




COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Environmental Services Agency

DATE: May 15, 2003

BOARD MEETING DATE: June 24, 2003

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: Marcia Raines, Director, Environmental Services Agency 

SUBJECT: Accept Grant Funds from the California Department of Parks and Recreation in the Amounts of \$335,000 for Gorse Eradication and \$140,000 for Restoration of the Colma Creek Headwaters on State Park Lands on San Bruno Mountain

Recommendation

1. Adopt a Resolution:
 - (a) Accepting two Proposition 12 grant funds administered by the Locally Operated Units of the State Park System Grant Program in the amounts of \$335,000 for gorse eradication and \$140,000 for restoration of the Colma Creek Headwaters on San Bruno Mountain;
 - (b) Certifying that the County of San Mateo has reviewed, understands, and agrees to the General Provisions contained in the Contract shown in the Procedural Guide;
 - (c) Appointing the Director of Environmental Services Agency to execute the grant agreement and any other documents required by and for the project described in the grants; and
 - (d) Directing staff to continue working with State Parks staff on the renewal of the Operating Agreement for County Parks to manage State Park lands on San Bruno Mountain for another ten-year period.
2. Approve an Appropriation Transfer Request in the amount of \$335,000 for gorse eradication and \$140,000 for restoration of the Colma Creek Headwaters

Background

San Bruno Mountain State and County Park is a landmark of local and regional significance, standing as a unique open-space island in the midst of the peninsula's urbanization, north of the Santa Cruz Mountain Range. The relative isolation of San Bruno Mountain has resulted in the creation of unique biotic conditions. It contains a diversity of microenvironments with coastal scrub and grassland communities being the most common. Magnificent wildflower displays are found throughout the year, especially in the spring. The Park's principal sensitive resources include 14 species of rare or endangered plant life, three species of endangered butterflies, and one threatened butterfly species. The San Bruno Elfin, Mission Blue, and Callippe Silverspot butterflies, which are all endangered, are

found in only a few other places in the world. A Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), the first of its kind in the world when developed in 1983, now protects the rare and endangered species and their habitats on San Bruno Mountain.

The Locally Operated Units of the State Park System grant program is part of the Park Bond Act of 2000 enacted by the voters in March 2000. According to the Program's procedural guide, "The intent of the Local Assistance Grant Program is to make available grants to Local Agencies that operate units of the State Park system. Eligible applicants are Local Agencies administering units of the State Park's System under an existing operating agreement with the California Department of Parks and Recreation." San Bruno Mountain's northern portion, commonly referred to as the Saddle Area, is owned by State Parks and operated by County Parks. The current Operating Agreement between State and County Parks has expired (December 2000). Both parties are in direct negotiation for a renewed Operating Agreement at this time, and will have met to resolve outstanding issues by the time of your hearing.

To preserve the State's extraordinary biological diversity, the California Department of Parks and Recreation has accepted two grant applications made by San Mateo County in the amounts of \$335,000 to eradicate gorse and \$140,000 to restore the headwaters of Colma Creek on the State owned lands on San Bruno Mountain. Both of these grants supplement existing habitat restoration activities being done by the Habitat Conservation Plan, as well as volunteer restoration activities led by the California Native Plant Society. County Parks has been awarded these two competitive grants pending the Board of Supervisors adoption of a resolution, and extension of the Operating Agreement authorizing County Parks to manage State Park lands. A resolution accepting these grant funds is due by June 30 2003, or the County risks losing these grants. Both projects must be completed by January 30, 2009.

Discussion

1. Gorse Eradication Grant

The spread of brush and invasive exotic species, including gorse, has consumed habitat formerly occupied by many of San Bruno Mountain's native animal species. Gorse has a considerable hold in the Saddle area covering approximately 90 acres in a segment that is bordered by the City of Daly City to the north and the Saddle Trail to the south. Gorse in the project area has eliminated all of the grassland that once supported native plant species, including the host and nectar plants of the endangered Mission Blue and Callippe Silverspot Butterflies.

