



STAFF REPORT

TO: Dorothy M. Sakazaki Environmental Endowment Fund Board of Directors

FROM: Stacey Ambrose, MVSD Deputy General Manager

DATE: May 8, 2025

SUBJECT: Gardens at Heather Farm Task Order No. 3 to Agreement 23-0004

RECOMMENDATION

1. Receive report from staff.
2. Adopt a motion approving Task Order No. 3 with Gardens at Heather Farm and authorizing the Board President to execute Task Order No. 3 with a not-to-exceed limit of \$60,000 for fiscal year 2025-2026.

DISCUSSION

The Dorothy M. Sakazaki Environmental Endowment Fund (DMSEEF) and Mt. View Sanitary District (District) partner with Gardens at Heather Farm (GAHF) to provide high-quality wetlands education programs for students throughout Contra Costa County. These programs include the Wetlands Classroom Program and the award-winning Wetlands Field Trip Program. These programs continue to benefit Contra Costa County school students, as well as the community's natural resources by increasing awareness and appreciation for the functions and values of wetland habitats.

Agreement 23-0004 is a three-year agreement between DMSEEF, District, and GAHF for fiscal years 2023-2024, 2024-2025, and 2025-2026 with a not-to-exceed value of

TASK ORDER NO. 3
CONTRACT NO. 23-0004

DOROTHY M. SAKAZAKI ENVIRONMENTAL ENDOWMENT FUND dba Mt. Diablo Wetlands
Fund (DMSEEF)

AND

MT. VIEW SANITARY DISTRICT
(DISTRICT)

AND

HEATHER FARM GARDEN CENTER ASSOCIATION, INC. dba The Gardens at Heather Farm
(CONSULTANT)

This Task Order is issued by the DISTRICT and accepted by CONSULTANT pursuant to the mutual promises, covenants and conditions contained in the Agreement between the above-named parties dated the 30th day of June 2023, in connection with services associated with the Wetlands Education Program (hereinafter "Project").

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Task Order is to provide services related to completion of the Wetlands Education Program, comprised of the Wetlands Field Trip Program and In Classroom Program.

CONSULTANT'S SERVICES

CONSULTANT'S services shall include the tasks set forth in this section. A detailed scope of work and description for each task is included as Attachment 1 to this Task Order 3.

TASK 1 – DELIVER THE WETLANDS FIELD TRIP PROGRAM

TASK 2 – DELIVER THE WETLANDS IN CLASSROOM PROGRAM

TIME OF PERFORMANCE

This Task order shall be fully performed not later than June 30, 2026.

PAYMENT

CONSULTANT shall provide invoices on a monthly basis for work performed toward completion of Task 1 through 2. Payment of invoices will be made within 30 days of receipt. A detailed estimate of hours and costs is included as Attachment 1 to this Task Order 3. The budget for each task will vary depending on demand for each program. The aggregate of Task 1 and Task 2 shall not exceed \$60,000.

Task	Total Not-to-Exceed TO#3
Task 1 – Wetlands Field Trip Program	
Task 2 – In Classroom Program	
TOTAL TASK ORDER NO. 3	\$60,000

EFFECTIVE DATE

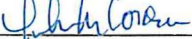
This Task Order No.3 is effective as of the 1st day of July, 2025.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, duly authorized representatives of the DISTRICT and of the CONSULTANT have executed this Task Order No.3 evidencing its issuance by DISTRICT and acceptance by CONSULTANT.

DISTRICT

CONSULTANT

Accepted this 13th day of March, 2025

By: 
 Lilia M. Corona,
 General Manager

By: 
 Officer

Name: Joan Lucchese

Title: Executive Director

DMSEEF

By: _____
 Gregory Pyka,
 Board President



THE GARDENS
at Heather Farm

Heather Farm Garden Center Association, Inc., dba

The Gardens at Heather Farm

Tax ID #23-7072009

1540 Marchbanks Drive

Walnut Creek, CA 94598

Proposal for:

Mt. View Sanitary District's Wetlands Education Program

2025-2026

Organizational History:

Founded in 1971, and awarded 501(c)(3) status in 1972, The Gardens at Heather Farm is a non-profit organization whose mission is to educate the community about being good stewards of the environment. Our 6.5 acre public garden provides a living classroom and is a Certified Wildlife Habitat and Certified Green business. Located in the City of Walnut Creek, the garden demonstrates and helps educate the community with regard to low-maintenance planting, water conservation, and environmentally friendly pest management and fertilization methods, as well as stunning landscape techniques and designs.

