



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: May 28, 2014

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Parks and Recreation Department Draft 2014 Strategic Drought Response Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission provide comments on the Parks and Recreation Department's Draft 2014 Strategic Drought Response Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Santa Barbara is facing extreme drought conditions. As a result, City Council declared a Stage One Drought on February 11, 2014, followed by a Stage Two declaration on May 20, 2014. New water use regulations were adopted requiring residents, businesses, government, schools and others to reduce water use by 20% to preserve limited water resources. Should unusually dry conditions continue, Santa Barbara could face Stage Three extreme drought conditions as early as spring 2015, which would bring further water use restrictions.

The Parks and Recreation Department manages a diverse range of park areas, recreation and sports facilities, street, park and facility trees, and the municipal golf course. The majority of water used by the Department is for irrigation of outdoor resources, with other water use supporting park restrooms, indoor facilities, pools, shower/locker facilities, and ponds. Given the diversity of parks and facilities, the challenge for the Department will be how best to achieve the necessary water use reduction with the least impact to parks and facilities that are heavily used by the community, while taking appropriate actions to preserve the long-term health of important horticultural resources.

The 2014 Strategic Drought Response Plan has been developed as a management tool to insure department programs and services undertake effective actions to reduce water use by at least 20% in a thoughtful and strategic way. The plan is intended to be a working document, which will be modified, as needed, depending on outcomes achieved, changed drought conditions, or revised programmatic priorities.

In developing the Strategic Drought Response Plan, a number of factors were taken into consideration, including:

1. Short-term and longer-term impact of reduced water use to turf, plants, and trees
2. Need to protect historic and other resources
3. Priorities for public use of certain parks and recreation facilities
4. Programmatic changes which could conserve water use
5. Financial impacts due to increased water cost
6. Modifications to irrigation and plumbing infrastructure which could further increase water conservation
7. Loss of revenue from changed appearance of rental sites affecting park and facility rentals areas; and, particularly loss of play and revenue at the Santa Barbara municipal golf course.

The Draft 2014 Strategic Drought Response Plan is being presented to Parks and Recreation Commission for review and comment. In addition to identifying priorities for irrigation and water use, the proposed plan includes some service reductions.

- The West Beach Wading Pool is recommended to remain closed this summer due to an intensive leak and high water use to meet health and safety regulations. Los Baños, Ortega Park Pool and Oak Park Wading Pool will operate as normal.
- Changes are proposed for several shower facilities, including turning off half of the showers at the Cabrillo Bathhouse, closing the Municipal Tennis Facility shower facility, possible closure of the Carrillo Gym shower facility, and modifications to turn off the upper showerheads on the outdoor showers at East Beach, leaving the foot showerheads operational.
- Reductions in water access are recommended for special events and activities permitted in park rental sites
- Landscape renovation projects will be deferred and no new trees will be planted until drought conditions have improved.

Following the Commission discussion, staff will finalize the plan, which will then be widely distributed throughout the Department for information and implementation and posted on the Department website.

ATTACHMENT: Draft Parks & Recreation 2014 Strategic Drought Response Plan

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