

**FILE NUMBER: 2025-143**

**DATE:** Friday, June 6, 2025

**SUBJECT: As-Needed Natural Resources Agreements**

**DESCRIPTION: Resolution Selecting and Authorizing Agreements with AECOM Technical Services, Inc.; Dudek; GHD, Inc.; ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc.; Tierra Data, Inc.; and WSP USA, Inc. to Provide As-Needed Natural Resources Management Services for a Total Aggregate Amount not to Exceed \$1,500,000 for a Period of Five Years. Funds Required for Future Fiscal Years will be Budgeted in the Appropriate Fiscal Year, Subject to Board Approval Upon Adoption of Each Fiscal Year's Budget**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) #24-30JLR for As-Needed Natural Resources Management Services was sent to 2,100 vendors via PlanetBids on January 7, 2025, pursuant to BPC Policy No. 110, with submittals due February 11, 2025. The District received eleven responsive proposals. Based on the written proposals and a decision analysis process using the criteria stated in the RFQ, staff recommends that the Board select and authorize agreements with the following six companies: (1) AECOM Technical Services, Inc.; (2) Dudek; (3) GHD, Inc.; (4) ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc.; (5) Tierra Data, Inc.; and (6) WSP USA, Inc. (Attachments A - F agreements) to provide as-needed natural resources management services for a total aggregate amount not to exceed \$1,500,000 for a period of five years.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a Resolution selecting and authorizing agreements with AECOM Technical Services, Inc., Dudek, GHD, Inc., ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc., Tierra Data, Inc., and WSP USA, Inc. for on-call natural resources management services for a total amount not to exceed \$1,500,000 for a period of five years.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Funds for the first year of the agreement are budgeted in the FY 2026 Environmental Conservation's proposed budget for On-Call Natural Resource Consultant subject to Board approval. Funds required for future fiscal years will be budgeted in the appropriate fiscal year, subject to board approval upon adoption of each fiscal year's budget.

**COMPASS STRATEGIC GOALS:**

On-Call Natural Resource consultants support District projects focused on habitat conservation, implementation and monitoring of nature-based solutions, enhancing engagement with nature, protecting endangered species, mitigation monitoring, proactive removal and/or eradication of invasive species, environmental education and volunteer

opportunities, as well as other environmental projects. This agenda item supports the following Strategic Goal(s).

- A vibrant waterfront destination where residents and visitors converge.
- A Port with a healthy and sustainable bay and its environment.
- A Port with a comprehensive vision for Port land and water uses integrated to regional plans.

## **DISCUSSION:**

### **Background**

As an environmental champion for San Diego Bay, the District manages and protects natural resources in and around tidelands. This includes but is not limited to the monitoring and protection of sensitive species and habitats, promotion of sustainable development, the fostering and furthering of public awareness of natural resources issues, in water construction permit compliance, mitigation monitoring, and continued support of related scientific research. Additionally, staff provides support for the Environmental Advisory Committee, the Environmental Fund, coordination and management of the Environmental Education Program, support for the Capital Projects and Major Maintenance and administrative support for the Chula Vista Wildlife Advisory Committee. In order to complete tasks effectively and efficiently, District staff rely on additional expertise and assistance of qualified consultants to assist with various tasks. These tasks include, but are not limited to, management of endangered species and natural resources; coordinating predator control and invasive species management activities; coordinating preservation and enhancement of sensitive species and habitats; research and preparation specific to mitigation banking; regulatory permit compliance; wetland jurisdictional delineations; pursuit of grant funding; coordination of project reviews with stakeholders; preparation of presentations and other information documents; and additional special assignments and tasks benefitting the health of San Diego Bay.

The Board authorized on-call natural resources agreements with six consultant firms on June 14, 2022 (Resolution #2018-0162), which was amended in June 2023 and February 2024. These existing agreements will expire on June 30, 2025. To continue working on natural resources issues, staff recommends entering into new five-year agreements for as-needed natural resources management services with six consulting firms to commence on July 1, 2025.

### **Request for Qualifications**

On January 7, 2025, pursuant to BPC Policy No. 110, the District issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ #24-30JLR) for As-Needed Natural Resources Management Services. The RFQ notification was sent to 2,100 vendors via PlanetBids and the District received eleven responsive proposals. Staff reviewed each of the eleven proposals and evaluated them using criteria established in the RFQ. Based on review of the proposals, staff recommends authorizing agreements with six firms. The six firms recommended to provide as-need services are:

*AECOM Technical Services, Inc.*

AECOM Technical Services, Inc. (AECOM) has extensive experience in natural resource management, including habitat assessments, ecological restoration, and specialized marine biology. AECOM's natural resources professionals work on a variety of projects along or in San Diego Bay, including natural resource surveys and habitat restoration in Chula Vista and National City, Chula Vista Bayfront Sweetwater Park, the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge, and Chula Vista Wildlife Reserve. The AECOM team includes the following subcontractors: Merkel & Associates, Inc., a small business (SBE) and woman-owned business enterprise (WBE); ACS Habitat Management, Inc., a minority-owned business enterprise (MBE); Nordby Biological Consulting; and the San Diego Natural History Museum.

