

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 20, 2020
To: Board of Directors, California Exposition & State Fair
Via: Rick K. Pickering, Chief Executive Officer
From: Tom Martinez, Chief Deputy General Manager
Subject: Presentation – Proposed Bushy Lake Conceptual Restoration Plan

BACKGROUND

Professor Michelle Stevens from California State University Sacramento (Sacramento State) has applied for a \$375,000 grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board to provide for the development of a draft conceptual plan for Bushy Lake Habitat and Education. This grant application is currently before the Wildlife and Conservation Board for consideration and approval. In order to be approved for the grant the applicant, Professor Stevens, must obtain the permission of the property owner. Professor Stevens is seeking a letter of support from the California Exposition & State Fair Board of Directors for her application.

Bushy Lake is located within the Lower American River Parkway on Cal Expo property. In accordance with the Bushy Lake Preservation Act of 1976, Cal Expo coordinates with the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks to maintain the area. Included in area maintenance is Cal Expo's obligations to provide 50,000,000 gallons of pumped ground water into Bushy Lake to keep it viable. This 50,000,000 gallons represents more than 1/3rd of the 140,000,000 gallons of ground water pumped by Cal Expo each year.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Professor Stevens describes the objective of her project as creating a Conceptual Restoration Plan for Bushy Lake with the following goals:

1. Protect, enhance, and restore a sustainable refuge for western pond turtles
2. To enhance habitat for fire resilient native flora and fauna; and
3. Enhance the education and interpretation of resources in the Parkway, specifically showcasing tribal cultural use of the Parkway.

STAKEHOLDERS

After being made aware of the grant application, Cal Expo provided a letter to the Wildlife Conservation Board of February 13, 2020 to advise them of the planned widening of the freeway adjacent to Bushy Lake.

The California Department of Transportation (Cal Trans) is currently undertaking the required environmental review related to its planned widening of State Route 51 (Capital City Freeway.) According to Cal Trans this is the most congested corridor in the Sacramento Region. The project calls for widening the freeway and the American River Bridge to accommodate and bus/carpool lane, an auxiliary lane, and a Class 1 bike path. This portion of Business 80 sees more incidents each year than all the Sacramento Region freeways combined. Consequently, this widening is critical to providing safe transportation for thousands of people travelling to their homes, jobs, schools, appointments, and more. Given Cal Expo's proximity in relation to the freeway, Cal Trans has requested a portion of Cal Expo's developed property (north of the levee) to serve as a possible staging site for the construction contractor.

Since Cal Trans' freeway-widening project will need to access and traverse the Lower American River Parkway near Bushy Lake, Cal Expo's February 13th letter respectfully recommended that the work the grant provides for be postponed until Cal Trans completes work in this area.

On February 21, 2020, Cal Expo and Cal Trans staff met with Professor Stevens to learn more about her project and its projected footprint. Also in attendance at the site visit were representative of the County of Sacramento Regional Parks and representatives of the Wildlife Conservation Board. Professor Stevens has requested to make a presentation to the Cal Expo Board on her grant application.

UPDATES

On April 16, 2020, Cal Expo staff met with a representative from CSU Sacramento about some of the concerns surrounding the bushy lake project. Some of the details we discussed included: increased/improved communication, reducing the borders of the project, and making sure the relationship is mutually beneficial.

Communication

Currently, there has been little communication between Cal Expo and Professor Stevens about accessing the property and other needs. The Cal Expo staff made clear that better communication is necessary in order for this potential partnership to move forward. For example, communication would include prior/proactive notice before accessing the property with all the necessary details including if students will be present.

Project Borders

Cal Expo wants to ensure that the areas of land frequently used for our operation of the fair are excluded from the boundaries of the project. This will ensure that when we need

to use the space, it will be available and will not interfere with Professor Stevens' work or our uses of the property.

Additional Considerations

Sacramento State has stated they welcome the insights and ideas from Cal Expo for Professor Stevens' project. As stated above, Cal Expo uses private resources to provide the 50,000,000 gallons of ground water for Bushy Lake annually. We believe it would be beneficial to both Professor Stevens' project and Cal Expo if the scope of the first objective was expanded to include identifying alternative sources of ground water or potentially river water to sustain Bushy Lake. Identifying alternative sources would alleviate Cal Expo of their burden and create a more sustainable habitat for the Western Pond Turtle.

The next Wildlife Conservation Board meetings where the grant application can be considered are Wednesday, May 20, 2020; Wednesday, August 26, 2020; and Wednesday, November 18, 2020.

RECOMMENDATION

Over the course of our communications and meetings with representatives of Sacramento State and Professor Stevens, they have addressed our concerns and made the necessary revisions to the project requested by Cal Expo staff. Attached is a letter (attachment A) and a map of the project (attachment B) outlining how Sacramento State intends on continuing our beneficial working partnership. As such, we recommend giving Professor Stevens and the Wildlife Conservation Fund our approval for use of the site.