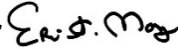


AGENDA ITEM NO. 12-A
MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD REPORT

DATE: June 3, 2026

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Jake Smith, Planning & Conservation Program Manager

REVIEWED BY: Eric Morgan, General Manager 

SUBJECT: Rejection of Bids, Directives to Re-Advertise RFP No. 202526-2, and Temporary Extension of the Palo Corona Regional Park Conservation Grazing Lease

SUMMARY

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (District) released a Request for Proposals (RFP No. 202526-2) on February 13, 2026, to solicit qualified livestock operators for the conservation grazing program at Palo Corona Regional Park (PCRP). The District received five (5) responsive proposals. Following an initial evaluation process and finalist interviews, this item was presented to the Board on May 6, 2026, with a staff recommendation to award the lease to Renz Livestock.

Following receipt of comments from MPRPD’s Board and RFP No. 202526-2 proposers, staff reviewed perceived ambiguity within the RFP process. To bolster proposers’ and the community’s confidence in the integrity of the District’s competitive procurement process, staff now recommends that the Board reject all current proposals and direct staff to re-advertise a clarified solicitation for a lease term commencing November 1, 2026. To maintain grazing at the PCRP through the high-risk dry season, staff further recommends authorizing a temporary, short-term lease extension with the current operator, Paddock Land and Cattle Company (DBA LE Cattle Company LLC), through October 31, 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT

None

DISCUSSION

Program Background

PCRP has a long history of cattle grazing and livestock operations that predate the District's acquisition of the property. Since the PCRP's creation in 2004, the District has utilized this practice as an essential resource management tool to protect and enhance globally rare coastal terrace prairie grasslands and the sensitive species that depend on

them. The conservation grazing program is guided by the science-based Grassland Management Plan for Palo Corona Regional Park (2007), which outlines specific conservation targets and prescribes targeted grazing strategies. Beyond actively reducing wildland fire risks by managing fine fuel loads adjacent to neighboring communities, grazing operations support commitments under the District's Safe Harbor Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This agreement permits ongoing park operations in exchange for maintaining critical habitat conditions for special-status wildlife, including the California red-legged frog, California tiger salamander, and Smith's blue butterfly. Managed under the direct oversight of District staff, the program relies on an extensive network of District-owned grazing infrastructure, including roads, fencing, pasture gates, and complex water delivery systems, requiring routine maintenance and regular repair to remain functional.

Current Lease History

The current conservation grazing lease with Paddock Land and Cattle Company (DBA LE Cattle Company LLC) (Lessee) is set to expire on June 30, 2026. This agreement originally commenced on May 1, 2014, and was amended on November 2, 2017, to extend the term by an additional five years through May 1, 2024. As the expiration date approached, the Board approved a final 26-month lease extension on April 3, 2024, extending the agreement to its current June 30, 2026, end date (**ATTACHMENT 1**).

Working in consultation with the Lessee, the 26-month extension was designed to align the lease end-date with the late-June agricultural cycle, ensuring that annual calves would be weaned, reducing operational impacts to the Lessee should a transition of cattle operators occur after the end of the lease. Importantly, the Board directed that any subsequent lease award would be subject to an open, competitive RFP process. Staff notified the Lessee of the Board's direction at that time and kept them apprised of the RFP's status until it was released.

New Lease Request for Proposals (RFP No. 202526-2)

On February 13, 2026, the District released [RFP No. 202526-2](#) on its OpenGov procurement portal, initiating a 40-day public solicitation period to secure a qualified operator for PCRPs conservation grazing program. The RFP package included a revised lease agreement, information on the Park's operational history, guiding documents, ecological baselines, infrastructure conditions, uniform submission requirements, and evaluation criteria.

