2,000,000 per occurrence and annual aggregate of \$4,000,000 recommended by County Risk Department. The Department is allowing limits of \$1,000,000/\$2,000,000, as the Department believes it to be sufficient for the type of services SRCD will be providing. Additionally, the professional liability insurance will be waived as SRCD will not be providing professional or specialized services requiring such insurance coverage.

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

BAI # 48, January 23, 2018

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED AND/OR ON FILE:

On file with Clerk - MOU with Sierra Resource Conservation District
On file with Clerk - Landowner Access Agreement

CAO ANALYST:

Maria Valencia