The Gardens at Heather Farm has, for more than 38 years, delivered environmental science education to K-8 students in over 300 schools in Contra Costa County. Pre covid, during the 2018-2019 school year, our teaching staff delivered our established curriculum (Natural Science Classroom) to over 27,000 K-8 students. Our presentations are focused on topics such as rocks and minerals, insects, plants and seeds, composting, biodiversity, and land-based and aquatic ecosystems. The majority of the students we reach have limited access to natural green space and related science curriculum. This year, 52% of our classes were taught in Title 1 schools. Many of our classes are taught on site in the garden, which serves as a living laboratory used to help establish a child's connection to the natural world. Our programs are engaging and always include hands-on activities for students of diverse backgrounds and learning styles.

The Gardens at Heather Farm is uniquely suited for leading the MVSD Wetlands Education program, as we have partnered with Contra Costa Water District for the last 5 years conducting similar water education programming. Our teaching staff is very comfortable with curriculum involving wetlands, water processes, and water treatment, so the background knowledge necessary is already in place. At CCWD our teachers lead water treatment plant tours, wetland hikes, and water quality activities focused on the Delta and our drinking water. During our Water Treatment Plant tours, students learn about the water cycle, where our water comes from, how we utilize water in our everyday lives, and how pollution can affect our drinking supply. We also have the privilege of taking students on a tour of the live water treatment facility where they experience the complete process, starting with the collection of water from the Delta, through the various steps of water treatment done on site, and finally into the pipes that deliver the water to our homes. During our field trip to Los Vaqueros Reservoir, students learn about animal adaptations and how to identify animals using clues they leave behind like tracks, fur, feathers, and scat. On a hike students observe wild animals and learn the importance of food webs in the many diverse habitats at Los Vaqueros. Using several models, students see in real time how pollution can affect our drinking water and ways we can work together to keep pollution out of the Delta. Lastly, students learn about the Native Americans that occupied the land Los Vaqueros now resides on. We discuss how they utilized the land and resources that can still be found in our environment today. Our teaching staff has been trained and is experienced in teaching curriculum focused on the water cycle, and how water moves throughout Northern California.

The Gardens at Heather Farm staff is also well versed in working at a live facility and outdoor environments that are located on public utility sites. Our staff has been trained to work cohesively with on site staff to conduct public programming in an essential service facility. We understand the unique working relationship necessary to keep everyone safe and to keep all facilities running smoothly. All staff are trained on how to use radios, including how to access emergency services if necessary. Our knowledge of safety and procedures while on site at a working facility will make our partnership a seamless transition for your on site staff.

We have been teaching in-classroom programs for over 3 decades and understand the flexibility needed when working with students and districts. Post-Covid, we have returned to in-classroom programming at over 100 schools. Our teachers are very comfortable navigating the check-in and on site processes involved in visiting local schools. All of our programs involve activities that require hands-on materials that the teachers transport to and from the classroom. We have ample on site storage at our offices in Walnut Creek for all classroom materials needed. After each program, teachers evaluate supplies and order any materials as needed. We have processes in place to monitor materials needed for each program to make sure we have adequate supplies on hand and take necessary steps to replenish anything needed. Our teachers present programs in several different classrooms each day and are comfortable entering a variety of classroom spaces with various technology resources. Our teachers know each classroom is unique and always make sure to be respectful of all students, teaching staff, and classroom routines.

Our Staff:

Our staff has diverse backgrounds, including a retired teacher and many with degrees in science. Most of our teachers have been with us for at least 2 years. Our staff are fingerprinted and background checked through Live Scan.

