

TO: PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
FROM: DAREN ANDERSON DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY SERVICES
DATE: JUNE 26, 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 12 distinct tasks. The work plan (Task 1) can be found in Attachment A.

The implementation of the work plan is expected to last from June 15, 2017 to December, 31, 2018. The following specific tasks are envisioned:

- Task 1: Develop Work Plan
- Task 2: Identify Existing Habitat Areas, Uses and Management Practices.
- Task 3: Establish Stakeholder Advisory Group
- Task 4: Summarize Future Planned Changes to Land, Uses, and Activities
- Task 5: Vision, Goals and Objectives
- Task 6: Opportunities Analysis, Best Management Practices, and Recommendations
- Task 7: Impacts to Baylands from Climate Change and Sea Level Rise
- Task 8: Baylands Action Plan
- Task 9: Design Plan for Byxbee Park Hills Master Plan
- Task 10: Assessment of Baylands Former ITT Property
- Task 11: Draft Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan
- Task 12: 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 to identify existing habitat areas, uses and management practices. In December 2017, AECOM completed the existing conditions report - Task 2 (Attachment B).

In August 2017, a stakeholder advisory group of approximately 20 people was formed (Task 3). The stakeholder engagement plan is included as Attachment C. The group has met three times: October 18, 2017, December 5, 2017, and February 15, 2018. Stakeholders were also invited to tour the former ITT site/Renzel Wetlands on November 13, 2017, and have been provided periodic updates by email and opportunities to review interim work products.

At the October 18, 2017 stakeholder meeting, the stakeholder advisory group discussed priorities they would like to see addressed in the BCCP. At the December 18, 2017 stakeholder advisory meeting, which was also open to the community at large, the group identified opportunities for Byxbee Park and former ITT Property/Renzel Wetlands. At the February 15, 2018 stakeholder advisory committee/community meeting, the group discussed draft vision statements for the Baylands, and potential goals and objectives. Following each meeting, notes were compiled and short reports summarizing major themes (Attachment D) were prepared and circulated to the group. The summaries and presentation materials from each meeting were also posted on the project website. The website (www.cityofpaloalto.org/BaylandsPlan) includes a library of planning materials, and was developed as an alternative venue for community participation for those unable to attend in-person meetings. Stakeholders who did not attend the meetings were provided with materials presented at the meetings and were asked to provide input online.

At the February 27, 2018, staff provided an update on the BCCP to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The Commission noted that the outreach and focus of the plan seemed on-track, but suggested the plan would benefit from additional outreach to youth and other Baylands users not represented in the stakeholder group. In March 2018, the planning team developed a short survey to receive onsite input from users of the Baylands. The survey was administered by Baylands Rangers throughout April and May 2018. The survey can be found as Attachment E and included the following questions:

- What issues do you think the BCCP should be focused on in the coming years? Tell us your top 3 priorities.
- What features of the Baylands do you like most or use most?
- Which areas of the Baylands have potential for improvements? What would these improvements look like? (i.e., trails, benches, habitats, etc.)
- How often do you visit the Baylands? (i.e., daily, weekly, monthly, etc.)
What do you do here? (i.e., paint, hike, run, windsurf, fish, kayak, birdwatch)
- Do you have any additional suggestions for managing the Baylands, or ideas for what it should look like in the future?
- What is your biggest concern with regards to the Baylands?

In May 2018, the feedback received from the stakeholder/public meetings and the user survey was incorporated into the Vision, Goals, and Objectives chapter of the BCCP and the chapter was finalized in June 2018- Task 5 (Attachment F). In June 2018 AECOM also completed the Planned Future Improvements and Changes to Land Uses and Activities Report -Task 4 (Attachment G).

Public Art

Another element of the BCCP is to provide a public art design overlay, which will identify potential locations for temporary and permanent public art, and ensure that future temporary and permanent Public Art installations are appropriate for the Baylands. The Public Art Master plan calls out the Embarcadero Corridor east of Highway 101 as one of the distinct areas that could benefit from a comprehensive approach to public art planning.

The City of Palo Alto's Public Art Program contracted with Mary O'Brien and Daniel McCormick to conduct a four-week artist in residency at the Baylands to engage the public and help inform the BCCP public art overlay.

On June 6, 2018 AECOM project manager Petra Unger and landscape architects George Strnad and Carol Maxwell met with the Mary O'Brien and Daniel McCormick and conducted a tour of the former ITT site/Renzel Wetlands and Byxbee Park. The artists will also facilitate up to two community and stakeholder public meetings to identify particular areas of on-site public engagement and temporary artmaking activities. As a result of the community-engagement work, artists may create a temporary public art installation which would only remain onsite on a temporary basis. The artists explained that their vision of a successful art piece is one that integrates into the environment and eventually becomes invisible.

NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

- Coordinate with Artists in Residence – June-December 2018, Ongoing
- Prepare Draft and Final Opportunities, Limitations, and Best Management Practices Analysis and Meetings – May-July 2018
- Draft and Final Sea Level Rise and Climate Change Analysis – May-July 2018
- Develop Draft and Final Baylands Action Plan – July-September 2018
- Draft and Final Design Plan for Byxbee Park Master Plan – June-August 2018
- Prepare Use Scenarios for former ITT/Renzel Wetlands – June-August 2018
- Develop Draft Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Presentations – August-September 2018
- Produce Final Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Presentations – October-December 2018

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Work Plan

Attachment B: Baylands Comprehensive Conservation Plan Existing Conditions Report

Attachment C: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Attachment D: Key Themes from the Oct 18, 2017, December 5, 2017, and February 15, 2018 Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meetings

Attachment E: Baylands User Survey

Attachment F: Vision, Goals, and Objectives

Attachment G: Planned Future Improvements and Changes to Land Uses and Activities Report

