

**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
NATURAL & CULTURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE
AGENDA STAFF REPORT**

DATE Tuesday, February 13, 2024
TITLE Approval of the Minutes for the NCRC Meeting August 16, 2023
DIVISION Acquisition, Stewardship, and Development
FROM Sabrina Pinell, Sr. Executive Assistant
Ken Wysocki, Assistant General Manager of ASD

APPROVED

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend to approve the minutes for the Board Natural & Cultural Resources Committee Meeting on August 16, 2023.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

A meeting of the Board Natural and Cultural Resources Committee was held on Wednesday, August 16, 2023, in a hybrid format in person and through the Park District's virtual platform, Zoom. Committee Chair Elizabeth Echols called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. The following is a summary of the items discussed:

I. Integrated Pest Management Annual Report for 2022 (Beitz)

IPM Specialist Pamela Beitz, presented the 2022 IPM Annual Report and provided committee members with an overview of the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program, recent herbicide use trends and updates on trainings, restoration projects, structural pest control improvements and ongoing aquatic pest species management.

The Park District strives to manage pests in the most effective and safest manner for our park visitors and our employees by following an IPM program. Prevention is the key to safe and effective pest management. Control of invasive vegetation is an essential, adaptive management tool that helps our ecology be more resilient to drought, provides habitat benefits and reduces risks of wildfire.

Public Health, Fire Safety, Recreation, Ecological Function & Healthy Forests are IPM's five goals. The IPM unit consists of four employees, so training is integral in habitat enhancement. 183 park rangers were trained in IPM implementation. IPM staff also held trainings on weed ecology, identification, and control techniques for 25 members of partner agencies such as the Civicorps and Student Conservation Association for a total of 12 hours.

One of the future goals for the IPM is to hire a new ecologist for noxious rangeland weeds and rancher for the program. Plans to digitize park maintenance areas including viewable maps & annual maintenance areas. IPM plans to roll out training video on phytophthora (soil born pathogen) and rules for in-park

nurseries.

Director Mercurio commented the presentation was very a comprehensive overview of IPM annual report also added “requires a lot of knowledge & tools” as he was very impressed. He also asked for a hard copy of the weed identification guidebook. Beitz said a hard copy is available online under IPM tab. Asked if it was possible to clean Lake Temescal more frequently.

Chief of Stewardship Matt Graul stated that Ecological Services Manager Becky Tuden conducted a feasibility study on Lake Temescal to improve water quality volume. The lake has sediment in significantly & there is hesitation on doing major upgrades because of cost and design. Sediments in the lake need to be removed.

Director Coffey commented about doing away with glyphosate to stop overgrowth at Briones of yellow star thistle.

Beitz responded changing from stocker and seasonal grazing to year-round helped with yellow star thistle control. Glyphosate is only used where there isn't a selective herbicide. The approach of the cultural methods of grazing mechanical along trail sides with the right timed mowing at the right densities park staff can really achieve a good amount of reduction. IPM needs money and staff to fully combat invasive weeds.

Director Echols thanked Beitz for her very interesting and thorough report and asked for a copy of the Weed Identification Guidebook. Echols expressed her appreciation of the integrated report & approach to trapping instead of rodenticide with rodents and asked about the long-term approach to both Lake Anza and Lake Temescal.

Beitz responded that staff is confident that we have base background levels of phosphorus that are high enough to support eutrophic or eutrophication. The lakes have high nutrient conditions coupled with hardened surfaces the water flows off the hardened surface and deposits nutrients directly into the creek. This water flows into Lake Anza as well. The District has hardened stream beds that don't have vegetation which takes phosphorus and grows captures it right so there's many places along Wildcat Creek where we could address both excess sediments.

Hard copies of the Weed Identification Guidebook were provided to all committee members in attendance and later distributed to the other four board members (Sanwong, Corbett, Waespi and Rosario).

No public Comment

2. 2023 Annual Review: Implementation of Update Free-Roaming Cat Management Policy (Bell/Graul)

Chief of Stewardship Matthew Graul and Wildlife Program Manager Doug Bell provided an update on implementation of the Updated Free-Roaming Cat Management Policy adopted by the Board of Directors in 2021. The presentation included progress on developing outreach and education programs, the success of the ongoing partnership with animal services agencies, monitoring to reduce impacts to sensitive wildlife, and park improvements to protect wildlife.