Joan Lucchese has been the Executive Director at The Gardens at Heather Farm since 2015. She has been involved in non-profit work for over 35 years as a volunteer, Board member, Board President, and Executive Director. She has a degree in small business and non-profit management from CSU Hayward, and is Certificated by the Philanthropy University program at Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley, and the Sanford School of Philanthropy at John F. Kennedy University. Among her accomplishments as Executive Director at The Gardens at Heather Farm is the planning, funding, and building of a new on-site greenhouse complex which is used for plant propagation for the maintenance of the 6.5 acre public garden and for plant sales to the public; planning, funding and building of a large community garden that provides space for 82 local families to grow their own food and garden with their children; and raising funds and providing oversight of the installation of two new demonstration gardens, The Butterfly Garden and the Climate Discovery Garden in 2022. The Gardens' primary mission is educating the community about being good stewards of the environment, and the children's education program is a major component of that mission. The Gardens has doubled funding support for this program over the last five years and works continuously to improve and strengthen the program.

Our Education Manager, Linsay Del Rosa is a credentialed teacher with over 15 years experience teaching science, including 11 years as a classroom science teacher. She has a B.S. and a multiple subjects teaching credential, and has worked with students in grades K-8. Linsay has won several teaching awards for her positive and engaging teaching methods, including Teacher of the Year for her school site, and Staff Member of the Year by the school site's PTA. When NGSS was implemented, Linsay was at the forefront of modifying curriculum to meet these new standards within her district, including serving as teacher in charge of curriculum development. Linsay attended numerous trainings, seminars, and conferences about NGSS and is extremely knowledgeable about the positive changes and impacts the new standards have on scientific learning. Linsay is also certified as a Level 1 Google Educator, which allows her to provide materials and resources to teachers using Google Suite, which is now the accepted format for all local school districts.

Olivia Montosa graduated from California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) with a degree in Environmental Studies in December of 2022 and has focused on making a difference in the lives of students. Olivia began working as a science educator in 2018 for a nonprofit organization, where she ventured to schools across Monterey County teaching about environmental issues and climate change. During her last semester at CSUMB, she also volunteered for the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History to educate children on how to care for native fauna and flora. Throughout her undergraduate training, Olivia continued to expand her knowledge of teaching and strived to enhance engagement in young students. Becoming an educator at The Gardens at Heather Farm has allowed Olivia to help students realize that

science can be both fun and educational. Working at The Gardens includes some of Olivia's favorite things: working outdoors, learning about native plants, and all things bug-related!

Virginia Hewgley has been a classroom educator for 18+ years. She taught 4th and 5th grade for many years, as well as Science and STEM to K-5 in the Mt. Diablo Unified School District. As the STEM teacher, Virginia was well-trained in NGSS and helped implement new curriculum both at her site and throughout the district. Gardening, camping, hiking, and learning about native flora and fauna have been an important part of her life since she was a child in the foothills of Mt. Hood in Oregon. She has cultivated an interest in the indigenous people of what is now the United States since her first class at UC Santa Cruz. When she isn't teaching, she researches and adds native plants to her home garden, participates in the East Bay Regional Parks Challenge, sews, and experiments with new cuisines to cook and eat.

Danielle Collin's fervor for children, education, and the environment started young. Her first experiences with teaching and children started in 2002 through the tutoring of classmates, and continued informally until 2009, when she took a volunteer position as a field trip specialist at the Pittsburg High School Science Museum. Following the dissolution of the PHS Science Museum, Danielle volunteered at every opportunity to participate and teach younger students through extracurriculars, electives and cooperative programs at the Keller Canyon Waste Facility, Dow Wetlands, on the R.V. Brownlee, and in Sausalito with the Marine Mammal Center. In 2017, she attained an Associate of Arts degree in Liberal Arts and Associate of Science in Biology, as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology emphasizing ecology, evolution, and behavior. During her time in college, Danielle led multiple studies on how the quality of water in the Greater Bay Area affects native and invasive species. She also began her own small animal rescue specifically for exotic mammals. The rescue has since expanded to include birds and reptiles. Danielle has continued her education through various California Community Colleges studying mycology, dendrology, small and nonprofit business management, and psychology. She also attends seminars provided by local agencies on wildlife, the environment, and ecology.

