



City of Santa Barbara
Parks and Recreation Department

Memorandum

DATE: January 27, 2010
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Jill Zachary, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director
SUBJECT: Parma Park Restoration Status Report

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission receive a report on the post-Tea Fire recovery and restoration of Parma Park.

DISCUSSION:

Parma Park, one of the City's 11 open space parks, comprises 200 acres. Located in the upper Sycamore Creek watershed and generally bounded by Sycamore Canyon Road, Mountain Drive, and Montecito, Parma Park provides passive recreation opportunities to hikers and equestrians. Mountain biking is limited to fire roads within the park. Harold Parma, along with his family, deeded Parma Park to the City in November 1973. The Parma Park Trust, established in 2000, provides funds on an annual basis to support the preservation and maintenance of the park.

Parma Park suffered significant damage as a result of the November 2008 Tea Fire. Over 95 percent of the native riparian, oak woodland and grassland habitats within the park were destroyed. Soon after the immediate hazards were addressed, the Department developed a rehabilitation and restoration plan for the park.

Parma Park Rehabilitation and Restoration Plan

The recovery and restoration plan addressed short-term objectives (first six months) that would allow the Parks Division to re-open the park to the public, and long-term objectives that would enhance and preserve the park's habitats and recreation opportunities. Short-term objectives included the removal of dead trees, brush, and exposed wire, as well as soil stabilization and trail restoration. Longer-term objectives (over two years) included the eradication of invasive non-native vegetation, enhancement of native tree and grassland areas, park signage, fencing and trail improvements, development of volunteer projects, and rehabilitation of the park's olive grove, among others.

Since the Tea Fire area was designated a natural disaster area, funding for many of the short-term objectives was secured from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Office of Emergency Services (OES). In early 2009, the Department received approval for funding the longer-term objectives from the Parma Park Trust. Concurrent with these efforts, the Department also secured National Emergency Grant (NEG) funding in the amount of \$186,190 with the assistance of the County of Santa Barbara Workforce Investment Board (WIB). The NEG funding was made available through the Department of Labor under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

Achievements to Date

In the first 6 months of 2009, the Parks Division addressed many of the immediate safety hazards and re-opened portions of the park to the public. From July through mid-December, an 11-member ground maintenance crew was dedicated to trail improvements, erosion control, brush removal, habitat restoration, removal of exotic natives (such as fennel and castor bean), fence construction, and sign installation. The maintenance crew was funded through the NEG. The purpose of the NEG funding was to create temporary jobs for unemployed workers focused on the rehabilitation of wildfire disaster areas in Southern California.

In addition to the temporary job creation, the rehabilitation of the park's habitats led to other opportunities. Craig Makela, of Santa Barbara Olives, provided technical assistance at no cost in the salvage and rejuvenation efforts for the Parma olive grove. Mr. Makela provided strategies that allowed the Department to salvage the burnt wood for reuse as park signs and benches, and techniques to foster re-growth of the remaining trees. Similarly, in the development of the restoration plan, the Department consulted with Dr. Bob Muller of the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, regarding fire impact, native habitats and exotic invasive species at the park. Over time, staff anticipates that restoration of the trails in Parma Park will also demonstrate sustainable trail building and maintenance strategies.

Restoration Plans for 2010

Continuation of the restoration efforts in 2010, in accordance with the Parma Park Restoration Plan, will be funded by the Parma Park Trust and the NEG. Although there has been significant progress in the rehabilitation of the park, wet weather may cause significant erosion and trail damage, non-native plants will continue to emerge, and areas designated for restoration will need to be planted with trees and other native shrubs. In 2010 the Parks Division will also expand its restoration efforts with volunteer projects focused on native plant habitats.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

The Department reports expenditures for Parma Park to the Parma Park Trustee on a calendar year basis, concurrent with the Trust disbursement of funds in December each year.

As outlined in the table below, expenditures for Parma Park restoration efforts in Calendar Year 2009 totaled \$296,664. This includes \$93,173 from FEMA, \$31,058 from the State OES, \$130,426 of the NEG funds, and \$42,007 in Parma Park Trust Funds. The Department estimates \$139,000 in expenditures for Calendar Year 2010. Funding for 2010 includes \$55,764 of NEG funds, with the remaining funding of \$83,236 from the Parma Park maintenance account.

Source	2009	2010	Total
FEMA	\$93,173	\$0	\$93,173
State OES	\$31,058	\$0	\$31,058
NEG	\$130,426	\$55,764	\$186,190
Parma Park Trust	\$42,007	\$83,236	\$125,243
Total	\$296,664	\$139,000	\$435,664

The Parma Park maintenance account currently has a balance of \$146,119 in budgeted appropriations. Of the \$71,288 in new funds distributed from the Trust, the Parma Park Trustee has designated \$32,282 for implementation of the restoration plan, which would bring the balance of the Parma Park Maintenance account to \$178,401. Of this total, \$83,236 will be used for the calendar year 2010 restoration efforts at Parma Park. The remaining portion of the new funds (\$39,006) will be dedicated to a future capital improvement project at the Stanwood entrance to the park.

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