East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy (and partners)

PROPOSAL 1:

Conservation Grazing Infrastructure: $1,000,000. (scale-able proposal)

This project proposes to fund infrastructure to support use of livestock to manage grasslands. Funds will be used to establish wells/water sources, construct livestock watering systems, install fencing, and provide other critical infrastructure for livestock. These funds would be used across the east Contra Costa County region to ensure efficient function systems to support livestock as a tool to manage habitat, control invasive weeds and reduce wildfire risk. Well managed conservation grazing helps maintain healthy grasslands that act as a carbon sink and provide habitat for native endangered species. *Livestock grazing is the most powerful tool in East Contra Costa County to help the region respond to the effects of climate change that is further threatening endangered species, habitat and local communities*.

These priorities are identified in a variety of state platforms and documents.

AB1500 Chapter 2 / SB 45 Chapter 2: Wildfire: Fuel management: Conservation grazing reduces the fuel load in open space areas around the region. Contra Costa County has extensive urban-wildlife interface and the use of livestock to reduce fuel loads helps prevent the acceleration of wildfires.

AB1500 Chapter 5 / SB45 Chapter 4: Protecting fish, wildlife and natural areas: Habitat and Endangered Species: Conservation grazing uses livestock as a tool to manage grassland habitats. The timing of grazing, type of livestock, and close monitoring of grasslands results the creation and maintenance of habitat that support state and federally endangered and special status species. In Contra Costa County conservation grazing is key to maintaining habitats for western burrowing owl, California red legged frog, California tiger salamander and others. With more frequent drought cycles in our region, natural and restored wetlands, streams, and ponds are drying more quickly. The water in these habitat features needs to be conserved for wildlife breeding habitat. By excluding cattle from these areas are providing alternate sources of water we can preserve wetland habitats and continue to keep livestock on grazing throughout the growing season to manage the upland habitats.

AB1500 Chapter 6 / SB45 Chapter 5: Protecting farms, ranches and working lands: Invasive Weeds: Conservation grazing uses livestock to mange invasive weeds in our grasslands. Livestock when introduced to a landscape early in the rainy season can eat and control noxious and invasive weeds. Livestock are land managers greatest tool in addressing widespread invasive plans in grasslands.

Timing: This project is ready to go and start spending in January 2022. It will probably take up to 3 years to spend the entirety of these funds across 14,000 acres of conserved land owned and managed by the East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy and East Bay Regional Park District.

PROPOSAL 2:

Mount Diablo: Pine tree and Manzanita Die-off: $500,000.

This project seeks to investigate the cause of the recent sudden (over the last 12 months) die off and/or dieback of thousands of manzanita and knob cone pine trees in the Knob Cone Point area, contiguous to Save Mount Diablo's Curry Canyon reserve and Mount Diablo State Park, as well as along the Wall Point Trail area of Mount Diablo State Park, and potentially identify methods of management of this situation. All species of manzanita (including the Mount Diablo Manzanita) are being affected by this issue and are dying at dizzying rates in lush, wide chaparral areas, some seemingly impenetrable. This die off is concerning as it greatly increases the vulnerability of the area to fire and also has the potential to have extreme impacts to state and federally endangered and special status species.



Justification, by chapter of AB1500 & SB45: Forest management to reduce fire risk to Mount Diablo State Park and surrounding conservation areas. This project provides important fire management and environmental benefits (Chapters 2 and 5).

AB1500 Chapter 2 / SB 45 Chapter 2: Wildfire: The sudden die-off of pines and manzanitas needs to be understood, controlled and managed. The cause is currently unknown and partners in the region would like to move quickly to prevent the spread of this phenomenon across though the region. The current situation is a fire risk, but an spread of this would be devastating for the fuels management in the region (note powerlines in photo).

AB1500 Chapter 5 / SB45 Chapter 4: Protecting fish, wildlife and natural areas: Habitat and Endangered Species: This forest and chaparral habitat supports state and federal endangered and special status species including Alameda whipsnake, golden eagle, mount diablo manzanita. The loss of the pine and manzanita cover could dramatically impact the populations of the species that are targeted for conservation.

Timing: This project is ready to go and start spending as of March 2022. It will probably take up to 4 years to spend the entirety of these funds on research, experimental management, and to develop management protocols and guidelines.

PROPOSAL 3:

Land Acquisition funding for the local regional Natural Community Conservation Plan (East CCC HCP/NCCP): $6,000,000. (scale-able proposal)

The East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy (ECCCHC) implements the Habitat Conservation Plan/ Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP). There is an ambitious land acquisition component of this plan that anticipates up to 30,300 acres of new conservation in the region. The ECCCHC will provide match funding for the state funds toward acquisition up to 45% with local, federal funds, and/or private funds for the conservation of endangered species habitat. Conservation of land helps secure and manage healthy watersheds, sequester carbon, preserve habitat for state and federally listed endangered species.

AB1500 Chapter 5 / SB45 Chapter 4: Protecting fish, wildlife and natural areas: The HCP/NCCP targets habitats that support 28 state and federally protected species. The ECCCHC has a track record of working with other local agencies and NGOs to move quickly to effectively protect and manage lands. In the last 14 years, the ECCCHC has successfully conserved over 14,000 acres of land and is working to continue this effort.

Timing: This project is ready to go and start spending as of June 2022. It will probably take up to 4 years to spend the entirety of these funds and the pace of expenditures will depend on the opportunities to acquire land from willing sellers in the region.

PROPOSAL 4:

Habitat Restoration funding for the local regional Natural Community Conservation Plan (East CCC HCP/NCCP): $6,000,000. (scale-able proposal)

The East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy (ECCCHC) implements the Habitat Conservation Plan/ Natural Community Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP). There is an ambitious aquatic habitat restoration and creation component of this plan (focusing on wetland, pond and stream habitats).

AB1500 Chapter 5 / SB45 Chapter 4: Protecting fish, wildlife and natural areas: The HCP/NCCP targets habitats that support 28 state and federally protected species. The ECCCHC has a track record of working designing, constructing, monitoring and maintaining habitat restoration projects. In the last 14 years, the ECCCHC has successfully constructed 11 restoration projects and has three projects in the planning stages. These funds could be used for planning/design or construction.

Timing: There projects ready to go (planning) and start spending as of January 2022. Other projects could start construction in summer 2022. It will probably take up to 6 years to spend

the entirety of these funds and the pace of expenditures will depend on the opportunities presented on existing and soon to be acquired conserved lands.