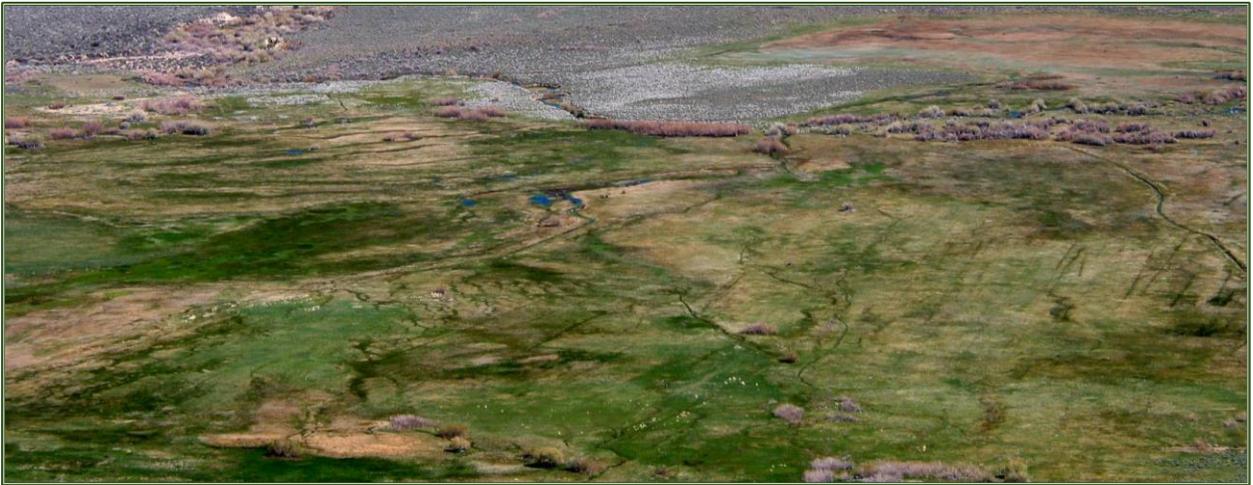


County of Mono



PO Box 696
Bridgeport, CA 93517



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS for CATTLE GRAZING ON CONWAY AND MATTLY RANCH

November 12, 2019

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

The County of Mono is seeking proposals from qualified individuals to provide resource management services in the form of cattle grazing, on approximately 500 acres of the Conway and Mattly Ranch (CMR). The CMR is located in central Mono County, on the northwest end of the Mono Basin. The area under consideration for lease includes 300+ acres of irrigated meadow, and 200 acres of upland sagebrush habitat.

These properties were acquired with conservation/habitat grant funding in 1998, and a Conservation Easement with the Eastern Sierra Land Trust was placed on the property in 2014.¹ Since 1998, the land has been grazed consistently by domestic sheep. In March of 2017, due to concerns over disease transmission between domestic and endangered Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep, the Board of Supervisors decided not to continue the lease for sheep grazing, and the County is now interested in proposals for cattle grazing.

Any resulting lease is anticipated to be for up to a ten-year term, which would be subject to termination should the terms of the lease and/or the conservation values not be upheld. The County recognizes the need for a long-term agreement in order an operator to recoup the investment in fencing that will be necessary with a transition from sheep to cattle.

Qualified operators will have the interest and experience to cooperate in achieving objectives to protect and enhance the conservation values of the CMR, as articulated in the Conservation Easement (Exhibit B). The County is interested in working with cattle owners who can implement grazing practices as established in the Livestock Grazing Management Plan (LGMP), attached hereto as Exhibit C, that will also succeed in meeting the wildlife habitat and special status species needs of CMR. These habitat needs are the primary consideration, and any grazing activities should complement and enhance them to the extent possible.

The primary goal is to contract with a cattle operator whose livestock operation will focus on maintaining and improving biodiversity and related habitat. The County envisions the project as an economically sustainable operation that is simultaneously beneficial to the environment and reflects a commitment to the habitat and wildlife benefits of the CMR.

