



Request for Proposal

FOR

Consulting Services for Measure Q, the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction and Wildlife Protection Act

Proposal Submittal Deadline: Tuesday, February 4th, 2025, no later than 5pm

Contact Persons:

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Proposal Contents: Proposal not to exceed 12 pages, and should include: cover letter, proposed scope of work, schedule/timeline, fee proposal, project team, and summary of relevant experience (project team description and relevant experience summary do not count towards 12-page limit but should be concise).

Background:

Measure Q, the Santa Cruz County Safe Drinking Water, Clean Beaches, Wildfire Risk Reduction and Wildlife Protection Act (Act), approved by over 60% of voters in the November 2024 election, will provide approximately \$7.3 million annually through a special parcel tax to address key community needs such as:

- Enhance climate resilience by investing in wildfire risk reduction, forest health, water supply, flood risk reduction, coastal protection, natural resource conservation, and habitat protection.
- Support local water quality, ecosystem restoration, and community water resources.
- Preserve and manage working lands and local agriculture.
- Maintain and enhance public access to nature through parks, open spaces, and trails.

The County Parks Department (Parks) and Office of Response, Recovery & Resilience (OR3) are tasked in the Act with the next steps of implementation, including the development of a

5-year Vision Plan for consideration and approval by the Citizen Oversight Advisory Board as well , providing all staff, administrative, and operational support to Citizen Oversight Advisory Board (COAB) as well as other the longer-term administration of the Act including management of the grant programs.

Project Overview:

Measure Q calls for the creation of a Vision Plan that will identify the activities and geographies that are prioritized for investment over the first 5 years of the Act. The purpose of the Vision Plan is to guide implementation of Measure Q to ensure that projects funded by the measure are best meeting the needs of the community. The Act states that the Vision Plan shall be published by July 1, 2025, and should be primarily based on existing plans.

The Vision Plan should identify the geographies, programs, and project/activity types that should be prioritized for funding between July 2025 and July 2030 to best meet the intent of the Act. The Vision Plan should be concise and in a format that is accessible to the general public.

As part of the prioritization process specified in the Act, the Vision Plan should identify project/activity types that support multiple benefits, particularly those that that maximize long-term climate resiliency and adaptation, benefit Disadvantaged Communities to improve equity and maximize the impact of funding generated by the Act. The Vision Plan should broadly identify opportunities for leveraging Measure Q funds to serve as a local match for state, federal, or other funding sources.

In order to meet the timeline set forth in the Act language, Parks and OR3 are seeking a qualified consultant team to assist in developing the 5-year Vision Plan for the implementation of Measure Q. The consultant will play a critical role in researching, drafting, engaging stakeholders and the community, and supporting the COAB's review and approval of the final Vision Plan. The desired scope consists of the following key deliverable areas:

- 1. Background Research**
- 2. Stakeholder Engagement**
- 3. Community Engagement**
- 4. Draft Vision Plan Development**
- 5. Final Vision Plan Development**

Project Timeline:

The consultant will deliver the work in alignment with the project timeline, from **February to June 2025**, to ensure the Vision Plan is adopted by **July 1, 2025**.

Budget:

Not to exceed \$50,000

1. Background Research

A comprehensive, AI-supported Literature Review of existing plans, studies, and reports relevant to the seven key thematic areas of the Act has been developed (See Attachment A). The seven key thematic areas of Measure Q are:

- Water resource protection
- Wildfire risk reduction and forest health
- Wildlife and habitat protection
- Parks, recreation, and public access
- Working lands and agricultural stewardship
- Coastal protection
- Climate resilience and adaptation

The Literature Review conducted an analysis of plans specifically identified in the Act and plans identified by a panel of experts in natural resource management, conservation, recreation, and climate adaptation in Santa Cruz County. A list of plans relevant to key thematic areas of Measure Q is included as Attachment B.

