

MEETING NOTES
City of San Diego
OPEN SPACE CANYONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
October 12, 2023

Meeting held at:
Virtual Zoom meeting

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present:

Parks & Recreation

Interim Chair Paul Kilburg (*Senior Planner*)

Development Services Department

Rudy Bilan, *Associate Planner*

Environmental Organization

Eric Bowlby (*SDCL*)

Recreational Organization

Domingos Dias (*Mtn. Bike Comm.*)

Stormwater Department

Anastasia Brewster (*Senior Planner*)

Planning Department

Daniel Monroe (*MSCP*)

Public Utilities Department

Dirk Smith (*Senior Environmental Planner*)

Megan Hickey (*Principal Water Res. Spec.*)

SDG&E

Lisa Murphy (*Land Rep.*)

Transportation

Brian Widener (*Streets Dept.*)

Member at Large

Deborah Knight

GUESTS:

Erika Weikel (*OSCAC liaison*)

Tershia d'Elgin

Laura Ball

Terrell Powell

Kristy Forburger

Jeshua Taucher

Laura Carlson

Kaelynn Graham

Marci Garcia

Melissa Tu

Mark Lopez

Raquel Elias

Renard Graham

Will Bailey

Susan Seiguer

Members Absent:

Matt Adams (*Building Industry Association*)
unexcused

Disabled Community Member (vacant)

Community Member Chair (vacant)

Kelsey Hall (*Senior Planner, PUD*) *excused*

Maya Mazon (*Engineering and Capital*
Projects) *excused*

Prepared by:

Erika Weikel

City of San Diego, Park & Recreation
Department

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619-235-526

CALL TO ORDER

OSCAC Interim Chair Paul Kilburg called the meeting to order at 3:32 PM.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Item 1 – Approval of Meeting Notes from January 12, 2023.

Eric Bowlby approved minutes, seconded by Deborah Knight. Meeting notes were approved by consensus.

Item 2 – Annual Report – Dirk Smith, Senior Environmental Planner, PUD

Canyon Sewer Cleaning and Long-term Sewer Maintenance Program

Covering the City of San Diego's last fiscal year, Dirk Smith summarized objectives for; Access Planning Support, Operations and Maintenance Support, Emergency Projects, Updates for Revegetation and Restoration, Redirectional Flow Studies, as well as Mitigation Programs. Dirk gave an update on the stages of long-term access support for several projects:

- Tecolote Canyon - Construction and bidding process
- Buchanan Canyon – Design and permitting
- San Clemente – Planning
- Rancho Mission and Woodman - Undergoing technical memos
- Navajo and Hopkins - Beginning design phase

Eric Bowlby asked regarding Juniper Canyon and the decision not to redirect the flow and if the current erosion is a threat to existing infrastructure. Dirk Smith responded the engineer's analysis showed the cost of putting in new pipeline and pumps made redirection unfeasible. Regarding erosion, protection and access to manholes is always discussed with work crews.

Debby Knight requested information on who to contact for removal of pampas grass in the Rose Canyon wetland mitigation site. Dirk Smith said she could reach out to Kelsey Hall, khall@sandiego.gov, for assistance with this issue.

Item 3 – Multiple Species Conservation Plan – Dan Monroe, Senior Planner, Planning Department & Kaelynn Graham, Assistant Planner

Dan Monroe announced the Nov. 3rd, 2023 workshop for the 25th anniversary for the Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSCP) to be held at Mission Trails Regional Park's visitor center.

Kaelynn Graham gave an overview of the 2022 MSCP and the Vernal Pool Habitat Conservation Plan (VPHCP) status.

- Project Loss and Gain of Habitat of Multi-Habitat Planning Area
- MSCP Conservation Status
- Management Report site provides a collection of the eleven Parks and Recreation Districts, which can be explored individually for more information.

- Natural Resource Management Plans discussed five different sites where habitat restoration is taking place.
- Management Action Plan detailed
 1. Trail maintenance & Sustainability
 2. Cleanups and Graffiti Removal
 3. Habitat Restoration
- Natural Resource Management Plans – covered seven areas that are completed and five that are being brought forward.
- Story Maps - created this year allows a user to scroll the website for images and descriptions of plants and animals on the MSCP.
- Land acquisitions achieved in 2022 and upcoming acquisitions

Tershia d' Elgin asked whom to contact to have the canyon at 32nd street included in the MSCP. Kaelyn Graham gave the email address as biodiversesd@sandiego.gov as the appropriate contact.

Debby Knight wanted to know if presentations would be given at the MSCP 25th anniversary event. Dan Monroe answered there would be opening remarks, followed by booths where questions would be able to be answered by representing agencies.

Item 4 – Brush Management Audit – *Laura Ball Open Space Deputy Director & Marci Garcia, Code Compliance Supervisor San Diego Fire-Rescue*

The purpose of this presentation was to give an update on the Brush Management Audit as the audit has been issued in July and have gone to City Council on Oct. 16th, 2023.

