



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: November 17, 2010

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Creeks Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Santa Barbara Zoo Wetland Margin Enhancement Project

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive a report on the Santa Barbara Zoo Wetland Margin Enhancement Project.

DISCUSSION:

Project Description

The Santa Barbara Zoo Wetland Margin Enhancement Project ("Project") is a collaborative ecological restoration project located along the western margin of the Andrée Clark Bird Refuge ("Bird Refuge") at the Santa Barbara Zoo ("Zoo"). The City's Creeks Division and the Zoo are partnering with a local non-profit organization, Channel Islands Restoration, to improve the biological diversity and aesthetics of this highly visible and ecologically important area. The 42-acre Bird Refuge is one of nine passive parks within the City's park system. The Zoo is located on City of Santa Barbara property zoned for parks and recreation.

The 3.2 acre project site is currently dominated by invasive, non-native plants that exclude many of the native wetland and upland plants typically found in similar, undisturbed habitats. The main objective of the Project is to remove the most invasive plant species, including giant reed, cape ivy, and myoporum, from the site and replace them with a diverse assemblage of site-appropriate native plants that will provide more food and nesting opportunities for wildlife. Approximately 2,400 native plants will be installed at the site once the invasive plants have been removed. A permanent educational sign will also be developed and installed in an area overlooking the Project that is accessible to Zoo visitors.

The work will be carried out by licensed contractors and community volunteers. The Creeks Division is providing contracted landscape services to assist with the labor-intensive removal of giant reed, one of the dominant invasive plants at the site and a target species of the Creeks Division's citywide Invasive Plant Removal Program. The Zoo and Channel Islands Restoration both have existing volunteer programs that will recruit community members to assist with planting and maintenance. Over 60 volunteers are expected to participate in the Project.

Schedule

The Project will be implemented in two phases. The location of both phases is shown on the attached site map (see below). Phase I, which covers approximately 0.5 acres, includes removing all the giant reed and Cape ivy at the site. Most of this work will occur along the northwestern margin of the Bird Refuge, with two giant reed sites located closer to the southeastern margin. Phase I also includes installing 640 native plants. On-the-ground work is expected to begin in January 2011, pending completion of the permitting process. Planting should be completed by April 2011, with ongoing maintenance occurring during the following two years. Channel Islands Restoration and the Zoo are responsible for the maintenance phase.

Phase II, covering approximately 2.7 acres, includes removing the remaining myoporum shrubs along the western portion of the Bird Refuge and restoring the wetland margin and upland areas with 1,785 native plants. The on-the-ground portion of Phase II is currently unfunded so no schedule for this portion of the Project has been set.

The Bird Refuge is located within El Pueblo Viejo Landmark District, an area of the City that requires projects located within this district to be reviewed by the Historic Landmarks Commission. The Project received final approval from the Historic Landmarks Commission on October 27, 2010.

Budget

Phase I is anticipated to cost approximately \$90,000. Channel Islands Restoration was awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Earth Island Institute, with support from the California Coastal Conservancy, to provide project coordination, native plants, maintenance, and educational outreach. The Creeks Division is contributing up to \$30,000 of Creeks Capital Program funds for the removal of giant reed and native plant restoration. The remaining \$30,000 will be funded through volunteer work and in-kind donations. Phase II work is currently unfunded, but is expected to cost approximately \$100,000. Additional grant funds will be sought by the project partners to complete Phase II.

ATTACHMENT: Map Depicting Phase I and II of SB Zoo Wetland Margin Enhancement Project

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APPROVED BY: Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director