This particular San Bruno Mountain Gorse Eradication and Revegetation Project would provide for comprehensive habitat restoration in 35 or more acres in the Saddle and Wax Myrtle Ravine areas of the Mountain by eradicating gorse over a period of time using a variety of methods and rehabilitating the disturbed area by creating small, high-quality native vegetation islands which include the host and nectar plants of the endangered butterflies. Thirty-five acres is the minimum area an acceptable project will restore, but project proposals of greater scope that meet budgetary requirements will be accepted. Gorse may be removed using a variety of tools and techniques such as mechanical brush cutters, chainsaws, grazing, burning, and others. Long-term gorse control can include herbicide treatment for several successive years after the original infestation is removed.

2. Restoration of Headwaters of Colma Creek Grant

Eucalyptus trees were introduced to San Bruno Mountain in the late 1800's as a potential source of lumber and firewood. Prolific and fast growing, the eucalyptus trees have spread throughout the Colma Creek headwaters, which is the main drainage for San Bruno Mountain and provides significant riparian habitat at the park. This foreign and invasive species draws significant amounts of water from the area, effectively diverting water away from Colma Creek. The spread of brush and

invasive exotic species, including eucalyptus, Monterey cypress, English ivy, Cape ivy, Himalayan blackberry, cotoneaster, poison hemlock, mustard, and various thistles, has consumed habitat formerly occupied by many of the mountain's native plant and animal species, including the headwaters of Colma Creek.

With grant funds, County Parks will implement a multi-year riparian restoration and maintenance effort for the headwaters that will be coordinated by a consultant with the assistance of staff and dedicated volunteers. The proposed project is expected to: (1) eradicate existing invasive species in the project area; (2) maintain invasive eradication; and (3) establish in the project area self-sustaining native-plant habitat in the headwaters of Colma Creek.

3. Operating Agreement

San Bruno Mountain is a combination of State and County Park lands. In 1978 the County settled litigation with Crocker Land Company who agreed to sell 1,100 acres to the County and donate another 546 acres. In 1980, the State of California acquired the Mountain's 298-acre Saddle area to become part of the State Park System. The County then formed an operating agreement with the State, merging the parklands into San Bruno Mountain State and County Park. The management of the park was established under an Operating Agreement in 1980 between the State of California and County of San Mateo for a 10-year period. The agreement allows for the development, operation control and maintenance of State property in conjunction with the County property. County Park management of State Park lands on San Bruno Mountain has been incorporated into the overall maintenance of the State and County Park.

The Agreement was renewed in 1990 for another 10-year period, and since 2000 County Parks has been managing State lands without an Operating Agreement. County staff has requested several changes to the agreement and the conditions of the final agreement are still being negotiated between State Park and County staff. State Park grant staff has encouraged the County Board of Supervisors to adopt the resolution accepting the grant funds while the Operating Agreement is being renegotiated, so that the grant funds are not lost. While the attached resolution authorizes the Director of Environmental services as agent to conduct all negotiations, execute and submit all documents related to agreements, payment requests and so on as it relates to the two grants a renewed Operating Agreement would be brought back to the Board of Supervisors for approval when ready. Grant implementation will not proceed until the Operating Agreement is completed.

Vision Alignment

Approval of the acceptance of the grant funds to restore the headwaters of Colma Creek and eradicate significant gorse infestation on State Park lands keeps the commitment of goal number 14: Important natural resources are preserved and enhanced through environmental stewardship. Both grants would restore the native habitat, which has been degraded over time, and would enhance environmental stewardship by authorizing County Parks to be proactive about habitat management.

Fiscal Impact

The two State Park grants for Gorse Eradication and restoration of the headwaters of Colma Creek will create no significant impact on the County Park Division's budget. The grant will fully fund the expected costs. Existing County Park staff resources will be used to administer the grant.

RECOMMENDED
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David Stannell
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ASSISTANT COUNTY MANAGER