Ideal Lessees will:

- 1) have a high acceptance of and appreciation for native wildlife species on cattle ranches
- 2) support wildlife restoration projects on their own property
- 3) be willing and able to participate in scientific studies
- 4) be willing and able to help create and support public recreation opportunities
- 5) be willing and able to operate with wildlife friendly fences and harvest practices
- 6) be willing and able to test new methods to reduce cattle/wildlife conflicts

¹ For additional information, visit: <http://www.monoCounty.ca.gov/facilities/page/conway-ranch-conservation-easement>

- 7) have a history of supporting environmental conservation efforts related to wildlife, water, and soil
- 8) have the experience and knowledge to successfully manage a cattle grazing operation in a manner which ensures rangeland and riparian health
- 9) be willing to provide financial information to demonstrate the lessee has the financial capability to meet the terms of the lease

CEQA Environmental Review

Upon selection of a preferred proposal and operator, the County will engage in an Initial Study of the project, pursuant to CEQA. This environmental review will be based on the project as described in the LGMP, which would become an integral part of any subsequent lease.

Upon completion of the Initial Study, the Board will determine whether additional environmental review will be necessary, and if so, whether that cost should be borne by the grazing operator or by the County. If borne by the operator, it is understood that this cost will influence any proposed lease revenue to the County and respondents will have the opportunity to revise the proposed lease payment or withdraw their proposal. For the purposes of proposals, respondents should assume that the County will perform the necessary CEQA analysis.

Once complete, the Board of Supervisors will consider whether to approve the CEQA document and enter into a lease. Until the CEQA process is complete, there is no commitment, implied or otherwise, by the County to enter a lease.

Scope of Work

Grazing operators will be expected to accurately and thoroughly implement as provided in the LGMP.

In addition to implementing the LGMP, the operators will also be responsible for irrigation duties. This includes requesting water diversion in accordance with the County's water rights, and making determinations on the appropriate irrigation schedules and adjustments to maintain the conservation values and provide for livestock needs.

Lessee will be required to perform installation of fencing around all grazing areas as well as provide improvements throughout the range. This includes, but is not limited to, the maintenance of any fencing, access roads, and irrigation infrastructure as necessary.

Only the lessee's cattle, appropriately marked with the lessee's brand or other legal markings, are authorized to inhabit the leased area.

Description of Lease Boundaries

The two Lease Areas comprise approximately 500 acres, as illustrated in **Exhibit A**. The boundaries of these areas may be adjusted within the exterior perimeter of the property prior to entering into a final lease agreement. The boundaries as proposed incorporate logical natural boundaries such as access roads, highways, and water features where it is anticipated fences would be erected.

Grazing Infrastructure

The grazing infrastructure at Conway Ranch is very limited at this time. There are established corrals but they are not in functioning condition, and would require significant improvement if they were to be used. The operator must repair, refurbish existing grazing infrastructure, or provide their own

infrastructure as necessary for their operation. This infrastructure may be temporary or permanent in nature, although the methods must adhere to the LGMP, to enable appropriate environmental review. Let down fencing is preferred to minimize impacts on Sage Grouse. The County may assist the successful lessee in pursuing available grant funding for these improvements, however, it should not be factored into costs for the proposal. Such grant opportunities are known to exist through the NRCS, as well as other state and federal agencies that offer funding for wildlife-friendly infrastructure and projects that focus on habitat improvements.

Depending on the details of your proposal, the payment of prevailing wages for any construction, alteration, demolition or repair work, registration of the contractor performing the work with the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR), and compliance monitoring by DIR may apply.

AUMs and Lease Pricing

Initial stocking rate will allow for up to 168 AUM's (cow/calf pair= 1 Animal Unit) for a four-month grazing period on the Conway Ranch and up to 102 AUM's for a one month period on the Mattly Ranch. These are conservative figures that will be implemented during the first grazing year with the potential to increase to 275 AUM's for Conway and 155 AUM's for Mattly depending on forage production.

Because lease pricing is linked to the number of AUMs, as well as the cost associated with necessary range improvements, the first year under lease will be at no cost in order to facilitate needed infrastructure. At the end of the lease agreement fencing infrastructure will be retained as County property. Respondents are encouraged to develop an environmentally sustainable proposal, with lease payments a secondary consideration.

INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

Property Tours

The CMR is open to the public, and interested parties are free to visit the proposed lease area. All proposed lease areas have unrestricted (non-motorized) access, and respondents are encouraged to walk the property and investigate the available resources and infrastructure as necessary to inform their response. Individual property tours to answer questions relating to past grazing and irrigation practices as well as detail on the available infrastructure, may be arranged by contacting Justin Nalder, jnalder@mono.ca.gov or 760-932-5453.

