TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES
DATE: JULY 22, 2002 CMR: 339:02
SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RENEWAL OF AN AGREEMENT WITH ACTERRA FOR STEWARDSHIP OF THE ARASTRADERO PRESERVE

RECOMMENDATION:
Staff recommends that Council approve the renewal of a five-year agreement with Acterra for the stewardship of the Arastradero Preserve.

BACKGROUND
On March 11, 1996, Council adopted a five-point plan for the management of the Arastradero Preserve, and gave direction to staff to explore opportunities for leveraging City resources to ensure future maintenance and oversight of the Preserve. This direction included:
1. Explore the possibility of a public/private stewardship;
2. The removal of all existing building structures;
3. Restoration of habitat in the areas where the structures were located;
4. Explore the potential for a new modest facility as a gateway to the Preserve;
5. Create a mechanism to allow funding for some or all elements of the Preserve Management Plan.

On May 13, 1996, Council approved the Arastradero Preserve project work plan (CMR:253:96). One element of the work plan addressed the development of the concept of a public/private partnership for stewardship of the Preserve. On November 12, 1996, Council approved the Arastradero Preserve Management Plan and the concept of a stewardship agreement (CMR:423:96). On April 28, 1997 Council approved a five-year contract with Bay Area Action to act as the steward of the Preserve and to implement action steps of the Arastradero Management Plan (CMR:199:97). The approved agreement included a clause providing for the renewal of the agreement for an additional five-year period if the performance of the steward was satisfactory. In 2000 Bay Area Action merged with the Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation to become a new organization named Acterra.
**DISCUSSION**

In the past five years, Acterra has faithfully pursued all of the goals of the Preserve Management Plan. It has consistently exceeded its objectives in terms of volunteer hours donated, number of acres of weeds controlled and number of miles of trail kept clear and accessible by the public.

Using the donated labor of 350 volunteers, Acterra coordinated the demolition of the house, barn and other structures on the Preserve during July and August 1997. The materials from those structures were salvaged for reuse on other buildings, including the Preserve gateway facility.

After building structures were removed from the former house site, Acterra immediately set about restoring the site to native oak grassland habitat. Soil under the buildings was extensively conditioned with mulch and natural nutrients. Volunteers spread and worked into the soil more than 1,400 cubic yards of mulch and planted over 1,000 valley oak and coast live oak acorns. Although many of the acorns were eaten by wildlife, by March 1999 hundreds of oak seedlings sprouted and were protected with wire cages or tree tubes.

Since the site restoration project began, student volunteers from Gunn and Palo Alto High Schools, coordinated by Acterra, have donated more than 4,000 hours of labor in collecting and sowing native grass seeds. This directed-study program has given students the opportunity to learn about wildlife habitat, preserving local bio-diversity and methods for propagating native grasses and oaks.

Acterra has also annually mapped both native California grasses and invasive weeds throughout the 609-acre Preserve in order to evaluate the effectiveness of various control methods and to monitor the spread of both weeds and nurtured native plant stands.

Restoration efforts have been so successful at the former house site and in other areas of the Preserve, the Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation awarded Acterra a *[Business Environmental Award]* at the Foundation’s annual ceremony November 12, 1999.

Acterra, together with park rangers, continues to investigate effective methods of eradication and control of vast stands of invasive weeds in meadow areas of the Preserve. The effects of different methods of grazing, systematic mowing and black-tarp solar soil sterilizing continue to be monitored for long-term control of non-native, invasive plants.
RESOURCE IMPACT
$35,000 for the first year of the new five-year Stewardship agreement with Acterra, including basic restoration activities, has been funded by the Arastra Fund of the Peninsula Community Foundation. An additional $10,000 for trail work will be funded by the operational budget of the Open Space Division of the Community Services Department. This amount includes $5,000 in contingency funds for unforeseen habitat restoration or trail maintenance projects that may or may not be spent. Subsequent years of the agreement will be funded entirely by the Community Services, Open Space operations budget. Acterra proposes to continue utilizing donations, grant funding and money obtained through fundraisers to augment funds from the City for stewardship expenses.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:
The proposal to have a nonprofit organization continue to serve as the Preserve steward to assist the City in the accomplishment of the goals of the Management Plan is consistent with Council direction and represents an extension to the City’s previous use of volunteers.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:
The Stewardship Agreement represents a continuation of the same use of existing facilities; therefore, it carries a Class I facility exemption under Section 15301 of CEQA.

ATTACHMENTS:
Attachment A       Stewardship Agreement

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