



DATE: February 23, 2023

MEMO TO: Nels Leutwiler, Chair
Preservation Foundation Board

FROM: Pati Vitt
Director of Natural Resources

RECOMMENDATION: Recommend approval of a Grant from Unrestricted Funds to Support Training and Equipping Volunteers to Participate in Prescribed Burns

FINANCIAL DATA: The requested funds will be paid in full in Spring 2023. As of December 31, 2022, the Foundation’s total of unrestricted funding was \$445,754.06. Grants payable from the unrestricted funds as of December 31, 2022, include:

| Year | Amount |
|--|------------------|
| 2023 | \$139,015 |
| 2024 | \$38,300 |
| 2025 | \$11,000 |
| Total Payable from Unrestricted Funds | \$188,315 |

BACKGROUND:

To maintain the highest native species diversity, particularly in high quality remnant habitats, the District needs to optimize our prescribed burn program to ensure that these habitats are burned every 3-4 years to maintain species diversity. To increase the District’s operational capacity for prescribed burning, the Natural Resources Department is seeking to expand the pool of trained burn crew members, particularly among our volunteer staff, and to fully equip a volunteer burn crew.

In the Fall of 2021, District volunteers participated in a virtual prescribed burn training offered by the Chicago Wilderness Alliance (CWA). The CWA Midwest Prescribed Burn Training is recognized across the region as the “entry-level” prescribed burn training. The CWA training, or the National Wildfire Coordinator Group (NWCG) S-130, are required by the District and other organizations to certify District staff and volunteers to participate in prescribed burning as burn crew members. Two additional training opportunities are currently scheduled for District volunteers in March 2023 and will be followed by a staff-led half-day live fire field training.

Volunteer burn crews conduct prescribed burns led by District staff acting as Burn Bosses and experienced burn crew members. Two volunteer burn crews recently conducted two prescribed burns at Cuba Marsh Forest Preserve in collaboration with the Citizens for Conservation as part of the Barrington Greenway Initiative. These two prescribed burns were small (Ela Prairie = 3.75 acres and Cathedral Woods = 19.5 acres) by necessity, constrained by a lack of trained and

experienced volunteers as well as a lack of equipment, including radios for communications and a vehicle with a water tank and pumper unit to ensure safe management of fire.

The total cost of this initiative is \$52,720, including two volunteer training sessions, personal protective equipment and a vehicle equipped with a tank and pumper unit as required by the District’s Prescribed Burn Management Procedures to ensure safe containment of intentional fire.

The Natural Resources Department requests \$30,300 to support training and equipping District volunteers to participate in prescribed burning. The requested funds will be matched by \$23,000, including \$16,000 from private donors to the Preservation Foundation and \$7,000 in funding that the District secured through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Project Budget

| Item | Est. Cost | Unit | Purchased with Grant Funds | NOTE: |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Kubota | \$24,000.00 | 1 | | RTV-X1120, cage, doors, etc. |
| Sprayer/Skid Unit | \$2,500.00 | 1 | | Northstar 55-gal capacity |
| Trailer | \$4,500.00 | 1 | | Big Tex 60ES, 12' |
| Radios | \$4,800.00 | 12 | 8 | \$400 each - compatible with current stock |
| Radio Harness | \$600.00 | 12 | 8 | \$50 each |
| Nomex Clothing | \$7,200.00 | 10 | | \$720 Fire Retardant Pants/Shirts |
| Bullard Helmet | \$1,400.00 | 10 | | \$140 with Face Shield & Neck Protector |
| Signs | \$200.00 | 4 | 4 | “Prescribed Burn Ahead Do Not Report” - \$50 |
| Trail Signs | \$200.00 | 2 | 2 | “Caution Smoke Ahead” - \$100 |
| Sign Stands | \$560.00 | 4 | 4 | \$140 each |
| Rakes | \$200.00 | 4 | | \$50 each |
| Flappers | \$390.00 | 6 | | \$65 each |
| Water Packs | \$2,160.00 | 8 | 8 | \$270 each |
| Drip Torches | \$660.00 | 4 | | \$165 each |
| Fuel Cans | \$150.00 | 2 | | For drip torch mix |
| CWA Training | \$3,200.00 | 2 | | Certified Trainer \$1400/session + materials (\$200.) |
| TOTAL: | \$52,720.00 | | | |

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Board President, Director of Community Engagement and Partnerships, Director of Finance, Forest Preserves Executive Director, Preservation Foundation Executive Director.

PRESERVATION FOUNDATION BOARD:

Date: _____ Roll Call Vote: Ayes: ____ Nays: _____

Voice Vote Majority Ayes; Nays: _____