Claire Raines is a talented individual who feels privileged to spend time working with children of all ages in a multitude of settings. Her passion for teaching and mentoring young minds began during high school, where she was involved in several community theater programs that brought theater education to younger children. While attending UC Irvine, where she obtained her Bachelor's Degree with honors, she worked with children and students of all ages in a variety of settings. She believes that each child has the potential to learn and grow. She works tirelessly to create a safe and supportive learning environment that encourages each student to reach their full potential. As the owner and performer at Storytime Character Co., a children's entertainment company, she has planned and executed a wide variety of events for the community of Brentwood. Through her company, she has been able to create opportunities for young theater professionals to grow and thrive while attaining a high level of theater training through paid work, making magic moments for children.

Rebekah Arias brings her enthusiasm and love of learning to Heather Farm's educational programs by always looking for fresh, innovative information to share with the programs'

participants.. After receiving her B.S. in Business Management, Rebekah spent many years working for various high-technology firms located in Silicon Valley and became a Certified Intel University instructor where she conducted over ten years of corporate training classes in the fields of safety, harassment avoidance, employee benefits, and employee orientation. It was also during this time that her interest in teaching was reignited when she joined San Jose Mayor Ron Gonzales' Role Model Program, an effort that recruited adult role models to visit local middle schools. Her love for reading and writing eventually led her into the teaching realm, where she has taught pre-K through high school students English, reading, and writing. Furthermore, Rebekah also proctors college and high school entrance exams (ACT, SAT, PSAT, etc.). She strives to get the students excited about learning and how their newfound knowledge can be applied to today's world.

Our organization and education team is comfortable with pivoting to meet the needs of the students we are working with and the standards for curriculum. When new science standards were released, our teachers spent numerous hours updating curriculum to meet the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) produced by the Department of Education. Every program we teach is now NGSS aligned and focuses on the disciplinary core ideas for each grade level. We list these aligned standards in the description of our programs to make it easier for classroom teachers to know which program will work best for their current lessons and curriculum. Along with the NGSS aligned curriculum we utilize in our programs, we also provide teachers with many pre and post lessons, activities, websites, videos, and interactive activities to help prepare students and enforce the curriculum we teach. These resources are shared with all classroom teachers and allows them to choose what medium and activities would best support their current curriculum and keep their students engaged.

Our teaching team is well versed in working with students from diverse backgrounds and abilities, including students with special needs. They are able to change curriculum and materials based on the abilities of the students in each class. Our teachers, based on their observations, can quickly modify programming to what will best engage the students.

When students stopped being able to attend school in person, we made a quick transition to presenting our lessons virtually, which gave us the opportunity to continue teaching, even when we couldn't meet with our students in person. We were able to begin providing virtual lessons in the fall of 2020, when students were starting distance learning. Our teachers taught hundreds of our programs virtually, including many of our Natural Science Classroom programs and our Contra Costa Water District programs. We created a 3 hour Los Vaqueros program (taught in 3 1-hour sections) and a 1 hour Water Treatment Plant program that we taught through distance learning. We still continue to offer this option to teachers who teach at virtual academies or are unable to come to our site for our in person field trips.

Scheduling:

We have a robust scheduling and calendar system and can begin scheduling classes immediately. We have used this system for 2 years and all of our staff is well versed in how to run reports and manage bookings. Many teachers have used this software for booking our field trips and classroom programs, so they are familiar with how to complete a booking. We collect all important information from the teacher including site, district, grade level, and number of students. Our staff is able to manipulate the calendar to only allow certain dates available for a program. From that calendar, teachers can choose the date that works best for them. This eliminates the back and forth between our staff and teachers about possible dates and allows teachers to start the process of securing chaperones, drivers, and permission slips right away. This system also allows us to provide all preparatory information for programming including liability releases, directions, educational materials, etc. directly to the teacher's email. Every teacher will also receive reminder emails before the program, updates on any changes, and post field trip surveys for feedback. Our staff uses Google calendar, which our software interfaces with, to confirm programs. This calendar also allows MVSD staff to easily see when programs are taking place to help coordinate any activities that are affected by on site field trips. We are able to easily compile reports that include all relevant information about each program for invoicing purposes. These reports can be specialized for the unique requirements of your funding and accounting needs. We will work with the district to manage billing to meet your requirements.

