



**City of Santa Barbara
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT**

DATE: December 15, 2010
TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Kathy Frye, Natural Areas Planner
SUBJECT: Parma Park Update

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission receive a report on the Stanwood Entrance/Equestrian Staging Area project and the post-Tea Fire 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.

The purpose of this report is to provide the Commission with information about the recently completed Stanwood Entrance/Equestrian Staging Area Project. The report also provides the Commission an update on restoration efforts after the 2008 Tea Fire. The Commission previously received a report on the restoration efforts in January 2010.

Parma Park - Stanwood Entrance and Equestrian Staging Area

Plans for the Parma Park entry at Stanwood Drive and enhancement of an existing staging area for equestrian group rides were completed in October 2008 but construction was delayed due to the November 2008 Tea Fire. Minor plan revisions due to the fire were prepared this past spring, construction began in early August, and the project was completed in the park in October 2010. A park celebration and community planting day was held on Saturday October 23, 2010.

The staging area now supports parking for three combination truck and two-horse trailers and one handicap vehicle, with a passing lane to allow emergency or other vehicle passage. New amenities in the picnic area include a handicap accessible drinking fountain, handicap accessible picnic table and signage. A new stone and wood entry gate was also constructed with the project. The total cost of the project (included design, permitting, and construction) was \$338,000. The capital improvements were funded by the Parma Park Trust.

Parma Park Rehabilitation and Restoration Plan

The recovery and restoration plan addressed short-term and long-term objectives that enhanced and preserved the park's habitats and recreation opportunities in the two years since the Tea Fire. Rehabilitation work included the eradication of invasive non-native vegetation, enhancement of native habitats, park signage, fencing and trail improvements, development of volunteer projects, and rehabilitation of the park's olive grove, among others. City staff, volunteers and contractors completed work, along with staff funded through a National Emergency Grant (NEG) through the Workforce Investment Board of Santa Barbara County.

Olive Grove Restoration

Although the 100-year old olive grove in Parma Park suffered losses from the Tea Fire above ground, the root system survived. Volunteers, staff, the NEG crew, and a contractor have been instrumental in rejuvenation of the orchard as it ends year two of an estimated 10-year recovery period. Burnt olive wood from the grove was salvaged and reused to create park signs, replacing those lost in the Tea Fire. Additionally, new interpretive and regulatory signs have been designed and will be installed in January 2011.

Native Habitat Restoration

A Eucalyptus grove, burnt in the Tea Fire, was identified as a potential hazard by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The trees had been previously identified for eradication by the City as the grove consists of non-native species with the potential to invade other areas of the park. The Eucalyptus trees were removed and this area is currently undergoing restoration with native species. Seeds from native plants were collected in Parma Park after the Tea Fire and propagated in a nursery. Thirty-seven volunteers helped install approximately 2,000 plants in Parma Park on October 23, 2010. The Santa Barbara Garden Club and Laguna Blanca Lower School provided cash donations of \$1,000 and \$2,141, respectively, to help pay for the propagation of plants. They also volunteered during the planting day, along with students from UCSB and Westmont College, and other Parma Park friends and neighbors.

Work Plan for 2011

Two years after the Tea Fire, Parma Park has moved out of the rehabilitation plan phase, the park continues to recover and is back to a regular work plan. The proposed Work Plan for 2011 includes trail maintenance, defensible space vegetation management, exotic invasive species management, olive grove maintenance, and ongoing restoration efforts.

Since all work at Parma Park is subject to review and approval by the Parma Park Trustee, staff submits the annual proposal in December.

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