Key lease terms established in the solicitation include:

- Initial term: Five (5) years, commencing July 1, 2026
- Extension options: Up to two (2) additional five-year terms at the General Manager's discretion, based on documented tenant performance, for a total possible term of fifteen (15) years
- Performance criteria for extension include: compliance with lease terms and the Grassland Management Plan, infrastructure maintenance and improvements, adherence to stocking capacity limits, proper animal husbandry, achievement of Residual Dry Matter (RDM) targets, and cooperative working relationship with District staff

- Rent Structure: Consistent with the current lease, the new lease is structured with nominal rent of \$1.00 to formalize the agreement, while recognizing that the primary value delivered to the District is through ecosystem services provided by the grazing operation that the District would otherwise have to contract for and fund through its annual budget.

The RFP provided a 26-day window for written technical questions and procedural inquiries where no objections were raised regarding the scoring criteria, the weighting system, or the evaluation process. All participating proposers advanced under this mutually accepted framework, and all applicants formally certified their acceptance of these terms by acknowledging receipt of the RFP and all subsequent addenda upon submission. On February 23, 2026, a mandatory Pre-Proposal meeting was conducted online and attended by representatives from six prospective operations. On March 5, 2026, an optional physical site tour was held, allowing prospective bidders to evaluate park conditions and range infrastructure firsthand. Proposals were due on March 25, 2026.

The District received five (5) responsive proposals, which were securely uploaded and time-stamped through the OpenGov portal from the following operators:

- Lonely Bull Cattle Co.
- Renz Livestock
- Willow Creek Land and Cattle, LLC
- LE Cattle Company LLC
- Baird Livestock and Land Management, LLC

Phase 1- Proposal Review

A three-person evaluation panel, consisting of two District staff members and one independent outside panelist, evaluated the written proposals according to the terms established in the published RFP document. The scoring matrix dedicated up to 100 points to the baseline written proposal, based on the evaluation criteria and terms referenced in the RFP, including, but not limited to:

- Business information and organizational capacity
- Livestock operating experience, including infrastructure maintenance and equipment
- Experience managing livestock conflicts, including recreation and predation
- Experience managing natural resources, including invasive species, sensitive species habitat, and grant collaboration
- Operational plan, including cattle class and rotation proposal
- Employee staffing plan and site presence
- Local preference — business based in Monterey County or within 40 miles of PCR

Phase 2- Finalist Interviews

Following the written proposal evaluation, finalist proposers advanced to a secondary evaluation phase that included interviews with a two-person panel. Under the RFP, Phase 2 carried a maximum possible score of 100 points and contemplated evaluation through both optional interviews and optional site visits. Because the District ultimately did not conduct optional site visits as part of the evaluation process, the 100 points allocated to Phase 2 was based entirely on interview performance, while maintaining the same overall 100-point maximum allocated to the second evaluation phase and 200-point cumulative maximum across both phases.

Selection Recommendation and Protest Window

The independent panel’s objective evaluation scores across both phases resulted in the following final cumulative rankings.

Finalist Proposer	Phase 1: Written Proposal (100 points max)	Phase 2: Oral Interview (100 pts max)	Final Score (200 pts max)
LE Cattle	80.7	62.8	143.4
Lonely Bull	95.8	85.8	181.5
Renz	92.5	91.8	184.3
Willow Creek	91.1	81.5	172.6

(Note: Minor variances in the final calculated sums may reflect rounding differences between displayed scores and the underlying unrounded panel scores).

Based on the final combined scores from both phases, Renz Livestock was determined to be the highest scoring proposer. Following the panel's determination, the District issued a formal Notice of Recommendation to Award to all participating proposers on April 15, 2026. Pursuant to Section 5.4 of the RFP, this notice included a five (5) business day window for any responsive operator to file a formal written protest challenging the RFP process. During this formal protest window, no protests or procedural objections were submitted to the District by any proposer, and the formal protest period closed on April 22, 2026.

