



City of Austin

Legislation Text

File #: 23-1007, Version: 1

Posting Language

Authorize negotiation and execution of a multi-term contract to provide molecular and biochemical screening for toxic algae in Austin-area reservoirs and surface waters with Florida International University, with an initial 12-month contract in the amount of \$99,910.00, and two renewal options in the amount of \$99,910.00 and \$49,517.77, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$249,337.77.

Lead Department

Watershed Protection Department.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$99,910.00 is available in the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Operating Budget of Watershed Protection Department. Funding for the remaining contract term is contingent upon available funding in future budgets.

Prior Council Action:

On, March 26, 2020, Council approved a contract implementing the same statement of work with the University of Texas at Austin to provide molecular and biochemical screening for toxic algae in Austin-area reservoirs and surface waters for up to five years, in an amount not to exceed \$499,550.00.

For More Information:

Brent Bellinger, Ph.D., Environmental Scientist Senior, 512-974-2717 brent.bellinger@austintexas.gov.

Additional Backup Information:

The contract will expand the use of analytical techniques available to screen for toxins and identify the algal species that produce toxins in our drinking and recreational water supplies. After the 2019 harmful algal bloom event, an increased need is recognized to track the development of a bloom and identify and quantify algal toxins present that can negatively impact recreational uses of Austin's water resources.

Harmful algae blooms have been recognized as a significant emerging threat to municipal and recreational water supplies. Under certain environmental conditions, the blooms have been found to produce toxins that have been linked to skin rashes, cancer, and even death of those that come into contact with or consumes impacted waters. Early detection through monitoring will enable more accurate prediction of harmful algal bloom development and targeted management strategies toward mitigation, and hopefully, prevention. This work supports City of Austin programs to monitor waterways for nuisance algal species that may result in impairments of the beneficial uses desired by the community.

A 5-year contract with University of Texas at Austin was entered in 2020 for a monitoring program for these services. However, the lead scientist on the project has left the University of Texas and is now employed at Florida International University (FIU). This contract will allow those services initially contracted through the University of Texas to be conducted through the same lab, now located at FIU. The University of Texas has released the remainder of the contract which allows the City to contract with FIU for these monitoring services. If the City is unable to secure a contract, recreational uses of Austin's water resources could be adversely impacted.

Strategic Outcome(s):
Health and Environment.