

MEETING NOTES
City of San Diego
OPEN SPACE CANYONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
April 11, 2024

Meeting held at:
Virtual Teams meeting

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present:

Parks & Recreation

Chair Erika Ferreira (*Deputy Director*)

Stormwater Department

Anastasia Brewster (*Senior Planner*)

Planning Department

Daniel Monroe (*MSCP*)

Public Utilities Department

Kelsey Hall (*Senior Planner*)

Lee BenVau (*Biologist III*)

Development Service Department

Rudy Bilan, *Associate Planner unexcused*

Engineering and Capital Projects

Nick Ferracone (*Project Officer II, Engineering and Capital Projects*)

Community Planning

Victoria Touchstone (*CPG*)

Environmental Organization

Eric Bowlby (*SDCL*)

Justin Daniels (*CNPS*)

Recreational Organization

Domingos Dias (*Mtn. Bike Comm.*)

SDG&E

Brian Niemela (*SDGE*)

Member at Large

Deborah Knight

GUESTS:

Erika Weikel (*OSCAC liaison*)

Paul Kilburg

Tershia d'Elgin

Mark Berninger

Susan Seiguer

Kristen Forburger (*MSCP*)

Daniel Neri

Michelle Thompson

Anne Fege

Megan Hickey (*PUD*)

Clayton Tschudy

Terrell Powell

Members Absent:

Matt Adams (*Building Industry Association*)
unexcused

Brian Widener (*Streets Dept.*) *unexcused*

Disabled Community Member (vacant)

Community Member Chair (vacant)

Prepared by:

Erika Weikel

City of San Diego, Park & Recreation
Department

202 C Street, 5th Floor, San Diego

619-235-52

CALL TO ORDER

OSCAC Chair Erika Ferreira called the meeting to order at 3:33 PM.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Item 1 – Approval of Meeting Notes from Feb. 08, 2024.

Erika Ferreira asked for any questions or concerns regarding the Feb. 08th OSCAC minutes, none were mentioned. Minutes were approved by consensus.

Item 2 – Maple Canyon Update – Nick Ferracone, *Project Officer II, EC&P*

Project Overview for Phases 1 & 2 of the Maple Canyon Restoration –

- The City of San Diego is upgrading 16 storm drain systems that outfall into Maple Canyon and a new storm drain system on Maple Street at the downstream end of Maple Canyon.
- This project will restore and stabilize the stream bed within the canyon which includes grading, the installation of riprap, and concrete drop structures.
- This project also includes 2 pedestrian bridges within the canyon at the stream bed crossings.
- The project scope will cover drainage, and revegetation improvements.

New Update –

- 16% of overall project construction has been completed, and that includes the majority of clearing and 851 linear feet of storm drainpipe and 12 new storm drain structures.
- Current construction activities include installing storm drains –
 - System 2 near Albatross and Olive
 - System 3 at the end of 2nd Ave near Quince,
 - System 13 near 1st Ave and Nutmeg
 - System 5,6 and 7 near 3rd Ave and Redwood St.
- Nick F. noted that he would send Senior Park Ranger Erika Weikel a list of native plants to be installed, as this was requested in the OSCAC meeting in Feb. 2024 from Debby Knight.

Item 3 – Healthy Canyons Initiative – *Michelle Thompson, Exequiel Ezcurra Director of Conservation Biology, Natural History Museum*

- Power Point on a Healthy Canyons Initiative covered several opportunities.
 - Improve biodiversity protection and quality of life.
 - Involve communities in science and conservation.
 - Inspire environmental conservation.
- The grant is for three years and will take place in about 20 of San Diego's Urban Canyons.

- Clayton Tschudy thanked Michelle Thompson for the tremendous work they have been doing with our (San Diego Canyonlands) student interns, and for bringing the scientific expertise of the Natural History into our Open Space Canyons.
- Dan Neri asked if the data that will be collected will be available somewhere to the public. Michelle Thompson stated information is georeferenced in the Field Maps, but exact locations will take into consideration sensitive species and property ownership.
- Justin Daniels asks about the standards for property lines, different jurisdictions, private property, and how rare plants will be protected. Michelle T. states that Field Maps shows property layers, and they work to stay within the city's property, and they encourage property owners to contribute information from their own property. They are also encouraging people to join iNaturalist and John's Plant Atlas so that sensitive species can be identified and cross-referenced. Justin follows up by saying this documentation is super valuable and he hopes there may be the potential to collect and propagate some of these rare species.
- Tershia D. suggested making information available to multiple city departments, so when a project is to be done the biology in the area will be evident. Michelle agreed this could be a good idea.

Item 4 – Brush Management – *Erika Ferreira, Deputy Director, Parks and Recreation*

Overviews of the Brush Management Audit recommendations and brief updates of responses are as follows:

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.

- Update – P&R and Transportation are meeting regularly to discuss implementation of this recommendation.
- A resource analysis on the needed funding that it would be required to take on the additional acreage, which is around 85 additional acres across the city of San Diego.
- Established two positions would be needed, another biologist and then ArcGIS analyst to assist with the mapping and the ongoing scheduling.
- Budget request for next fiscal year FY25 beginning July 1st that is currently in process. Will not fully know 100% if that's a resource and funding request that is approved until probably late May or early June.

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.