Recent Board Consideration and Procedural History

On May 6, 2026, this item was presented to the Board of Directors with a staff recommendation to award the conservation grazing lease to Renz Livestock. During the public comment portion of the hearing, the Board received testimony from the community and participating proposers regarding the procurement process. Consequently, the Board tabled the item to allow staff the opportunity to provide additional documentation to requesting proposers and to explore opportunities to maximize the efficiency of an operator transition while maintaining consistency with the baseline terms of the RFP.

Following a comprehensive review of the RFP and evaluation materials after the May 6 Board meeting, a proposer made staff aware of a textual ambiguity within Sections 4.2 and 8 of the solicitation regarding how Phase 2 scoring would be administered in the event optional site visits were not conducted and informally protested the allocation. While the RFP established a 100-point maximum for Phase 2 evaluation, the evaluation language did not expressly clarify that interview scoring would constitute the entirety of the 100 points allocated to Phase 2 evaluation if site visits were omitted.

Additionally, during the evaluation process, one panel reviewer voluntarily withdrew participation out of an abundance of caution after identifying a potential perceived conflict. Although staff does not believe this circumstance compromised the integrity of the evaluation process, the withdrawal and subsequent public discussion contributed to broader questions regarding the transparency and overall perception of the procurement process.

To eliminate any ambiguity or inequity perceived by participants, staff determined that the District would be best served by rejecting all current proposals and re-advertising a revised RFP, allowing the District to address any perceived ambiguities and make any other improvements as appropriate to the RFP based on lessons learned from this process. Accordingly, staff recommend that the Board reject all bids and direct staff to re-advertise the RFP with a targeted lease commencement date of November 1, 2026.

Executing a total rejection of bids without an emergency temporary extension would leave PCRPs unmanaged during the fire season. To preserve continuous resource management and critical fuel reduction operations at the park through the dry season, staff also recommend extending the current lease with Paddock Land and Cattle Company (DBA LE Cattle Company LLC) through October 31, 2026.

Therefore, a temporary four-month extension is brought forward as an act of operational necessity to maintain fire risk reduction and sensitive habitat while the corrected solicitation is processed. Importantly, while the original RFP layout anticipated an initial lease start date of July 1, 2026, it was structurally designed to terminate on October 31 to permanently align future terms with the traditional November 1 through October 31 regional grazing season. Shifting the revised RFP's lease commencement date to November 1, 2026, accomplishes this seasonal alignment goal immediately.

Extending the current lease through October 31, 2026, directly coincides with this standard fall grazing season cycle and matches the proposed October 31 termination date included in the revised lease structure, ensuring a seamless operational timeline for both the District and the eventual awardee.

CEQA Compliance

The temporary extension of the existing conservation grazing lease, consistent with the foundational Grassland Management Plan, is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the Class 1 Categorical Exemption (Existing Facilities). This exemption applies to the operation, repair, maintenance,

permitting, leasing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, or topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of an existing or former use (14 Cal. Code Regs. §15301). The recommended action constitutes a short-term lease extension of public facilities and topographical features to continue established, legal grazing uses on the property. As a continuation of an ongoing resource management program with zero expansion of use, the project is categorically exempt under Class 1.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Pursuant to Section 601 of the District Ordinance, which mandates that no person shall permit livestock grazing on District lands without the express permission of the Board, Staff respectfully recommend that the Board of Directors:

1. Reject all proposals received in response to Request for Proposals (RFP) No. 202526-2 for the Palo Corona Regional Park Conservation Grazing Lease.
2. Direct staff to re-advertise a revised Conservation Grazing RFP substantially as to form, incorporating explicit structural clarifications regarding phase-weighting and updated proposal evaluation metrics, for a new lease term commencing November 1, 2026.
3. Authorize and direct the General Manager to negotiate and execute a temporary, short-term lease extension with the current operator, Paddock Land and Cattle Company, through October 31, 2026, to align with the revised RFP timeline, standard agricultural cycles, and the optimized seasonal calendar.

ATTACHMENTS

1. [Current grazing lease with Paddock Land & Cattle LLC](#)