TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: JUNE 26, 2006 CMR:275:06

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO APPLY FOR A GRANT AND EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH THE CALIFORNIA STATE COASTAL CONSERVANCY FOR FUNDS WHICH THE CITY INTENDS TO EXPEND ON SPARTINA TREATMENT AND ERADICATION IN THE PALO ALTO BAYLANDS

RECOMMENDATION
Staff recommends that Council approve the attached resolution to:
1. Authorize the submittal of a grant application to the California State Coastal Conservancy under its invasive Spartina treatment and eradication project, and approve the terms and conditions of the grant agreement.
2. Authorize the City Manager or his designee, as the person responsible for the administration of the grant on behalf of the City, including certifications and any amendments.

BACKGROUND
An aggressive species of non-native cordgrass (Spartina alterniflora) was introduced in the Alameda marina in 1975, and since that time has infected areas of marshland throughout the San Francisco Bay estuary. This non-native cordgrass is a threat to the Palo Alto marshes because it crowds out native cordgrass and saltgrass and displaces nesting habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rail by its tall, dense foliage. Cordgrasses are highly aggressive invaders that significantly alter both the physical structure and biological composition of tidal marshes, mudflats and creeks.

In 1998, the California State Coastal Conservancy initiated a regional program to combat the spread of non-native Spartina throughout the nine-county Bay Area. The Invasive Spartina Project is a coordinated regional effort among local, state and federal organizations dedicated to preserving California's extraordinary coastal biological resources through the elimination of introduced species of cordgrass.

In order to enable local agencies to effectively control the spread of the non-native cordgrass, a grant funding program was established to pay for the costs of control and eradication. The City of Palo Alto has received grants from this program for the past three years. The Coastal Conservancy proposes that the grant program to the City of Palo Alto continue for an additional year in the amount of $4,500.
The Palo Alto marshes, which comprise 1,000 acres, have a relatively small area (.7 acres) of non-native cordgrass. The invasive species was identified in two areas of the Palo Alto marshes five years ago, and for the last five years the City has hired specialized contractors to systematically treat the non-native cordgrass during September of each year when birds are not nesting.

**DISCUSSION**
The proposed grant from the State Coastal Conservancy would reimburse the City of Palo Alto for all costs incurred with the control of Spartina. The annual expense for contracted spraying is approximately $5,000.

**RESOURCE IMPACT**
Work covered by the grant application is an on-going responsibility for Community Services Open Space staff. Approval of the grant will not affect other scheduled park or community facility projects or their completion timelines.

The systematic containment of Spartina now, while its infestation in Palo Alto marshes is relatively small, will reduce the amount of expenditures required in the future if the plant is not adequately controlled.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**
These recommendations are consistent with existing City policy.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**
The application for a grant is not considered an action subject to the California Environmental Quality Act; therefore, no environmental assessment is needed at this time. Environmental review has been conducted by the Coastal Conservancy on approved methods of treatment.

**ATTACHMENTS**
Attachment A: Resolution Authorizing the Filing of Application to the California State Coastal Conservancy under their invasive Spartina treatment and eradication project

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