On June 15, 2021, the Park District adopted a Board resolution that updated an existing policy to manage free-roaming cats. This updated policy strives to comply with federal and state laws to protect native, endangered species in regional parks by removing cats from sensitive habitats as humanely as possible. The hundreds of native species that exist in the Park District lands are

protected by federal and state law. Over a dozen of these species such as the California Ridgway Rail and the Salt Marsh Harvest Mouse are on the endangered species list and are at significant risk of extinction. The protection of these species contributes to the biodiversity, ecological health, and unique evolutionary history of regional parks. The updated Free-Roaming Cat Management Policy (Policy) establishes best practices to improve education, prevention, collaboration, and transparency with other agency partners and the community the Park District serves. This report reviews the actions the Park District has taken in the past year to comply with the Policy and provides progress of actions taken to-date.

Bell discussed how to prevent losing shoreline habitat. Currently the Bay Area has lost over 95% of shoreline habitat. The Park District manages 50 miles of the remaining shoreline habitats. Signs, brochures, internal and external education programs. Website updates include all resources for protection of our shoreline habitats. The Park District has a large resiliency protection plan to restore habitats.

Since December 10, 2020, no cats have been lethally removed from East Bay Regional parks. Trapping training, led by the Park District along with OAS & Oakland organization Feral Change, were held on December 7, 2022. Monthly meetings with Berkeley Animal Care Services, Oakland Animal Services, Contra Costa County Animal Services, Hayward Animal Services, and Fremont Animal Services/Tri-City Animal Shelter, and Friends of the Alameda Animal Shelter. Bi-weekly internal meetings included staff from Stewardship and Park Operations to discuss implementation of the policy and tracking and planning efforts.

Methods of tracking include internal surveys, park visits, camera trapping and data tracking. 119 cats have been humanely trapped and transferred from our regional parks since 2021. Staff has worked with Animal services to get the cats in a working program or adopted. The Natural & Cultural Resources Board Committee will review the policy every five years (2026) unless situations change.

Director Coffey commented on public concern for humane treatment of the cat colony/population and the success of the policy, regarding no emails and extensive public presence. He asked for further clarification of the numbers between staff and volunteer support for this effort.

Bell responded that Animal Service shelters reached out to cat colonies that were closest to East Bay Regional parkland, especially along the shorelines. The colony caretakers often moved cats to other areas, so unfortunately not all cats were recorded in the tracking data.

Director Coffey asked for the monthly reports for each park and the status, specifically Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK, Jr.) & Hayward shorelines. In addition, overhead & financial support along with an update on funding. What is the long-term financial goal?

Bell stated that cats are still being trapped in Hayward Marsh, but numbers aren't available. MLK, Jr. shoreline's weekly report is being generated via contractor.

Graul responded that the policy was initially funded on a three-year basis for \$25,000 per year. He also added adequate funding is needed to keep staff working.

Director Mercurio asked for more details on cat trapping methods.

Bell explained the use of walk-in traps and fall down traps – generally there is food set out and the cat will walk into the trap. Cameras were set up for data analysis purposes as well. Once the cat is in the trap it will be transferred as soon as possible. The Park District's Cooperative Service Agreement with the Animal service agencies is that they will care for the free roaming cats until they can be transferred to a shelter.

No public comment

3. Chochenyo Trail Signs and Basket Exhibit at Coyote Hills (Sulots)

Supervising Naturalist Christopher Sulots provided an update on several interpretive sign projects completed at Coyote Hills Regional Park in 2022. The Park District collaborated with several Indigenous tribes to create Chochenyo trail signs and a newly updated basket exhibit. Staff replaced trail markers throughout Coyote Hills Regional Park to include trail names translated into Chochenyo, the Indigenous language still spoken throughout the Bay Area. This project highlights an ongoing partnership with the Park District and the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe. Additionally, the basket exhibit showcases traditional Indigenous basketry techniques and the importance of knowledge and skills used in cultivating plant resources. These public displays are significant interpretive features that help promote a greater appreciation of Indigenous People and their ongoing contributions to the Park District.

Director Coffey asked if there can be a breakdown of the pronunciation of the names.

Sulots informed the committee that the Muwekma tribe has pronunciation guides online and will provide links to the source via email after the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS

None.