

# 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	ADOPTED FY 2023-24
<b><u>Expenditures</u></b>	
Departmental Operating Expenditures	\$52,592,152
Internal Transfers	\$943,507
<b><u>Funding Sources</u></b>	
Total Revenues/Use of Fund Balance	\$20,964,700
Total General Fund Contribution	\$0
% Funded by General Fund	0.00%
Total Staff	35.00

## 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 actions are guided by the 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 also committed to ensuring that our work benefits everyone in our community and we are actively pursuing ways to incorporate tenants of diversity, equity and inclusion into every aspect of our conservation work.

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

### Service Area Description

The **Community Resources Program** provides outreach and communication, outings and education, government relations, grant funding, and technical expertise to increase resilience of natural and human communities.

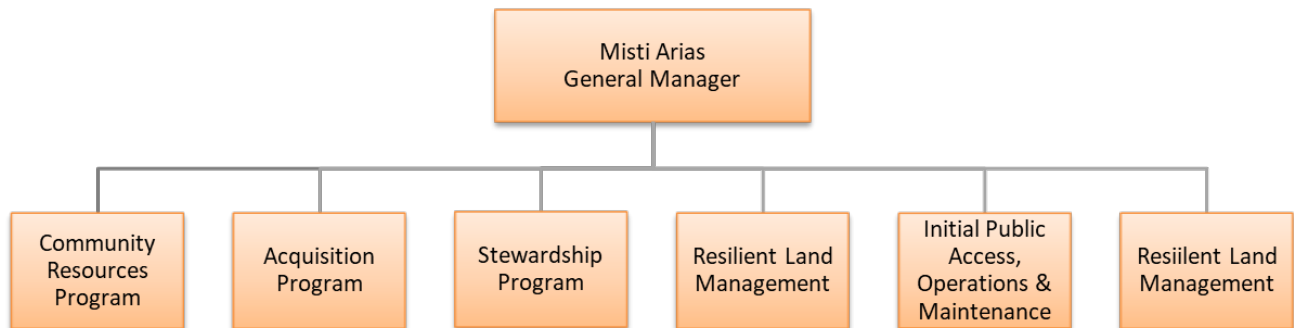
The **Acquisition Program** leads the purchase of conservation easements and land to protect farmland, greenbelts, natural resource areas, and recreational lands.

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.

**Initial Public Access, Operation and Maintenance** (IPAOM) reflects eligible expenditures by Ag + Open Space to other agencies to accelerate initial public access on protected properties intended for public recreational use.

**Resilient Land Management** provides technical and financial support to landowners to enhance land management efforts the minimize risk from extreme events and increase resilience of our natural and human communities.

## DEPARTMENT CHART



### Permanent Positions by Service Area\*

	FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget	FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget	Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted	% Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted
Community Resources	9.5	8.5	(1.00)	(10.5)
Acquisition	11.0	11.0	0.00	0.0
Stewardship	12.5	13.5	1.00	8.0
Resilient Land Management	1.0	1.0	0.00	0.0
Initial Public Access, Operations and Maintenance	0	0	0.00	0.0
<b>Total Permanent Positions</b>	<b>34.00</b>	<b>34.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.0</b>

\*Positions are shown in the service area in which they are budgeted. Executive Management and Administration FTE and costs associated with them are proportionally allocated to the Community Resources, Acquisition, and Stewardship service areas based on the size of their budget.

# FINANCIAL SUMMARIES

## Expenditures by Service Area

	FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget	FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget	Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted	% Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted
Community Resources	\$3,342,881	\$2,237,379	(\$1,105,502)	(33.1)
Acquisition	\$36,919,009	\$43,424,696	\$6,505,687	17.6
Stewardship	\$3,459,818	\$3,243,434	(\$216,384)	(6.3)
Resilient Land Management	\$250,000	\$304,007	\$54,007	21.6
Initial Public Access, Operations and Maintenance	\$2,541,640	\$3,382,636	\$840,996	33.1
<b>Departmental Operating Expenditures*</b>	<b>\$46,513,348</b>	<b>\$52,592,152</b>	<b>\$6,078,804</b>	<b>13.1</b>
<i>Internal Departmental Transfers</i>	<i>\$629,640</i>	<i>\$943,507</i>	<i>\$313,867</i>	<i>49.8</i>
<b>Gross Departmental Expenditures</b>	<b>\$47,142,988</b>	<b>\$53,535,659</b>	<b>\$6,392,671</b>	<b>13.6</b>

\*Departments often need to transfer funds within or between Service Areas for a variety of reasons. These internal transfers overstate the Department's gross expenditures, because they are recorded both on the sending side (for the movement of funds) and the receiving side (where funds are utilized). Expenditures associated with these internal transfers are excluded from the above Service Area budgets to more accurately illustrate operating costs.

\* Executive Management and Administration costs are proportionally allocated to the Community Resources, Acquisition, and Stewardship service areas.