- Update – An initial quarterly meeting of City Departments with brush management responsibilities was held on Dec. 11, 2023 with representatives from Fire, P&R, Transportation, PUD, Stormwater, DREAM, PD, Library, ESD and Economic Development.
- We have been meeting quarterly with those departments to establish if they want to create their own proactive program or if they want to try to incorporate their acreage into the Parks and Recreation departments program.
- Working slowly through each department to establish and confirm the acreage that was identified in the audit and determine again if they want to establish their own or be part of ours.
- PUD, Real Estate Assets are looking into establishing their own in-house program.
- Transportation has opted to try to incorporate their acreage into the Parks and Rec. program.
- The department is working with San Diego Fire Rescue to assist in their ArcGIS to establish their acreage and help determine if they want to create their own or program or incorporate into P&R.
- San Diego Police and libraries are also asking for ArcGIS support to establish their acreage.

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

- Quarterly meeting of City Departments with brush management responsibilities with representatives from Fire, P&R, Transportation, PUD, Stormwater, DREAM, PD, Library, ESD and Economic Development are being held.

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

- Continue to conduct quarterly performance evaluations and submit these forms to the Purchasing and Contracting Department for monitoring.
- Provide corrections and improvements to the contractor. We make sure that we hold them accountable for that.
- We also engage with the Transportation Department because they utilize our current contract for their brush management work, and we incorporate their comments as well.

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.

- Identified that we do need another biologist as well as a geographical information systems analyst who take on additional acreage within the department.

- A survey of the entire Parks and Recreation department, not just the open space, determined approximately 360 acres between transportation and proxy recreation that could potentially be folded into our current program and that was what the funding requests.

Clayton Tschudy, thanked the team for being willing to take on that extra responsibility and attempt to get in front of a very difficult management issue. He asked how the community can support P&R in getting funding to support P&R incorporating these acres. Erika F. responded that P&R always appreciate the support, but as a public servant it's beyond us make recommendations about what you can do to support this. She states that community leaders can be a great resource and city council. Clayton responds to the group that organizing a group to support P&R may be needed. Eric B. echoed Clayton's statement on praise for the P&R dept for taking on these 360 acres. Eric asked when the funding season is and Anne Fege answered now, and Erika F. confirmed. Eric B. asks for Erika F. to inform him when an opportunity to speak on this agenda item and she agrees.

Anne Fege talked about being a past member of Citizens for Responsible Wildfire Risk Reduction. They worked to clarify Brush Management regulations and explain the priority of native plants versus invasive plants. She states the performance audit purpose was to show if contractors had implemented the correct practices. Anne questions if the current audit addressed the fact that many of these areas are MHCP lands. Erika F. states that she can only comment on the P&R recommendations that were part of the audit. Erika F. says Fire did have recommendations; however, they are not currently present at this meeting. Anne F. said that Fire doesn't manage the MHCP's that Fire is only interested in brush clearing.

Erika F. read one the Fire's recommendations to improve accountability for fresh management on city owned land, which requires a department to identify and maintain information on the location of lands managed by the State Department on the regulations and establish policies and procedures to proactively monitor compliance. Anne F. states her point was that because it (MHCP) wasn't mentioned in the audit, that P&R knows how to manage those lands and it their responsibility. Erika F. says this was not one of the recommendations.

Clayton T. states the SDCL and the Open Space Division (OSD) have been working closely over the past few years and wants everyone to know that we partner very closely with the OSD, BMZ team and I just want make sure that everyone's aware that that team operates under compliance requirements that are not mandated by the BMZ protocol but by the MSCP protocols, that protocols are already in place and being followed. The more we can support OSD by get the funding they need to have the right people in place so work can be done at the highest standard, the better results we are going to get with brush management. Erika F. thanked Clayton for the comments.

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

Senior Park Ranger Erika Weikel 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, including the Careers in Public Service job fair. Upcoming sites for restoration, volunteer events and Creek to Bay were discussed.

- Eric B. asked how sensitive species were protected in these restoration areas from being damaged by volunteers. Senior Park Ranger Erika explained that one factor in selecting a restoration sites is that the area is overrun with non-natives. She described the restoration process which includes teaching volunteers to identify the plants they will be removing and states that if there was a sensitive species, she would most likely avoid that area but also educate volunteers.
- Tershia D. asked about getting help to unclog the creek bed at 32nd without a permit. Mark stated typically those types of things are very permit heavy, maybe it's something the city would take on, but it's not something we go around to look to remove dammed up drainage ditches and gullies. Tershia states the erosion in the creek bed is because of the recent BMZ work and invites Mark B. to come walk the site. Eric B. adds that discharge into a creek bed from BMZ is discharge into the waters of the US and not allowed. Erika F. responded that the group had done a walk through, and a punch list was created, and the contractors will be establishing and remedying the situation.

Item 6- Future Agenda Items

- Eric B. ask if BMZ is typical on the agenda and Erika F. answers yes, BMZ will be ongoing.
- Justin D. wants to bring awareness to a Supreme Court Case, City of Grants Pass Oregon vs. Johnson. It's regarding whether local ordinances can be used to take property of an unhoused individual who is staying in the canyon. Justin would like a discussion on how the ordinances can be legally applied and of policies that are in place.
- Clayton asks to hear about restoration projects that are happening with the City of San Diego within the Open Space Division in addition to the projects from OSC. He suggests that in a few meetings the topics of stream bed restoration, bio engineering and the state of that initiative that Canyonland's is working on with the Storm Water Department be discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

July 11, 2024