

# AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION & OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

**Misti Arias**  
**General Manager**

**The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District permanently protects the diverse agricultural, natural resource, and scenic open space lands of Sonoma County for future generations.**

## ADOPTED BUDGET AT A GLANCE

**FY 2021-22**

Total Expenditures	\$46,284,046
Total Revenues/Use of Fund Balance	\$4,924,402
Total General Fund Contribution	\$41,359,644
Total Staff	30.50
% Funded by General Fund	89.36%

## DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District (Ag + Open Space) partners with willing landowners, public agencies, and non-profit organizations to permanently protect land through agreements with landowners (conservation easements), purchase of land, and stewardship activities on existing easements and fee title owned properties. Ag + Open Space acquisitions are guided by the newly adopted Vital Lands Initiative, which reflects community desires and values, and directs preservation to the highest priority farmlands, greenbelts, natural resource areas, and recreational lands. Ag + Open Space has a strong focus on climate resiliency and will provide a lead role on land conservation actions identified as high priority to ensure our community's ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Ag + Open Space is funded by Measure F, a Sonoma County sales tax measure. Most of this funding goes toward acquisition of land and easements, stewardship activities, and department operations. In addition, up to 10% of sales tax revenue can be used for initial public access, operation and maintenance of lands purchased by Ag + Open Space for transfer to park agencies and non-profit partners for outdoor recreation.

### Program Area Description

Ag + Open Space is organized into three program areas, and is currently evaluating its organizational structure to ensure effectiveness in climate resiliency efforts and to advance the goals and objectives outlined in the Vital Lands Initiative.

**The Conservation Planning** develops and analyzes data to ensure the highest value land is protected, and includes community relations.

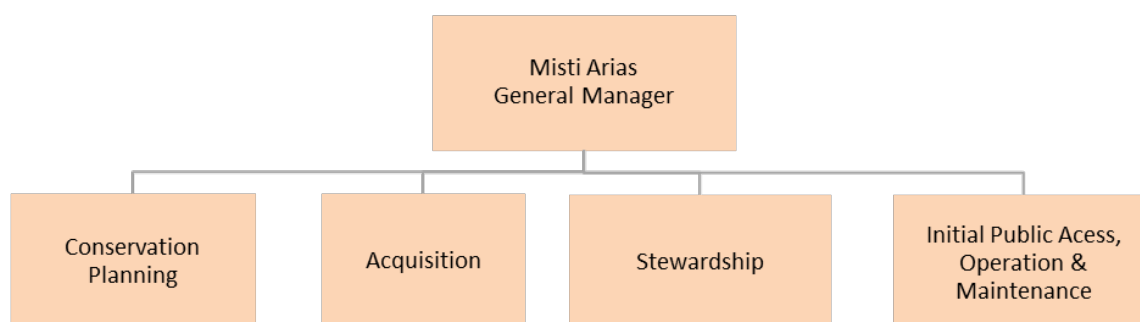
The **Acquisition Program** leads the purchase of conservation easements and land to protect farmland, greenbelts, natural resource areas, and recreational lands.

**The Stewardship Program** ensures that the conservation values of lands and conservation easements acquired with taxpayer funds are protected in perpetuity. Ag + Open Space staff monitor and enforce conservation easements, and manage fee-title owned properties.

While not a separate program, **Initial Public Access, Operation and Maintenance** reflects eligible expenditures by Ag + Open Space to other agencies to provide initial public access on protected properties intended for public recreational use.

For more information, call (707) 565-7360, or visit <https://www.sonomaopenspace.org/>.

## DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## FINANCIAL SUMMARIES

### Expenditures by Program Area

	FY 2020-21 Adopted Budget	FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget	Change from FY 2020-21 Adopted	% Change from FY 2020-21 Adopted
Conservation Planning	3,600,346	3,594,213	(6,133)	(0.2)
Acquisition	36,892,997	35,773,671	(1,119,326)	(3.0)
Stewardship	4,793,480	4,129,662	(663,818)	(13.8)
Initial Public Access, O&M	3,017,413	2,786,500	(230,913)	(7.7)
<b>Total Expenditures by Program</b>	<b>48,304,236</b>	<b>46,284,046</b>	<b>(2,020,190)</b>	<b>(4.2)</b>