Finding 1 – The City lacks comprehensive brush management oversight, causing inconsistent and potentially ineffective brush management efforts by some departments with significant amounts of land in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Recommendations

1.1– To improve accountability on city owned land, the Chief Operating Officer should adopt and implement an Administrative Rule that:

- a. Requires the Fire-Rescue Department to identify and maintain information on the location of lands managed by City departments subject to brush management regulations, and to distribute this information to the relevant City departments; and
- b. Establishes policies and procedures for Fire-Rescue to proactively monitor City-owned land for compliance with brush management regulations to evaluate the work performed and provide a publicly available report of the outcomes to City Council and the Chief Operating Officer.

1.2 –The Fire Rescue Department should conduct a resource analysis to determine whether it needs additional resources to proactively monitor City-owned lands for compliance with defensible space regulations.

Finding 2 - The Parks and Recreation Department Open Space Division has a program to perform regular and effective brush management; however, the City should implement a more coordinated approach to ensure other high fire risk City-owned lands undergo regular brush management.

Recommendations

2.1 –The Chief Operating Officer should direct the Parks and Recreation Department Open Space Division to incorporate paper streets which require brush management, and that are within or adjacent to land managed by the Open Space Division, into its brush management schedule and program.

2.2 – To ensure consistent and effective brush management across all City-owned land, the Chief Operating Officer should consider consolidating brush management responsibilities to the extent and operationally and fiscally possible.

2.3 – Departments with significant brush management responsibilities should establish regular periodic meetings.

2.4 – To monitor the effectiveness of contractor’s brush management work, the Parks and Recreation should:

- a. Obtain input from other departments who also use Parks and Recreation’s contractors to perform brush management and
- b. Continue to conduct quarterly performance evaluations and submit these forms to the Purchasing and Contracting Department for monitoring.

2.5 – The Parks and Recreation Department should conduct a resource analysis to determine whether it needs additional resources to perform brush management activities on paper streets and potentially other lands managed by other departments.

Marci Garcia added Fire-Rescue will refine the recommendations in 1.1 and 1.2 and these will be targeted for fiscal year 2025 budget process for additional resources.

Eric Bowlby stated he thought the recommendations made sense and that the Open Space Division is doing a good job in the areas under their jurisdiction. Eric Bowlby said, if Open Space is to take on some paper streets, that the Open Space Division needs to be well funded to do so properly. Eric Bowlby mentions non-native annuals in Open Space Canyons on slopes, and in areas that could be maintained he said these areas could be transformed with low-growing native vegetation.

Debby Knight asked if the City is going to require changes to the additional requirements for all new construction, since San Diego has so many high fire zones. Laura Ball answers that this presentation was on BMZ City-owned land and that since 1989 the City does not receive new land that requires brush management. Debby Knight states that she is concerned about contractors, who are working in open spaces, and their not knowing native versus non-native vegetation.

Tershia d'Elgin gave an account of a conversation with Anne Fege and says Anne Fege remarked on the absence of the mention of the MSCP in audit. They believe that mentioning the MSCP in the audit could help improve habitat restoration efforts. Laura Ball states that at this point it's most likely the report will be going to City Council as it was presented to the audit committee. Debby Knight asked if the City was doing anything about dealing with brush management at type conversion? Laura Ball said we follow regulations as we understand them including working with biologist on flagging native species before brush thinning occurs. Laura Ball stated brush clearing is needed to meet the 50 percent coverage that is called for in the regulations.

Paul Kilburg stated this will a standing item and as things evolve updates will be provided.

Item 5 Open Space Canyon Ranger District Update- *Erika Weikel, Senior Park Ranger, Open Space Division*

Senior Park Ranger Erika Weikel gave an update to recent changes in park ranger staff for Open Space Canyons. She discussed the impact ranger staff have had on responding to Get It Done (GID) reports, as well as trail clearing, debris removal, community contacts and public safety. Ranger Weikel talked about several past outreach events, getting more residents to utilize lesser know open spaces, dog safety awareness, articles in San Diego Magazine, partnerships with the Humane Society, updated kiosks, and job fairs. Past restoration efforts results were shown in photos. Upcoming sites for restoration and volunteer events were discussed.

Future Agenda Items

Eric Bowlby asked for a future agenda item regarding page # 4. Clarification for why site development permits was not needed on the Maple Canyon project. Paul Kilburg mentioned there would be an update on Maple Canyon. Eric Bowlby asked for an agenda item that would address wetland definitions when discussing Maple Canyon, and will the area be following, State, Federal or City definitions. Paul Kilburg recommends reaching out to Daniel Yelsits for more information.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Debby Knight asked how one could get access to the Power Point's. Paul Kilburg stated that she could email Erika Weikel for Power Points.

NEXT MEETING

Jan 12, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

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