

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

FROM: DAREN ANDERSON DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES

DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2018

SUBJECT: BAYLANDS COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan (BCCP) is to develop goals, policies, prioritized action steps, and best management practices to holistically manage the Baylands Nature Preserve over the next 15 years and beyond. The BCCP will provide staff, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the City Council will with clear direction on how to manage the Baylands using an ecosystem-based approach that will help guide the protection of the preserve’s habitat, wildlife, and natural resources; ensure that stewardship and access to nature-friendly recreational opportunities are available for park visitors to enjoy the Baylands now and in the future; and help the City manage the Baylands in a way that allows the preserve to thrive in the face of challenges such as sea level rise and climate change.

DISCUSSION

In June 2017, the City hired AECOM, an environmental consultation firm, to develop the BCCP. AECOM and staff developed a work plan that lays out how the BCCP will be developed over an approximately 18 month time period by completing 11 distinct tasks.

The implementation of the work plan is expected to last from June 15, 2017 to December, 31, 2018. Many tasks, but not all, will be executed in parallel to one another (i.e., Task 2 and Task 3), whereas execution of other tasks (i.e., Task 10 and Task 11) are dependent up on the completion of prior tasks.

- Task 1: Identify Existing Habitat Areas, Uses and Management Practices.
- Task 2: Establish Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Task 3: Summarize Future Planned Changes to Land, Uses, and Activities
- Task 4: Vision, Goals and Objectives
- Task 5: Opportunities Analysis, Best Management Practices, and Recommendations
- Task 6: Impacts to Baylands from Climate Change and Sea Level Rise
- Task 7: Baylands Action Plan
- Task 8: Design Plan for Byxbee Park Hills Master Plan
- Task 9: Assessment of Baylands Former ITT Property
- Task 10: Draft Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan
- Task 11: Final Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan

From June 2017 to December 2017, AECOM biologists analyzed the Baylands habitat, and conducted interviews with Open Space staff and partnership groups in order to identify existing habitat areas, uses and management practices. In December 2017, AECOM completed the existing conditions report-Task 1 (Attachment A).

In August 2017, a stakeholder advisory group of approximately 20 people was formed. The group has met three times: October 18, 2017, December 5, 2017, and February 15, 2018. The key themes from the first two meetings can be found in Attachment B. At the October 18, 2017 meeting, the stakeholders suggested inviting the community to future stakeholder meetings. The last two stakeholder meetings were publicly noticed and the broader community was invited to participate. Staff created a project website that houses materials and acts as another avenue for community participation

https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/csd/parks/preserves/baylands_comprehensive_conservation_plan.asp.

At the October 18, 2017 stakeholder meeting, the group discussed their priorities that they wanted addressed in the BCCP. The suggestions included:

- Recreation
- Natural Resources
- Wildlife
- Sea Level Rise/Climate Change
- Community/Organization Partnerships
- Stakeholder/Community Involvement
- Former Los Altos Treatment Plant
- Byxbee Park
- Former ITT Property/Renzel Marsh

At the December 18, 2017 community meeting, the group identified opportunities for Byxbee and former ITT/Renzel Wetlands

- Recreation
- Hydrologic Connectivity
- Trails
- Wildlife
- Parking
- Benches
- Measure E site at Byxbee
- Potentially Historic Buildings at ITT site
- Habitat Enhancement/Restoration
- Sea Level Rise/Climate Change

At the February 15, 2018 community meeting, the group discussed vision statements for the Baylands, and goals and objectives for the following topics (Attachment C):

- Management, Organization Partnerships, Public Art, Former LATP site
- Byxbee Park, Former ITT property/Renzel Wetlands
- Natural Resources, Climate Change & Sea Level Rise, Recreation

The example vision statement that was shared at the February 15, 2018 community meeting:

The Palo Alto Baylands Nature Preserve is an ecological safe haven where the habitat, wildlife, and natural resources entrusted to Palo Alto are protected and preserved. It is a sanctuary that rekindles the human spirit through recreation and reflective introspection, and offers a living link to our cultural history.

Implementation of the BCCP will help guide the protection of the preserve's habitat, wildlife, and natural resources; ensure that stewardship and nature-friendly recreational opportunities are available for park visitors to enjoy the Baylands now and in the future; and help the City manage the Baylands in a way that allows the preserve to thrive in the face of challenges such as sea level rise and climate change.

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

- Compile February 15 community meeting notes into summary, and post major themes and presentation materials to the web page. Invite those who could not attend the meeting to provide input online.
- Incorporate feedback on goals and objectives into corresponding chapter. – March 2018
- Draft and Final Future Planned Projects Report – March 2018
- Prepare Draft Impacts to Baylands from Climate Change and Sea Level Rise Report – March-April 2018
- Develop Design Plan for Byxbee Park Hills Master Plan – March-April 2018
- Develop Draft Use Scenarios Report for former ITT/Renzel Wetlands – April-May 2018
- Draft and Final Opportunities Analysis, Best Management Practices, and Recommendations Report and Meetings– May-July 2018
- Baylands Action Plan – July- September 2018
- Draft Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Presentations – August-September 2018
- Final Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Presentations – October-December 2018

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan Existing Conditions Report

Attachment B: Key Themes from the Oct 18, 2017 and December 5, 2017 Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

Attachment C: Vision Statement Topics from February 15, 2018 Meeting