Proposal Requirements

All proposals shall be type-written, and limited to no more than 30 pages total. Any information that Applicant claims is "confidential" or "proprietary" shall be marked as such. Each applicant shall submit the following information in their proposal:

1. Statement of Applicant

The statement shall identify the name of the applicant. If the applicant is a joint venture, partnership, corporation or other entity other than an individual, the applicant shall include a description of its ownership structure, the names of the individual officers, partners, or joint venturers, and evidence of the applicants' qualifications to do business in the State of California.

2. Experience and Operations

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A concise, written summary, in narrative form, of the applicant's experience and operations shall be provided. The summary should include the location, scope, and management of past and current ranching operations, which may be supported by photographs, maps, and other documentation that provides evidence of the applicant's grazing management experience and operations.

3. Proposed Grazing Plan

A written grazing plan shall be provided that describes how the applicant intends to operate the proposed lease area. The narrative should address the proposed approach to the following:

- The number and kind of livestock (cow-calf, bulls, replacement heifers, yearlings)
- Turn-in and turn-out dates
- Approach to livestock management for resource conservation and enhancement
- Necessary rangeland improvements (fencing, water development)
- Staffing of management and operations
- Integrated pest management practices (weeds, rodents)
- Management of riparian and wetland areas
- Livestock health and supplemental feeding practices
- Range monitoring practices
- General availability and ability to respond to emergencies
- Approach to managing grazing operations in lands open to the public for recreational purposes
- Proposed vegetation planting which contributes to habitat improvement and biodiversity

4. Financial Qualifications

Written evidence of the applicant's ability to make timely rent payments and carry out the obligations of the grazing plan shall be provided. This evidence may include federal or state tax returns, certified financial reports, or a certified statement of financial condition (e.g. asset liability balance sheet) for each individual or entity that will be a signatory to the grazing lease. "Certified" as used above shall mean certified as true and correct by an officer of the applicant, and does not mandate an audit or certification by a certified public accountant.

5. Supplemental Questions

1. Have you worked on properties where Conservation Easements exist? Explain how your operation will comply with the Conservation Easement.
2. Will your proposal incorporate community benefits and/or education into your operation? If so, how?

Submittal and Deadline

Submittals are due to the County by **3:00 p.m., December 17, 2019.**

They can be hand-delivered or mailed to the following address:

**Mono County Public Works
c/o Justin Nalder
74 North School Street
PO Box 457**

Bridgeport, CA 93517

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Evaluation Process

Upon receipt of the proposals, a selection committee formed by the County staff shall evaluate and rank the applicants based on the criteria described below. The top 2 applicants may be contacted for an interview. Said applicants should make themselves available for such interview appointments sometime during the months of December 2019 and January 2020.

Following interviews, the selection committee will rank the proposals. Once received, the proposals will be presented to the board of Supervisors for their direction and consideration. Following Board direction, the CEQA initial study will begin. Following the Initial Study and any further CEQA review, the proposal will be recommended to the County Board of Supervisors for approval along with certification of the CEQA document.

Formal award of any lease shall be at the sole discretion of the County Board of Supervisors as discussed in more detail in the Additional Information section, below. The successful applicant will be required to execute and deliver the grazing lease to the County following Board approval. In the event a successful applicant fails to execute the lease or otherwise comply with requirements, the County may reject the successful applicant and select a different applicant.

Selection Criteria

All proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria (100 points total):

1. Experience and operations (20 points)
2. Proposed management practices (20 points)
3. Conservation, preservation and enhancement strategies (30 points)
4. Maintenance and improvement plans (10 points)
5. Lease Payments (10 points)
6. Financial ability (5 points)

The selected applicant will be chosen primarily on the basis of his or her apparent ability to best meet the overall rangeland management expectations of the County. The County will be the sole judge as to which applicant offers the greatest benefit to the County. The County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, waive or correct any minor irregularities in a proposal, request further information, terminate failed negotiations, and to eliminate, or reject a proposal as non-responsive.

Additional Information

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary herein, this is a request for proposals only. The County reserves the right to reject any and all proposals for any reason whatsoever. By submitting a proposal the applicant waives all rights against the County and its agents, employees, and representatives relative to the RFP process and the costs of submitting a proposal. No officer or employee of the County has authority to represent the agency in entering into a lease unless and until a resolution of the County Board of Supervisors has been duly passed approving the lease and authorizing the transactions contemplated thereby. No lease shall be effective unless and until it has been approved by the County

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Board of Supervisors in its sole and absolute discretion. Applicants also understand and agree that under the California Public Records Act ("CPRA") (Gov. Code section 6250 et seq.) all records, information and materials submitted to the County in connection with this Request for Proposals will be available for public inspection immediately after the lease has been awarded. Reference is made to the CRPA for additional information regarding required disclosures. If Applicant believes that certain information is exempt from public disclosure, Applicant may mark that information as CONFIDENTIAL or PROPRIETARY. County will endeavor to notify applicant if such information is requested as part of a Public Records Act request. Applicant (not County) will be solely responsible for obtaining a protective order or other relief from a court of law to prevent the disclosure of such records under the CPRA. County shall not be liable for the disclosure of any information marked CONFIDENTIAL or PROPRIETARY.