## Department Budget Details

	FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget	FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget	Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted	% Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted
<b>Expenditures by Character</b>				
Salaries and Benefits	\$6,652,471	\$6,930,065	\$277,594	4.2
Services and Supplies	\$8,752,161	\$7,563,334	(\$1,188,827)	(13.6)
Capital Expenditures	\$28,415,000	\$32,485,000	\$4,070,000	14.3
Other Expenses*	\$2,676,943	\$5,594,443	\$2,917,500	109.0
Transfers within the County**	\$646,413	\$962,817	\$316,404	48.9
<b>Total Expenditures by Character</b>	<b>\$47,142,988</b>	<b>\$53,535,659</b>	<b>\$6,392,671</b>	<b>13.6</b>

\*Project accepted into the Matching Grant Program.

\*\*Transfers within the County reflect funds that are transferred both within this department as well as between departments.

Revenues/Reimbursements/ Use of Fund Balance (Sources)	FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget	FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget	Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted	% Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted
Open Space District Sales Tax Revenue*	\$40,772,000	\$32,570,959	(\$8,201,041)	(20.1)
State, Federal, & Other Govt. Revenue	\$5,084,700	\$4,864,000	(\$220,700)	(4.3)
Other Department Revenue**	\$635,300	\$2,029,000	\$1,393,700	219.4
Use of Fund Balance***	\$0	\$13,077,803	\$13,077,803	0.0
Transfers & Reimbursements within the County****	\$650,988	\$993,897	\$342,909	52.7
<b>Total Revenues/Use of Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$47,142,988</b>	<b>\$53,535,659</b>	<b>\$6,392,671</b>	<b>13.6</b>

\*Open Space District Sales Tax Revenue includes \$32,570,959 in anticipated FY 2023-24 sales tax revenue.

\*\*Other Department Revenue includes \$145,000 in use of money and property and \$1,884,000 in donations and contributions.

\*\*\*Reflects use of allocation from the PG&E settlement fund in FY21-22 to support the time-limited Vegetation Management Program, accumulated IPAOM revenue from prior years, and \$12,648,256 accumulated sales tax revenue from prior years.

\*\*\*\*Transfers within the County reflect all funds that are transferred both within this department as well as between departments.

## DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

### Major Variances

- **Community Resources** had a minor reorganization, which moved staff associated with Planning and Geographic Information Systems from Community Resources to Acquisition to increase overall capacity, and moved a program manager from Community Resources to Resilient Land Management to reflect a separate services area, resulting in a net staffing and services and supplies cost reduction of 33.1% (\$1.1 million).
- **Acquisition** expenditures increased by 17.6% (\$6.5million) for FY 2023-24 primarily due to an increase in potential acquisitions that could close in the year and staffing and acquisition costs related to the Matching Grant Program.
- **Stewardship** expenditures decreased by 6.3% (\$216,000) for FY 2023-24 due to the decreased maintenance cost on recreation properties due to the transfer of fee lands to Regional Parks and the completion of a riparian restoration project on an agricultural greenbelt property.
- **Initial Public Access, Operation & Maintenance** expenditures increased by 33.1% (\$841,000) due to an encumbrance of remaining contract balances for Regional Parks transfer agreements to ensure adequate appropriations exist for Initial Public Access activity at Calabazas Creek Regional Park and Open Space Preserve, Carrington Coast Ranch Regional Park and Open Space Preserve, Kashia and Stewarts Point Coastal Trails, Estero Americano Coast Preserve, Mark West Regional Park and Open Space Preserve, Torr West and Wright Hill Ranch Regional Park and Open Space Preserve.
- **Resilient Land Management** expenditures increased by 21.6% (\$54,000) due to additional administrative support needs associated with Vegetation Management Program.

### Key Issues

- Ag + Open Space is tasked with preserving productive agricultural lands, but local producers are facing many challenges which puts agricultural lands at greater risk of conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- Climate change is significantly increasing the threat to our natural and human communities. Protecting the land from subdivision and development is not sufficient to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Enhanced land management on protected lands is needed to achieve climate resilience.

- The community at large does not have a thorough understanding of Ag + Open Space’s mission and work, opportunities to engage, and the benefits they receive as a result of their investment.
- Ag + Open Space has a perpetual obligation to monitor public investments but has a time limited funding source. Therefore, Ag + Open Space needs a perpetual funding source to support ongoing land and easement stewardship activities.
- Lack of ongoing funding and technical assistance for landowners to implement land management practices that enhance ecological health and agricultural production.
- Acquisition project delays caused by the limited pool of appraisers that can appraise properties and conservation easements in a timely and effective manner.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

