

**Special Notice / Hearing:** None  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors  
**From:** Supervisor Carole Groom, District 2  
Supervisor Don Horsley, District 3  
**Subject:** **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** - Equitable Access to the San Mateo County Parks System

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a resolution:

- A) Adopting the San Mateo County Parks Department's Interpretive Program Strategic Plan; and
- B) Authorizing the Parks Department to implement the Mariposa Program, which will provide a no-cost Parks Annual Pass to eligible individuals/households, and further authorizing the Parks Director to expand the eligibility list to meet future needs of the residents of San Mateo County; and
- C) Authorizing amendments to the Parks Department's fee schedule to increase the cost of an annual pass and create separate resident and non-resident camping rates for campgrounds within the San Mateo County Parks system.

**BACKGROUND:**

In December 2021, the Board of Supervisors created this *ad hoc* subcommittee to analyze and explore ways in which the San Mateo County Parks system can become more accessible to all County residents. The subcommittee convened three times in 2022, and focused on eliminating barriers to access (including financial barriers) and developing strategies to better serve County residents not currently using County parks. The subcommittee proposes a series of recommendations focused on certain aspects of the Parks Department ("Department"): the Department's Interpretive Program Strategic Plan, the Mariposa Program, Parks Annual Pass fees, and camping fees.

**DISCUSSION:**

1) *Interpretive Program Strategic Plan*

In 2021 and 2022, the Department conducted a public planning process for its Interpretive Program Strategic Plan, which included interviews with 29 partner groups, community-based organizations, and stakeholders; 1,178 survey responses; and a series of workshops. The strategic plan will serve as a guide for the Department in

providing services that better reflect the desires of the public, especially members of disadvantaged communities.

Through this robust public planning process, seven goals for the Interpretive Program were identified. These goals include increasing knowledge of the County's natural, cultural, and recreational resources; expanding the public's understanding of climate change and the impact humans have on the environment; building support for active stewardship and preservation of parkland; and promoting equity by uplifting the voices of underrepresented populations, especially local Native American tribes. To meet these goals, the Department identified a series of recommendations organized into the following categories: equitable access, expanded uses, and public outreach; partnerships; interpretive media; organizational capacity; professional standards and training; and education. The Department developed all recommendations through an equity lens to better serve members of disadvantaged communities.

## *2) New Uses, New Users*

The survey administered by the Department during the Interpretive Program Strategic Plan's public planning process demonstrated that a significant barrier to access is "No time to visit," which the Department interprets to mean, at least in part, that County parks may not offer the amenities these individuals are looking for in their free time. If the County wants to be the park system of choice for those who do not currently use County parks, it needs to consider upgrading existing facilities, replacing antiquated facilities, and providing new amenities reflective of the public's wants and desires. Examples of projects that reflect this effort include Realize Flood Park, the Huckleberry Flat dog-friendly campground, the Quarry Park Pump Track, and renovation of the Memorial Park facilities and San Bruno Mountain Day Use area.

## *3) Mariposa Program*

With a better understanding of how barriers to access impact both current and potential park visitors, the subcommittee directed the Department to refine the Mariposa Program. Under the refined proposal, all individuals/households eligible for Economic Self Sufficiency programs (i.e. cash programs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal) are eligible for a free Parks Annual Pass. The Department and the Human Services Agency will collaborate to administer the Mariposa Program and enroll eligible individuals/households. The program will operate at no cost to the eligible individual/household; the Department will absorb the cost incurred by administering the program. Approximately 94,000 households, or approximately 166,000 individuals will be eligible for a free Parks Annual Pass; this is over 20% of all County residents.

## *4) Vehicle Entry*

At current, the San Mateo County Parks system has the lowest annual pass rate of comparable agencies in the Bay Area (\$60 per pass), and charges market rate for vehicle entry (\$6). The subcommittee proposes to increase the annual pass rate by \$12

per year to \$72, the equivalent of two additional park visits per year. This change is not anticipated to significantly impact overall annual pass sales. The revenue generated by the price increase will offset the costs of administering the Mariposa Program and providing new interpretive programs for youth.

5) *Camping Fees*

The Department charges \$30 per night for a family campsite (tent) at Memorial Park which is approximately 20% below market rate. Included in the campsite reservation fee is access for one vehicle. As camping is often a group activity, most reservation holders arrive with more than one vehicle, thus requiring every additional vehicle to pay a \$10 vehicle fee. Because digital payment is not accepted at Memorial Park, all payments must be in cash. To make matters more convoluted, the Department charges \$30 for a tent site, \$35 for a small trailer site, and \$40 for a large trailer site. The subcommittee thus directed the Department to streamline its camping fee schedule and develop separate resident and non-resident rates as follows:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed – Resident</b>	<b>Proposed – Non-Resident</b>
Tent Camping	\$30	\$40	\$45
Small Trailer	\$35	\$45	\$50
Large Trailer	\$40	\$45	\$50

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no Net County Cost associated with the recommendation. Anticipated costs associated with the Mariposa Program will be paid for by increasing the Parks Annual Pass rate. The cost of organizing and hosting interpretive events are included in the Department’s Adopted Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget and will be included in future budgets.