EXHIBIT A

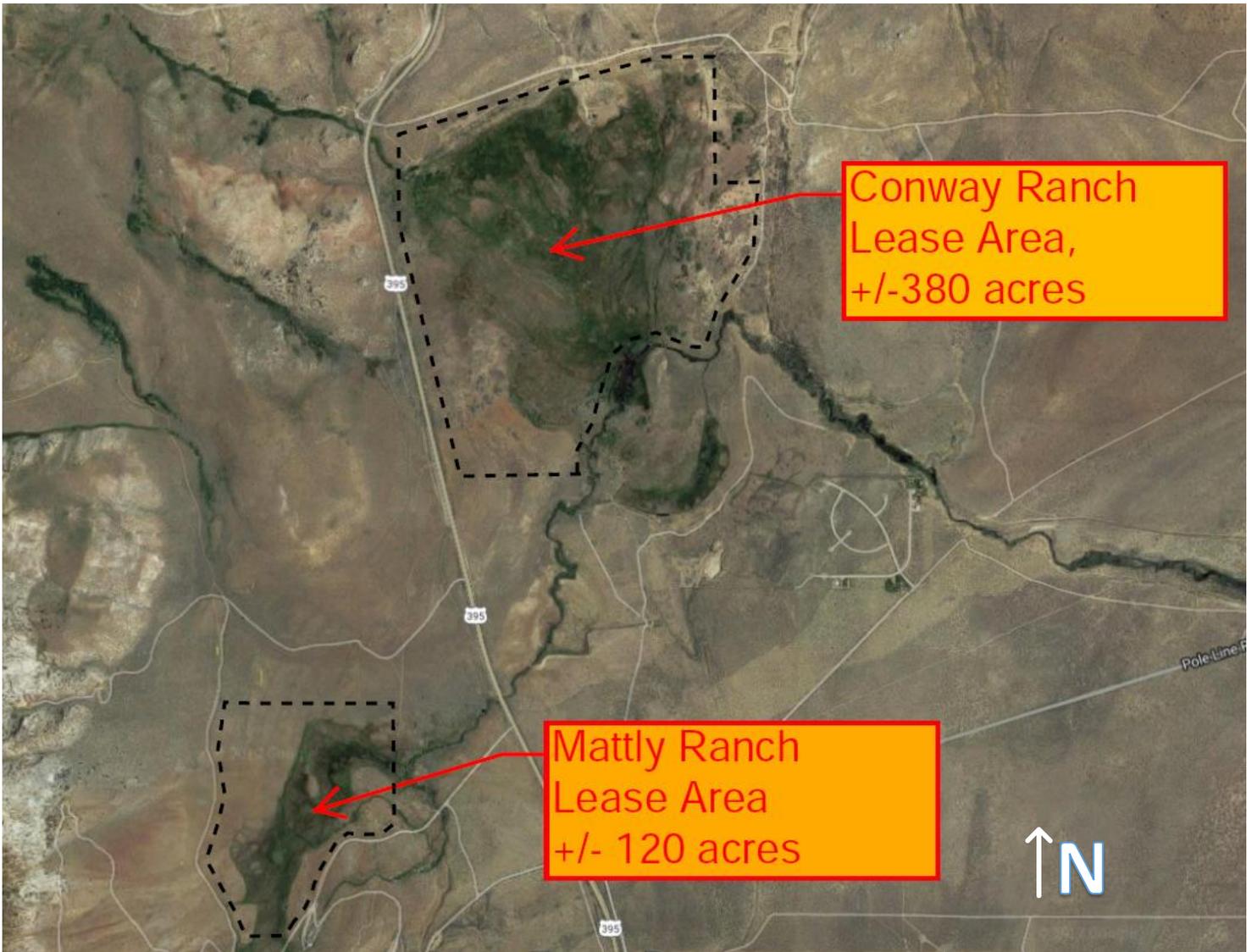


EXHIBIT B

EXHIBIT C