The consultant will research, review and build upon the Literature Review. This research will provide a solid foundation for communicating existing plans, studies, and priorities to partners specified by the Act (the County, four incorporated cities, the RCD, and the Land Stewardship Implementation Partner, henceforth “Act Partners”), stakeholders, the public, and the Citizens Oversight Advisory Board (COAB). It will also help identify priorities set forth in the existing plans that will form the basis for the draft Vision Plan and subsequent stakeholder and community engagement.

Key Tasks:

- **Review Existing Plans:** Familiarize results from Literature Review of existing plans, building in any areas missed or needing further analysis. This will be accomplished by conducting a high-level review of the relevant plans, reports, and studies identified in Attachment B.

- **Synthesize Key Findings:** Summarize and synthesize the findings from these plans to inform the Vision Plan using the format of the Literature Review. This will include identifying key recommendations, priorities, gaps in existing plans, and opportunities for alignment with regional and state priorities (e.g., Prop 4, 30x30 California).
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2. Stakeholder Engagement

The consultant will facilitate engagement with key stakeholders to ensure the Vision Plan is informed by relevant expertise and community input. This will involve direct collaboration with Act Partners, county departments, cities, fire and water agencies, conservation partners, and other key organizations.

Key Tasks:

- **Stakeholder Identification:** Collaborate with County staff to identify key stakeholders, including representatives from the four cities, the Resource Conservation District (RCD), the Land Stewardship Implementation Partner, and other relevant groups in the key thematic areas of water resource protection, wildfire risk reduction and forest health, wildlife and habitat protection, parks, recreation, and public access, working lands and agricultural stewardship, coastal protection, and climate resilience and adaptation.
- **Engagement Strategy:** Develop a stakeholder engagement plan that outlines the objectives, timeline, and format for engagement sessions.
- **Initial and Follow-Up Meetings:** Organize and facilitate two to three rounds of stakeholder meetings; a possible scenario for engagement is below:
 - Round 1: Large group meeting for stakeholder engagement kick-off
 - Round 2: Initial, intensive round of engagement consisting of one-on-one meetings with individual stakeholders and small group meetings to gather feedback on priority project types, programs, activities, and geographies prior to development of the Draft Vision Plan.
 - Round 3: Follow-up meetings to review the Draft Vision Plan and refine recommendations.
- **External Stakeholder Focus:** Given that biodiversity/habitat protection, water resource planning, climate resilience, and public access are well-represented by existing plans, a focus of external stakeholder engagement should revolve around wildfire resilience/risk reduction, and equity.

- Stakeholder engagement should also focus on identifying opportunities for multi-benefit projects, benefiting disadvantaged communities, and use of Act funds for local match.
- **Summary Memo and Annotated Outline of the Vision Plan:** Produce a summary memo and an annotated outline of the Vision Plan based on background research and initial stakeholder engagement. The annotated outline of the Vision Plan will be presented to the COAB for feedback. The consultant will make any changes requested by the COAB into a final version, which is expected to be used in the community engagement task.
 - **Multi-Benefit Projects:** Identify opportunities where projects can address multiple Act goals simultaneously (e.g., wildfire risk reduction and water conservation).
 - **Local Match:** Identify opportunities to utilize Act funds as a local match for outside funding sources, including private, state and federal opportunities, that can be leveraged in alignment with Measure Q priorities.
 - **Disadvantaged Communities:** Identify opportunities to benefit disadvantaged communities as defined by the Act.

Deliverables:

- List of key stakeholders
- Stakeholder engagement plan
- Stakeholder survey tool for feedback gathering
- Summary memo of background research and key stakeholder feedback from the initial round of engagement
- Draft and final annotated outline of the Vision Plan, based on background research and initial round of stakeholder engagement, and incorporating feedback from the COAB.

3. Community Engagement

The consultant will design and facilitate a community engagement process that is transparent and inclusive, ensuring the broader community has an opportunity to provide input into the Vision Plan. County staff, subject matter experts, and potentially representatives from the COAB, four cities, the RCD, and the Land Stewardship Implementation Partner will attend engagement events to answer questions, facilitate community participation, and as general support. The County will provide translation services, as needed.