Please see attachments for invoicing examples and graphics showing the steps teachers will complete to book a program.

Outreach:

The Gardens at Heather Farm has long-term relationships with school districts throughout Contra Costa County. We also have a wide range of homeschool families throughout the county that participate in our programs. We currently have an established email list with thousands of local teachers who are interested in bringing science content to their students. We are a trusted education partner that teachers know, and they are confident that our well established programs are aligned with current standards and taught in an engaging way. We can easily include MVSD programs in our outreach. Outreach is performed through email, distribution of flyers at school sites, and social media channels, which reach thousands of teachers in districts in Contra Costa County and beyond.

Program Content:

We evaluate our curriculum, lessons, and standards every year. We review program content regularly to ensure it is engaging, meets NGSS, and is relevant to current in-classroom curriculum for each district. We often modify curriculum depending on the age and learning abilities of the students in each class. We also explore activities and manipulatives that we use to teach our hands-on lessons to confirm they meet the most up-to-date standards and work well for the grade level and abilities of the students we are working with. Our teachers' strong

background in science and education allows them to pinpoint where our programs and tools can be improved to provide the best experience possible for each student that we get to work with.

Implementation:

If The Gardens at Heather Farm is awarded this contract, we would begin implementation immediately. This would include working with MVSD staff to establish timelines and trainings necessary to begin our work. We would work with MVSD staff to schedule required safety training and initial training of our teaching staff. During this time we will familiarize ourselves with your curriculum and site specific components. We would plan to begin teacher and school site outreach in August before school starts to schedule programs in September. We anticipate we will begin leading field trip tours in September.

Budget:

Wetlands Field Trip:

\$850 per program

This price includes all of the following:

- Hire, train, and supervise knowledgeable instructors to lead all tours. Each program will include 3 teachers
- All associated costs with staffing including, but not limited to labor, transportation, insurance, overhead, payroll, administrative fees, etc.
- All associated costs with database subscriptions including, but not limited to communication costs, scheduling, fees, etc.
- Provide outreach to previous teachers and teachers within our database about availability of programs
- Be the point of contact for all teachers regarding any questions about their field trip tour
- Coordinate and manage all field trip supplies
- Coordinate and manage the application lottery for interested schools if applicable
- Contact teachers for scheduling of programs
- Contact teachers several times before field trips with important information and reminders about the programs
- Provide teachers with the following materials:
 - pre and post tour resources for use with their students in the classroom
 - liability releases or any other MVSD required paperwork for field trip tours
 - post tour evaluation for teachers to complete
- Review and modify curriculum to ensure a high quality of content and that they meet current state teaching standards
- Invoice and bill MVSD when requested (i.e. once a month). Invoice will provide metrics required by MVSD, including teacher name, school site, school district, grade level, title 1 and number of students

In Classroom Programs:

\$275 Per Program

This price includes all of the following:

- All details listed above for wetland field trips
- House all program supplies at our facility in Walnut Creek
- Give MVSD ample notice when any supplies need to be replenished
- Pay staff mileage for their visit to school sites

Initial staff on-site training will be necessary before programs begin in the fall. It will be billed at \$40 per hour, per teacher. These fees will be billed separately from the tours and in classroom program costs. These fees will be a one time charge and will not be re-occurring after initial training takes place.

The Gardens at Heather Farm is proud to be a part of the solution to help educate our youth about their responsibilities to be good stewards of the environment. We look forward to your review of our proposal and a successful partnership with Mt. View Sanitary District. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.



Lindsay Del Rosa

Education Manager

Lindsay@gardenshf.org

925-323-3214



Joan Lucchese

Executive Director

Joan@gardenshf.org