



Legislation Text

File #: 16-1242, **Version:** 1

Resolution to Approve Participation in 2016 Assistance to North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grants Program, to be Submitted by Ducks Unlimited

The attached Resolution authorizes the City of Ann Arbor to partner with Ducks Unlimited (DU), the grant applicant, in the Proposal for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Small Grants Program for funding toward the purchase of development rights (PDR) for a property located in Northfield Township.

Applications to the USFWS NAWCA Small Grants Program are for funds up to 50% of the appraised fair market value of the development rights, to a maximum of \$100,000. The NAWCA program is a competitive, matching grants program that supports public-private partnerships carrying out projects in the United States that further the goals of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. These projects must involve long-term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated upland habitats for the benefit of all wetlands-associated migratory birds.

The NAWCA program is voluntary and provides matching funds for entities to protect wetlands by acquiring conservation easements or fee-title properties, or by completing wetland restoration projects. Completed applications must be submitted by November 3, 2016. It is expected that final decisions regarding project selections will be made by the NAWCA Council in February 2017, and that funds will be available by spring or early summer 2017.

DU has successfully applied for a number of USFWS NAWCA Small Grants in the past and is experienced in partnering with local governments and non-profit entities to complete acquisition projects with these funds. By partnering with DU, the City would be gaining the support of an experienced partner and increasing the likelihood of receiving grant funds.

If DU is ultimately awarded the grant based on its proposal to the NAWCA Small Grants Program, a request for an agreement with DU to receive the grant funds will be presented to City Council, likely in the spring of 2017. In addition, an appraisal will be completed and, if awarded grant funds, a request to approve the purchase of the conservation easement and appropriate funds will be submitted to City Council for review and action, subsequent to Council accepting grant funds.

A brief description of the property for grant application is as follows:

The parcel consists of approximately 40 acres along East Joy Road and Nollar Road in Northfield Township. Wetlands and open water cover approximately 24 acres of the property, and although the tract is not currently in active agriculture, 20 acres have a farming history. The tract is located in the Horseshoe Creek drainage, which is a tributary to the Huron River. The property is within a half mile of two Greenbelt easements, and within a mile of a third Greenbelt easement. The Property scored in the top 30% of all Greenbelt applications in the scoring system developed and approved by the Greenbelt Advisory Commission. The protection of this property is a priority for the Greenbelt Program because of the wetlands and natural resources found on the tract, the possibility to leverage

funds from federal and other sources of funding, and its proximity to other protected properties. The property meets the priorities for both the Greenbelt Program and the USFWS NAWCA Programs.

The Greenbelt Advisory Commission recommended partnering with DU in the submission of the grant application at its July 7, 2016 meeting.

Passage of the attached resolution and participation with DU in the proposal submission for the USFWS NAWCA Small Grants Program is recommended by staff.

Prepared by: Ruth Thornton, Greenbelt Program Manager, The Conservation Fund

Reviewed by: Derek Delacourt, Community Services Area Administrator

Approved by: Howard S. Lazarus, City Administrator

Whereas, Chapter 42 of The Ann Arbor City Code establishes the Greenbelt District and enables the City to purchase development rights on property within the district;

Whereas, Limited funds are available through the County Natural Area Preservation Program and Township land preservation funds;

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, The Greenbelt Advisory Commission strongly recommends a minimum of 25% matching funds on Greenbelt purchases, provided by either grant funds, other local matching funds, or landowner donations;

Whereas, Purchase of Development Rights may be funded through the Open Space and Parkland Preservation Millage Proceeds; and

Whereas, If Ducks Unlimited's application is successful, a request for an agreement with Ducks Unlimited to receive the grant funds up to 50% of the appraised fair market value of the development rights of the aforementioned property, to a maximum of \$100,000, will be presented to City Council;

RESOLVED, That City Council approve the Partnership with Ducks Unlimited in the application to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grants Program; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator be authorized to take all necessary actions to implement this resolution, including forwarding a certified copy of this Resolution to Ducks Unlimited and any other documentation required in support of the City's participation as a partner in the North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grants Program proposal to be submitted by Ducks Unlimited.