#### *Dudek*

Dudek has decades of experience working on San Diego Bay and has completed several environmental efforts with the District over the past 20 years. Dudek's staff include scientific, regulatory and planning professionals working on a variety of complex environmental management projects. The Dudek team includes the following subcontractors: ADV-SOC, Inc. a disabled veteran-owned business enterprise (DVBE) (SBE); Dancing Coyotes Environmental (SBE, WBE); GEI Consultants, Inc.; Juniper Group Inc, DBA Juniper Strategic Advisory; and Merkel & Associates, Inc. (SBE, WBE).

#### *GHD, Inc.*

GHD has direct experience with the District's Environmental Conservation, Engineering, and Planning departments on environmental planning, biological monitoring, and regulatory compliance projects, as well as experience with other local agencies. GHD's staff have a well-established understanding of coastal habitat, ecology, and restoration. The GHD team includes the following subcontractors: Nexus Planning & Research (SBE); Atlas Planning Solutions (SBE, DVBE); and Merkel & Associates, Inc. (WBE).

#### *ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc.*

ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc. (ICF) has provided consulting services to the District for over 27 years, including natural resources management services. The ICF team has worked on complex coastal restoration and enhancement projects throughout Southern California including design, permitting and implementation of restoration projects. ICF's team includes the following subcontractors: Marine Taxonomic Services Ltd. (SBE); IO Environmental & Infrastructure (SBE, DVBE); and Mission Environmental LLC (SBE).

#### *Tierra Data, Inc.*

Tierra Data, Inc. (TDI) is a small (SBE), women-owned (WBE) and disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) firm with over 30 years of experience providing natural resource management services both in public and private conservation sectors working in Southern California marine and terrestrial environments. TDI authored the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan for San Diego Bay as well as the Chula Vista Natural Resource Management Plan. TDI's team includes the following subcontractors: Rincon Consultants, Inc.; GHD, Inc.; Coastal Spc (SBE); and Marine Taxonomic Services, Ltd. (SBE).

#### *WSP USA, Inc.*

WSP USA, Inc. (WSP) is a port- and harbor-focused consulting firm with more than 30 years of experience working with the District with in-depth knowledge of tidelands, submerged lands, and uplands around San Diego Bay. WSP has supported the District's Regional Harbor Monitoring Program, and our Blue Technology, and Aquaculture projects. WSP's team includes the following subcontractors: Scout Environmental, Inc. (SBE, DVBE); FMF Pandion (SBE, DVBE); Merkel & Associates, Inc. (SBE, WBE); Six Scientific Service (SBE); MBC Aquatic Sciences (SBE); Noble LLC; and San Diego Natural History Museum.

The decision analysis conducted via the RFQ, determined that all six firms demonstrated the relevant experience needed, a thorough and thoughtful approach with a good understanding of the District's issues related to natural resource projects, all with fair and reasonable costs. It was determined that each of the six firms would provide unique value to the District's as-needed natural resources management requirements.

### **General Counsel's Comments:**

The General Counsel's Office reviewed this agenda and approved the proposed agreements as presented to it as to form and legality.

### **Environmental Review:**

The proposed Board action, including without limitation a resolution authorizing agreements to provide as-needed natural resources management services for a period of five years does not constitute a project under the definition set forth in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15352 and 15378 because no direct or indirect changes to the physical environment would occur. CEQA requires that the District adequately assess the environmental impacts of projects and reasonably foreseeable activities that may result from projects prior to the approval of the same. Any project developed as a result of Board action requiring the District or the Board's discretionary approval resulting in a physical change to the environment would be analyzed in accordance with CEQA prior to such approval. CEQA review may result in the District, in its sole and absolute discretion, requiring implementation of mitigation measures, adopting an alternative, including without limitation, a "no project alternative" or adopting a Statement of Overriding Consideration, if required. The exercise of this discretion is in no way limited by this proposed Board action. Therefore, no further CEQA review is required.

The proposed Board action is consistent with Sections 21 and 35 of the Port Act, which allow for the Board to pass resolutions and to do all acts necessary and convenient for the exercise of its powers. The Port Act was enacted by the California Legislature and is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine. Consequently, the proposed Board action is consistent with the Public Trust Doctrine.

The proposed Board action does not allow for development, as defined in Section 30106 of the California Coastal Act, or new development, pursuant to Section 1.a. of the District's

Coastal Development Permit (CDP) Regulations because there will not be, without limitation, a physical change, change in use or increase in intensity of uses. Therefore, issuance of a Coastal Development Permit or exclusion is not required. However, development within the District requires processing under the District's CDP Regulations. Future development would remain subject to its own independent review pursuant to the District's certified CDP Regulations, Port Master Plan (PMP), and the relevant chapter(s) of the Coastal Act. The exercise of the District's discretion under the District's CDP Regulations is in no way limited by the proposed Board action.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program:**

A 5% SBE goal was established for this Agreement. The recommended firms listed SBE subcontractors as part of their teams to meet the 5% goal.

**PREPARED BY:**

Heather Carroll  
Program Manager, Environmental Conservation

Attachment(s):  
Attachment A: Agreement No. 41-2025JLR with AECOM Technical Services, Inc.  
Attachment B: Agreement No. 36-2025JLR with Dudek  
Attachment C: Agreement No. 40-2025JLR with GHD, Inc.  
Attachment D: Agreement No. 39-2025JLR with ICF Jones & Stokes, Inc.  
Attachment E: Agreement No. 38-2025JLR with Tierra Data, Inc.  
Attachment F: Agreement No. 37-2025JLR with WSP USA, Inc.