Key Tasks:

- **Engagement Tools and Strategy:** Develop a community engagement plan, utilizing various tools to ensure broad participation, including:
 - Use of the County’s **dedicated Measure Q website** and social media for information distribution and feedback collection. The County will host, maintain, and operate the website and social media channels, and the consultant will be responsible for creating content specific to community engagement for posting on the website and social media.
 - A **bilingual survey** to gather input from a wide range of community members. The survey shall be available in a digital format for virtual distribution as well as in-person at engagement events.
 - **In-person Community Open Houses** in three strategic locations (e.g., San Lorenzo Valley, Santa Cruz, Watsonville). It is expected that the content for the open houses will be the same (county-wide), regardless of geographic location.
 - A **virtual meeting** to reach a broader audience.
- **Community Open Houses:** Design, organize, and facilitate open house-style community meetings, where participants can engage with thematic information stations (fire, water, biodiversity, access).
- **Survey Development:** Create the survey questions in collaboration with the County and Act Partners (four incorporated cities, the RCD, and the Land Stewardship Implementation Partner) to capture community priorities and ideas. Ensure accessibility and cultural relevance, especially for disadvantaged communities.
- **Feedback Integration:** Gather and synthesize community feedback from all engagement into a summary memo and integrate key insights into the Admin Draft Vision Plan.

Deliverables:

- Community engagement plan
- Bilingual survey for collecting community feedback
- Draft and final content for community engagement (community open houses, virtual meeting, website, and social media)
- Summary memo of community feedback and recommendations

4. Draft Vision Plan Development

After approval of the annotated Vision Plan outline by the COAB, the consultant will develop a comprehensive Draft Vision Plan document in collaboration with County staff, the COAB, the four incorporated cities, the RCD, and the Land Stewardship Implementation Partner that outlines the geographies, goals, priorities, project/activity types, and strategies for Measure Q implementation. The Draft Vision Plan will provide a concise strategic roadmap for Measure Q implementation from July 2025 to July 2030. The document is expected to be richly layered with photographs, maps, and other graphics, and be roughly 20-30 pages, excluding appendices.

Key Tasks:

- **Administrative Draft Vision Plan:** Develop a detailed structure and draft contents for the Administrative Draft Vision Plan. The plan should generally include the following sections:
 - Introduction and summary of Measure Q and its purpose and intent. This should include a description of the various funding categories specified in the Act.
 - Funding opportunities and prioritization of the seven key themes:
 - water resource protection
 - wildfire risk reduction and forest health
 - wildlife and habitat protection
 - parks, recreation, and public access
 - working lands and agricultural stewardship
 - coastal protection
 - climate resilience and adaptation
 - Each theme should include a background and context section, and include project/activity types, programs, and geographies that should be prioritized for investment.
 - A section on recommended multi-benefit type programs to maximize benefits to disadvantaged communities.
 - An implementation strategy section, with a focus on leveraging external funding sources. (As needed, these sections can be woven into the discussion of priorities for the seven major themes noted above.)
 - Priority project/activity types for the two areas specified in the Act: **San Vicente Redwoods** and **Pajaro River Watershed**
 - **Visuals and graphics** should be added to the draft document where necessary to enhance the plan's clarity and engagement by the general public.

- **Review of Administrative Draft Vision Plan:** circulate the Admin Draft Vision Plan for review by the County, four cities, the RCD, and the Land Stewardship Implementation Partner.
- **Draft Vision Plan:** after review and comment by the County and stakeholders, the consultant will finalize the Administrative Draft Vision Plan into a Draft Vision Plan that will be presented to the COAB at a public hearing for review and feedback.
- **COAB Public Hearing Preparation:** Assist with preparing materials for a public hearing and presentation of the Draft Vision Plan to the COAB, ensuring clear communication of the Draft Vision Plan’s goals, priorities, and recommendations.
- **Public Comment Period:** Coordinate a public comment period following the presentation of the Draft Vision Plan to the COAB, ensuring that comments are collected and reviewed.

