

**Metropolitan Domestic Water Improvement District  
Board of Directors Meeting**

**May 13, 2019**

**Authorizing Activities Related to Vegetation on  
Certain State Trust Lands to Support the  
Northwest Recharge, Recovery and Delivery System**

**Synopsis**

The Board of Directors is requested to authorize the General Manager to submit payment of \$20,874.21 to the Arizona State Land Department based on the total valuation of vegetation affected by the three well sites and associated collector pipelines / access roads located on State Trust Lands and to engage the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society to permit, tag, collect and transplant protected plants from these areas.

**Background**

Metro Water District (District), the Town of Marana, and the Town of Oro Valley store water underground or utilize groundwater savings facilities in the north Marana area. To use this water, the three entities (Partners) have entered into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to construct the Northwest Recharge, Recovery, and Delivery System (NWRDRS), to transport water from north Marana to meet current and future water demands in the north area of the Tucson Basin.

To recover and construct recovery wells for its recharged water resources, the District acquired easements for three well sites located on Arizona State Land Department (ASLD) property. In February 2019, the Partners executed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) 19002 to authorize the District, as Operating Agent, to proceed with a Native Plant Inventory and Assessment on the three recovery well sites located on State Trust Lands. This work is necessary to advance the Exploratory Wells and the Recovery Wells.

**Issues**

As authorized by MOA19002, the District utilized its as-needed consultant, WestLand Resources, Inc. (WestLand), to count and assess existing protected native plants within the projected areas of disturbance associated with the development of the three test well sites and associated access/pipeline routes located on Arizona State Trust Lands. In accordance with ASLD instructional memos, a valuation of the vegetation was developed.

The total valuation of vegetation affected by the three well sites and associated collector pipelines/access roads is \$20,874.21. Per the IGA and MOA 19003, the Town of Oro Valley will reimburse the District for 50% of the cost.

In addition to paying a fee to disturb affected vegetation based on the ASLD formula-based valuation (also called the “stumpage” fee), ASLD provides options for the disposition of protected native plants. These include:

1. Transplant all protected species onto adjacent State Trust land and irrigate to ensure at least 75% survival after three years;
2. Provide the Arizona Department of Administration (ADOA) with a copy of the protected plant inventory and request ADOA to notify nurseries of available plants for sale; or
3. Transplant protected plants onto private land or leave them on site.

Due to the anticipated cost and time constraints of options 1 and 2, District staff contacted the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society (TCSS) regarding option 3. At no cost to the project or liability to ASLD or the District, TCSS would obtain the necessary permit and tags from the ADOA, and would collect and transplant protected plants. In discussion with TCSS, this process is expected to take approximately three weeks. Option 3 is considered to be the most cost-effective method to salvage plants without additional budgetary impacts and was approved by the Partners as part of MOA 19003.

The cost to allow the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society to permit, tag and salvage plants is \$0.00.

The Fiscal Year 2019 budget includes funding for land acquisitions for NWRDSD.

### **Staff Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board of Directors authorize the General Manager to submit payment of \$20,874.21 to the Arizona State Land Department based on the total valuation of vegetation affected by the three well sites and associated collector pipelines/access roads located on State Trust Lands. It is also recommended that the General Manager be authorized to engage the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society to permit, tag, collect and transplant protected plants from the three well sites and collector pipelines/access roads located on State Trust Lands.

### **Suggested Motion**

I move to authorize the General Manager to submit payment of \$20,874.21 to the Arizona State Land Department based on the total valuation of vegetation affected by the three well sites and associated collector pipelines/access roads located on State Trust Lands and to authorize the General Manager to engage the Tucson Cactus and Succulent Society to permit, tag, collect and transplant protected plants from the three well sites and collector pipelines / access roads located on State Trust Lands.

Respectfully submitted,

I concur with the above-noted recommendation.  
Respectfully submitted,

Sheila M. Bowen, P.E.  
District Engineer

Joseph Olsen, P.E.  
General Manager