

Record demand for scarce Keller Canyon money in East Contra Costa

By Rick Radin
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In the wake of reforms generated by scathing criticism of a fund to offset effects of an East Contra Costa landfill, county supervisors this week approved a drastically lower payout of grants, which went almost exclusively to Pittsburg and Bay Point community organizations and nonprofit groups this year.

The Keller Canyon Mitigation Fund is awarding 38 grants worth \$766,796 for 2011-12 compared with 100 grants worth \$1.37 million a year ago.

There were a record 130 applicants compared with 125 last year, with 30 percent receiving funding versus 80 percent in 2010-11.

The lower amount was because of a requirement to pay off a \$200,000 deficit from past years and the need to establish a 20 percent reserve fund, said David Fraser, chief of staff for Supervisor Federal Glover of Pittsburg, whose territory includes the landfill.

Supervisors enacted the requirements after a report last November from outgoing county Auditor Steve Ybarra.

The report criticized Glover for allowing the deficit to accumulate, overspending from the fund, and distributing grants outside the principal areas affected by the landfill, among other issues.

"The reforms require that any deficit accumulated over the past several years had to be eliminated in one fell swoop," Fraser said.

The largest single grant of \$175,000 this year will pay for a resident sheriff's deputy in Bay Point, and a \$132,604 grant will go for an employee in Glover's

office

to deal with Bay Point issues. Bay Points schools will receive \$135,000 for a crossing guard and a school resource officer.

The remaining \$324,192 will go to sports and health care organizations, projects and clubs in grants from \$1,000 to \$45,000.

The mitigation fund is part of a 1992 agreement to compensate Pittsburg and Bay Point for the county locating the landfill on Bailey Road on the southern fringe of the two communities.

The community agencies and organizations receive \$1.75 per ton of garbage dumped at the landfill, and Pittsburg receives \$1.25 per ton in a separate grant.

The dumping fees were down again this year, in part because of reduced construction waste and higher levels of recycling, Fraser said.

Far East County agencies, such as the Discovery Bay Community Services District and the Byron Municipal Advisory Committee, received grants in recent years.

However, the new rules dictate that 70 percent of the money go to Bay Point and the western area of Pittsburg that are nearest the landfill. The rest goes to the eastern part of Pittsburg and to Antioch.

Fraser attributed the higher number of grant applications to the poor economy and the publicity the fund has received over the auditor's report.

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online
Read the list of Keller Canyon grant recipients at
ContraCostaTimes.com



