



# County of San Mateo

## Inter-Departmental Correspondence

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**Department:** COUNTY MANAGER: OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

**File #:** 19-834

Board Meeting Date: 9/17/2019

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

**To:** Honorable Board of Supervisors

**From:** Jim Eggemeyer, Director, Office of Sustainability  
Peggy Jensen, Interim Director, Parks Department  
James C. Porter, Director, Department of Public Works  
Steve Monowitz, Director, Planning & Building Department

**Subject:** Green Infrastructure Plan for the Unincorporated County and County Facilities

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt a resolution approving a Green Infrastructure Plan for the Unincorporated County and County Facilities.

**BACKGROUND:**

The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board's (Water Board) 2015 Municipal Regional Permit (MRP) regulates pollutants in stormwater runoff from municipal storm drain systems throughout San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa Counties.

The MRP requires jurisdictions to adopt a Green Infrastructure Plan (GI Plan) by September 30, 2019 to show how jurisdictions plan to gradually shift from traditional "gray" storm drain infrastructure-which channels polluted runoff directly into receiving waters without treatment-to "green" infrastructure (GI) -which uses natural processes to treat stormwater, reduce flooding, and recharge groundwater. GI measures identified in the GI Plan must then be installed to improve water quality by reducing Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) and mercury in the San Francisco Bay to thresholds consistent with the MRP, meeting 2020, 2030, and 2040 reduction targets.

**DISCUSSION:**

Over the past two years, County staff from multiple departments have collaborated to develop the proposed GI Plan with support from a team of consultants. The plan includes design guidelines, funding strategies, a tracking system, a strategy for policy updates, and prioritized project locations for GI. It describes three primary GI categories: green streets, regional projects, and low impact development (GI integrated into new development and redevelopment sites), as options for meeting reduction targets. Due to economies of scale, regional projects can be much more cost effective than

green streets; these projects will be installed in partnership with other cities.

Following Board approval, the GI Plan will be submitted to the Water Board for review and approval on September 30, 2019. Efforts to meet water quality targets through GI implementation are ongoing and will continue in order to meet 2020, 2030, and 2040 reduction targets. The 2020 target has already been surpassed but increased levels of implementation over the next 20 years will be necessary to meet more stringent reduction targets for 2030 and 2040.

Transitioning from gray to green infrastructure and implementing the County's GI Plan will require significant resources, including potentially adding staffing, supporting interdepartmental collaboration, planning for County capital improvement projects, and providing leadership for collaboration on regional projects. The County plans to use an adaptive management approach to take advantage of opportunities as they arise over time, ensuring the most cost-effective implementation of GI projects.

Following approval of the GI Plan by the Water Board, the County must adopt any proposed policy changes by December 2020. Proposed policy updates include an update to the General Plan, a revised County Stormwater Ordinance, and consideration for lower thresholds for GI implementation by private development. Policy updates are still being developed and will be brought to your Board for consideration in late 2020.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Environmental review is not required for adoption of the GI Plan. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review for policy updates will be completed as necessary at the time of the adoption of the draft regulations.

### **SHARED VISION 2025:**

The GI Plan contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of an Environmentally Conscious Community through the planning and construction of private and public green infrastructure projects, which can provide benefits such as water quality improvement, potential offset of municipal water use, and groundwater replenishment, as well as the creation of attractive streetscapes, reduction of heat island effect, and improved bicycle and pedestrian accessibility. The GI Plan further contributes to the Shared Vision 2025 outcome of a Collaborative Community by using a watershed-based collaborative approach to achieve regional solutions to mandated pollutant load reduction targets.

### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

Preliminary modeling shows the cost to completely implement the GI Plan could range from \$10 million to \$60 million over 20 years, not including the cost of ongoing maintenance. Several factors will affect implementation costs: future revisions to MRP requirements, changes in development and redevelopment rates, policy changes to increase requirements for GI in private development, the ability of the County to work collaboratively on regional projects, and the County's commitment to integrating GI cost effectively into new County projects.

Actual project costs will vary based on the scope of work; proposed projects and funding requests will be presented to your Board for consideration on a case-by-case basis.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- A. Resolution
- B. San Mateo County Draft Green Infrastructure Plan