### Permanent Positions by Program Area

	FY 2020-21 Adopted Budget	FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget	Change from FY 2020-21 Adopted	% Change from FY 2020-21 Adopted
Conservation Planning	8.33	9.00	0.67	8.0
Acquisition	8.33	9.00	0.67	8.0
Stewardship	11.84	12.50	0.66	5.6
<b>Total Permanent Positions*</b>	<b>28.50</b>	<b>30.50</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>7.0</b>

\*11/17/2020 Board of Directors resolution 20-0432 added one Time-Limited Planner position through 06/30/2022.  
02/09/2021 Board of Directors resolution 21-0077 added one Assistant General Manager position.

## Department Budget Details

Expenditures by Character	FY 2020-21 Adopted Budget	FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget	Change from FY 2020-21 Adopted	% Change from FY 2020- 21 Adopted
Salaries and Benefits	5,233,016	5,749,314	516,298	9.9
Services and Supplies	8,021,735	9,157,550	1,135,815	14.2
Capital Expenditures	30,285,548	26,565,000	(3,720,548)	(12.3)
Matching Grant Program	3,618,213	4,146,943	528,730	14.6
Transfers within the County	1,145,724	665,239	(480,485)	(41.9)
<b>Total Expenditures by Character</b>	<b>48,304,236</b>	<b>46,284,046</b>	<b>(2,020,190)</b>	<b>(4.2)</b>
<b>Revenues/Reimbursements/Use of Fund Balance (Sources)</b>				
Open Space District Sales Tax Revenue*	40,574,362	41,359,644	785,282	1.9
State, Federal, & Other Govt. Revenue	3,070,000	2,275,000	(795,000)	(25.9)
Revenue-Use of Money & Prop	145,000	145,000	0	0.0
Donations and Contributions	2,255,500	1,850,000	(405,500)	(18.0)
Use of Fund Balance	1,128,077	0	(1,128,077)	(100.0)
Internal County Reimbursements and Transfers	1,131,297	654,402	(476,895)	(42.2)
<b>Total Revenues/Use of Fund Balance</b>	<b>48,304,236</b>	<b>46,284,046</b>	<b>(2,020,190)</b>	<b>(4.2)</b>

\*Open Space District Sales Tax Revenue includes \$26.1 million in anticipated FY 2021-22 Sales tax revenue and \$15.2 million in accumulated sales tax revenue from prior years

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

### FY 2020-21 Accomplishments

- Board adoption of Vital Lands Initiative (VLI) which provides the framework to permanently protect the unique natural and working landscapes of Sonoma County.
- Implementation of pro-active fuels reduction, invasive species management, and roadwork on Ag + Open Space owned properties, including Saddle Mountain Preserve and Calabazas Creek Preserve for community safety and fire resiliency.
- Acquisition of a conservation easement while assisting Regional Parks with the fee acquisition of the Torr property (315 acres) to expand recreational opportunities; transferred to Sonoma County Regional Parks Carrington Ranch Open Space Preserve providing recreational opportunities on the Sonoma Coast; receive expanding recreational opportunities in the coastal zone and Sonoma Valley.
- Anticipated to close conservation easements on Mattos Dairy and Earthseed Farm totaling 715 acres by the end of the fiscal year to preserve agricultural land and to advance District goals to broaden access to agricultural land.
- Conducted the 2020 Matching Grant Program and recommended six new matching grant projects approved by the Board of Directors. Updated and refined the Matching Grant Program Guidelines, including development of a new evaluation matrix to provide urban area recreation. Also, conducted the Agricultural Support and Protection Matching Grant Program and recommended nine projects for funding.

### FY 2021-22 Objectives

- Initiate and accelerate proactive land conservation efforts within high priority areas as identified by the Vital Lands Initiative.

- Implement and quantify Board climate change objectives relevant to the Ag + Open Space land conservation mission, including actions focused on carbon sequestration, avoided greenhouse gas emissions, climate adaptation and climate resiliency.
- Establish Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion goals including the adoption of an Environmental Justice policy and proactively seek projects benefitting underserved communities, including the Matching Grant Program criteria.
- Resolve the highest priority outstanding conservation easement enforcement cases protecting taxpayer investments and develop an investment strategy to achieve the Stewardship Reserve Fund target to ensure that Ag + Open Space held easements are protected in perpetuity.
- Develop partnerships with community organizations and tribal partners to manage or receive transfer of greenbelt properties now owned by Ag + Open Space.
- Coordination of centralized vegetation management funded by the PG&E settlement.

## DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Major Variances

- Salaries and Benefits increased nearly 10% due to the addition of one Time-Limited Planner position and one Assistant General Manager position, which will provide increased support to landowner request and internal operational efficiency, as well as overall staffing cost adjustments.
- Services and Supplies increased by 14%, or \$1.13 million, which reflects the required contracts for projects anticipated during this fiscal year. The FY 2020-21 budget was reduced due to anticipated impacts of COVID-19, and this increase brings spending back in line with pre-COVID levels.
- Capital Expenditures decreased by 12%, or \$3.72 million, which reflects a decrease in the purchases that are anticipated to close in this fiscal year.
- The Matching Grant Program increased by over 14%, or \$529,000, which reflects the work to be completed on accepted projects. The Matching Grant program provides reimbursement for approved expenditures as they are completed, and so the level of spending is contingent on work being completed by the grant recipients.
- Transfers within the County budget has decreased by approximately 42%, or \$480,000, as a result of reduced funding from the Operations and Maintenance reserve to perform stewardship work due to the transfer of fee lands to other entities.
- State and Federal Revenue decreased by nearly 26%, or \$795,000 representing the completion of grant funding deliverables in the prior year.
- Donations and Contributions decreased by 18%, or \$405,000, which corresponds to the decrease in the purchases that are anticipated to close in this fiscal year.
- Use of Fund Balance decreased to \$0. During budget adjustments related to COVID-19, expenditures were not reduced to the same extent as revenues, resulting in a budgeted use of fund balance in the District fund that was not reflected in actual expenditures.
- Internal County Reimbursements decreased by 42%, or \$477,000, which reflects the reduction of fee land as described above.

### Key Issues

- Implementation of the Vital Lands Initiative (VLI) is the top priority of Ag + Open Space for Fiscal Year 2021-22. VLI provides key policy direction for planning, acquisition, and stewardship components of our land conservation work, including proactive targeting of acquisitions within regional or focus areas, and increasing the role of Ag + Open Space land conservation actions in meeting the County's goals for climate resiliency and adaptation.
- The completion of property transfers (Wright Hill, Carrington, and Calabazas) will create 2,861 acres of new Regional Parks and will reduce associated District costs of land management. This is key to reducing the costs of stewardship overall and enhancing public benefit.

## BUDGET HEARING CHANGES AND ACTIONS

Adopted as recommended with the following changes:

### Supplemental Changes

	FTE	Gross Expenditures	Revenue and Reimbursements	Net Cost
<b>Other Funds</b>				
Appropriate \$660,000 in revenues from PG&E Settlement Funds to a designated fund in the District to support a Vegetation Management Coordinator position for 3 years (3/23/21, item #19)	0.00	0	660,000	(660,000)

## DEPARTMENT ADOPTED BUDGET DETAILS

	FY 2020-21 Adopted Budget	FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget	FY 2021-22 Adopted Budget	Change from FY 2020-21 Adopted	% Change from FY 2020-21 Adopted
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Other Expenses	3,618,213	4,146,943	4,146,943	528,730	14.6
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Revenue-Use of Money & Property	145,000	145,000	145,000	0	0.0
State, Federal, & Other Govt. Revenue	3,070,000	2,275,000	2,275,000	(795,000)	(25.9)
Donations and Contributions	2,255,500	1,850,000	1,850,000	(405,500)	(18.0)
Use of Fund Balance	1,128,077	0	(660,000)	(1,788,077)	(158.5)
Internal County Reimbursements & Transfers**	1,131,297	654,402	1,314,402	183,105	16.2
<b>Total Revenues/Use of Fund Balance</b>	<b>48,304,236</b>	<b>46,284,046</b>	<b>46,284,046</b>	<b>(2,020,190)</b>	<b>(4.2)</b>
<b>Total Permanent Positions</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>30.50</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>

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