Deliverables:

- Administrative Draft Vision Plan
 - Draft Vision Plan
 - COAB Public Hearing Presentation
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5. Final Vision Plan Development and Approval

The consultant shall prepare a Final Draft Vision Plan that incorporates feedback on the Draft Vision Plan from the COAB, Act Partners, and input received on the Draft Vision Plan during the public comment period. The Final Draft Vision Plan will then be circulated for a last round of minor review by Act Partners. The consultant will integrate any last changes into a Final Vision Plan and will support the approval process with COAB to ensure that the Vision Plan is formally approved prior to July 1, 2025.

Key Tasks:

- **Final Draft Vision Plan:** Preparation of a **Final Draft Vision Plan** in coordination with Parks and OR3 staff that incorporates feedback on the Draft Vision Plan.
- **Final Vision Plan:** Preparation of a **Final Vision Plan** in coordination with Parks and OR3 staff that incorporates any final edits and comments by Act Partners on the Final Draft Vision Plan.
- **Vision Plan Approval Public Hearing Preparation:** Prepare materials in coordination with Parks and OR3 staff for a public hearing and presentation of the

Final Vision Plan to the COAB, ensuring clear communication of the Final Vision Plan's goals, priorities, and recommendations.

Deliverables:

- Final Draft Vision Plan
- Final Vision Plan
- Vision Plan Approval Presentation

Attachment A – Literature Review

Click link to access the document: [Vision Plan Literature Review](#)

Attachment B – list of existing plans that should form the basis of the Vision Plan

Priority Plans

In addition to the plans named in the Act, a panel of experts in natural resource management, conservation, recreation, and climate adaptation in Santa Cruz County selected local plans that cover strategies for each priority area. These plans were analyzed in the Literature Review.

- **Water Resource Protection** – Santa Cruz County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, Pajaro River Watershed Integrated Regional Water Management Plan
- **Wildfire Risk Reduction and Forest Resilience** – Santa Cruz County San Mateo County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- **Wildlife and Habitat Protection** – Santa Cruz County Regional Conservation Investment Strategy
- **Parks, Recreation, and Public Access** – Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plan, Santa Cruz County Parks Strategic Plan Update
- **Climate Resilience and Adaptation** – Santa Cruz County Climate Action and Adaptation Plan
- The plans listed above were determined to encompass the **Working Lands and Agricultural Stewardship** and **Coastal Protection** categories.

State Plans

The following state plans were named in the Act as forming the basis for the Vision Plan and were analyzed in the Literature Review.

- California Adaptation Planning Guide
- California Water Plan
- California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan
- California Outdoors for All Strategy
- California Pathways to 30x30 Strategy
- California Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy

Additional Plans

The expert panel identified other priority plans, but they were not covered in the Literature Review. It is recommended to apply the Literature Review's analysis framework to the following plans to gain more information.

Highest Priority

- Watsonville Climate Action Plan (climate resilience)
- City of Santa Cruz Climate Action Plan (climate resilience)
- Capitola Climate Action Plan (climate resilience)
- Regional Project Prioritization Plan (wildfire)
- DRAFT Santa Cruz Emergency Operation Plan (wildfire)
- Santa Cruz County Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

Additional Priorities

- Groundwater Sustainability Plans (water resource)
 - Pajaro Valley Water Basin Management Plan
 - Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin Groundwater Sustainability Plan
 - Santa Margarita Groundwater Sustainability Plan
- Zone 5 Master Plan (water resource)
- Pinto Lake Catchment Total Maximum Daily Load for Cyanobacterial Blooms (water resource)
- Watsonville Slough Pathogens Total Maximum Daily Load (water resource)
- Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County Strategic Direction (water resource/wildlife)
- Coho Salmon Recovery Plan (wildlife)
- City of Santa Cruz Anadromous Salmonid Habitat Conservation Plan (wildlife)
- North Coast Facilities Management Plan (wildlife/parks)
- Watsonville Trails and Greenways Master Plan (parks/access)
- City Parks Strategic/Master Plans