



Legislation Text

File #: 21-1396, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Approve a Programmatic Partnership Agreement with USDA-NRCS for the Lake Erie Conservation Partnership: Food & Water for the Future of Southeast Michigan RCPP

This resolution approves an agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to accept up to \$7,400,000.00 in grant funds over five years for the "Lake Erie Conservation Partnership: Food & Water for the Future of Southeast Michigan" RCPP (Regional Conservation Partnership Program). RCPPs are special federal grant programs that provide a guaranteed pool of grant funds for regional conservation activities, and typically involve several public and private partners. The City has previously successfully participated in two RCPPs. The City will use the grant funds to purchase conservation easements in the City's Greenbelt District and fund certain costs of administering the program.

On October 5, 2020, City Council approved the submission of a grant proposal to the USDA-NRCS Fiscal Year 2021 RCPP in partnership with Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission, Ann Arbor Township, Scio Township, Webster Township, and others, to secure funding for USDA-NRCS RCPP Easements and RCPP Land Management Contracts in the Huron River and River Raisin Watersheds

On April 22, 2021, the USDA-NRCS notified the City of Ann Arbor that the grant proposal was successful and awarded funds in the amount of \$7,400,000.00 to the RCPP partners. The City is requesting up to \$1,847,000.00 from NRCS toward the purchase of RCPP conservation easements. The City would contribute up to \$1,847,000.00 of Open Space and Parkland Preservation millage funds over the five-year grant period to be matched 1:1 by NRCS RCPP Easement funds. The City of Ann Arbor would commit contributing funds in the amount of \$75,000.00 for due diligence activities (appraisal, survey, title work, environmental assessments, closing costs, etc.) over the five-year grant period, and would receive up to \$450,000.00 in RCPP financial support for staffing to implement RCPP activities. Individual RCPP Easement projects will still seek City Council approval on a project by project basis. The remaining RCPP award funds will be distributed among the RCPP Partners to fund RCPP Easements and RCPP Land Management Contracts in the region.

The City has partnered with several conservation partners in the region to secure this RCPP award, including Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission, Scio Township, Ann Arbor Township, Webster Township, Legacy Land Conservancy, Six Rivers Land Conservancy, Huron River Watershed Council and the Washtenaw County Conservation District. The City is the lead partner for this RCPP and will act as the grant administrator and liaison with USDA-NRCS.

Prepared by: Remy Long, Greenbelt Program Manager, The Conservation Fund

Reviewed by: Derek Delacourt, Community Services Area Administrator

Approved by: John Fournier, Assistant City Administrator

Whereas, Chapter 42 of City Code establishes the Greenbelt District and enables the City to purchase conservation easements on property within the district;

Whereas, The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation

Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) provides a pool of matching grant funds for up to 50% of the purchase price of conservation easements on eligible land, and funds certain administrative costs of the program;

Whereas, The Greenbelt Advisory Commission goal is to leverage the City's millage funds to protect as much land as possible throughout the 30-year life of the millage;

Whereas, On October 5, 2020 City Council approved an application to the USDA-NRCS FY21 RCPP to secure funding for USDA-NRCS RCPP Easements and RCPP Land Management Contracts in Huron River and River Raisin Watersheds (Resolution No. R-20-391);

Whereas, USDA-NRCS awarded \$7,400,000.00 to the "Lake Erie Conservation Partnership: Food & Water for the Future of Southeast Michigan" RCPP for funding RCPP Easements and RCPP Land Management Contracts over five years, with the City as lead partner and the contributing partners consisting of Washtenaw County Parks & Recreation Commission, Scio Township, Ann Arbor Township, Webster Township, Legacy Land Conservancy, Six Rivers Land Conservancy, Huron River Watershed Council and the Washtenaw County Conservation District; and

Whereas, The City, as lead partner, would be eligible to receive matching funds of up to \$1,847,000.00 for USDA-NRCS RCPP Easements and up to \$450,000.00 in financial staffing support for RCPP implementation over five years;

RESOLVED, That City Council accepts the grant award and approves a Programmatic Partnership Agreement with USDA-NRCS for the "Lake Erie Conservation Partnership: Food & Water for the Future of Southeast Michigan" RCPP;

RESOLVED, That the Mayor and City Clerk are authorized and directed to execute the agreement after approval as to substance by the City Administrator and as to form by the City Attorney; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator is authorized to take all appropriate actions to implement this resolution.