### FY 2022-23 Accomplishments

- **Acquisition** acquired four conservation easements or properties from the coast to the Mayacamas Mountains that protect vital agricultural resources including prime grazing lands, water resources such as vernal pools, and key wildlife corridors; as well as properties that maintain community identity and create expanded recreational opportunities.
- **Community Resources** initiated the Farmland for All program to increase conservation of and equitable access to agricultural lands. Completed the sale of Haroutunian North to an agricultural buyer, Tierra Vegetables.
- Conducted the 2023 **Vegetation Management** Grant program to select projects to receive up to \$3 million in PG&E settlement funds. These projects will add to the over \$8.3 million that was previously awarded to 46 projects resulting in vegetation management treatments on 3,125 acres of land.
- **Stewardship** completed riparian restoration work at Oken Property near Rohnert Park, fuels reduction projects at various Ag + Open Space-owned properties, including forest management at Saddle Mountain Open Space Preserve, and invasive species management, mowing and livestock grazing at several other properties.
- Conducted the 2022 **Matching Grant Program** and accepted two new projects for funding in Petaluma and Southeast Santa Rosa. Reopened the 2022 cycle to encourage additional applications with increased support and received an additional 6 applications.
- **Community Resources** released a Request for Proposals to solicit partnership proposals for our Public Outings & Youth Education and Workforce Development Program with increased effort for diversity, equity and inclusion and public exposure to private protected lands.

### FY 2023-24 Objectives

- **Strategic Plan Alignment: Climate Action and Resiliency Goal 5, Objective 2** – Outreach directly to owners of high priority agricultural and natural lands identified by the Vital Lands Initiative to increase and accelerate protection of these lands.
- Work with the Board of Directors to scope, create, and initiate funding of the Ag + Open Space Endowment to ensure that our agency can meet its perpetual obligation to steward lands and conservation easements.

- **Strategic Plan Alignment: Climate Action and Resiliency Goal 1, Objectives 2 and 3 and Goal 5, Objective 2 -** Provide technical and financial support to increase land management practices on public and private lands that enhance the health and function of protected lands through stewardship of conservation easements, technical support, and funding.
- Conduct a pilot Buy, Protect, Sell project(s) to increase protection of agricultural lands and help to facilitate equitable, affordable access to land for diverse farmers and ranchers.
- Expand opportunities for all members of the community to connect with protected lands through new Outings and Education contracts and revised Matching Grant Program Guidelines.
- Work with our recreational partners to identify how we can support their efforts to open parks and preserves acquired with Ag + Open Space funds and provided with Initial Public Access Operations and Maintenance funds to the public within Fiscal Year 2023-24.

# BUDGET HEARING CHANGES AND ACTIONS

Adopted as recommended with the following changes:

## Budget Hearing Actions

Other Funds	FTE	Gross Expenditures	Revenue and Reimbursements	Net Cost
Add 1.0 FTE APOSD Geographic Information Systems Analyst. Appropriations included in the FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget.	1.0	\$0	\$0	\$0

## DEPARTMENT ADOPTED BUDGET DETAILS

Expenditures by Character	FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget	FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget	FY 2023-24 Adopted Budget	Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted	% Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted
Salaries and Benefits	\$6,652,471	\$6,930,065	\$6,930,065	\$277,594	4.2
Services and Supplies	\$8,752,161	\$7,563,334	\$7,563,334	(\$1,188,827)	(13.6)
Capital Expenditures	\$28,415,000	\$32,485,000	\$32,485,000	\$4,070,000	14.3
Other Expenses	\$2,676,943	\$5,594,443	\$5,594,443	\$2,917,500	109.0
Transfers within the County	\$646,413	\$962,817	\$962,817	\$316,404	48.9
<b>Total Expenditures by Character</b>	<b>\$47,142,988</b>	<b>\$53,535,659</b>	<b>\$53,535,659</b>	<b>\$6,392,671</b>	<b>13.6</b>

Revenues/Reimbursements/Use of Fund Balance (Sources)	FY 2022-23 Adopted Budget	FY 2023-24 Recommended Budget	FY 2023-24 Adopted Budget	Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted	% Change from FY 2022-23 Adopted
Open Space District Sales Tax Revenue	\$40,772,000	\$32,570,959	\$32,570,959	(\$8,201,041)	(20.1)
State, Federal, & Other Govt. Revenue	\$5,084,700	\$4,864,000	\$4,864,000	(\$220,700)	(4.3)
Other Departmental Revenue	\$635,300	\$2,029,000	\$2,029,000	\$1,393,700	219.4
Use of Fund Balance	\$0	\$13,077,803	\$13,077,803	\$13,077,803	0.0
Internal County Reimbursements & Transfers	\$650,988	\$993,897	\$993,897	\$342,909	52.7
<b>Total Revenues/Use of Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$47,142,988</b>	<b>\$53,535,659</b>	<b>\$53,535,659</b>	<b>\$6,392,671</b>	<b>13.6</b>

<b>Total Permanent Positions</b>	<b>34.00</b>	<b>34.00</b>	<b>35.00</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.9</b>
----------------------------------	--------------	--------------	--------------	----------	------------