



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: PARKS COMMISSION

File #: 20-389

Board Meeting Date: 6/4/2020

To: Parks and Recreation Commission
From: Nicholas J. Calderon, Parks Director
Subject: Update regarding Parks Department operations during the COVID-19 pandemic

RECOMMENDATION:

7.3 Accept the Department's update regarding operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Mateo County Parks Department strategically closed facilities and amenities that promote the congregation of people and use of high touch surfaces. As part of this effort, 50 percent of restrooms system-wide were closed, and the frequency in which the remaining restrooms were cleaned was increased to every two hours. The Department also closed all playgrounds, picnic sites, and reservation sites, and cancelled all special events. All trails remained open to the public. These actions were implemented in mid-March.

As the virus continued to spread and confirmed cases increased, the Department closed most parks and trails to the public. Parks and trails that remained opened included San Bruno Mountain, Crystal Springs Regional Trail, Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve, Wunderlich Park, Pillar Point Bluff, Quarry Park, Mirada Surf, the Bay Trail through Coyote Point, the Coastal Trail through Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, and Sam McDonald Park. All visitor centers were closed to the public.

During the weekend of March 20 - 22, parks throughout the Bay Area experienced an unprecedented increase in visitors. Crystal Springs Regional Trail saw an increase of almost 300% at the South of Dam trail segment, and Pillar Point Bluff and San Bruno Mountain saw an increase of over 100%. In anticipation of a surge in COVID-19 cases, and in observation of unsafe numbers of people congregating at trailheads and in parking lots and visitors using closed picnic sites and playgrounds the Department closed its parks on March 27. The parks remained closed until May 4.

DISCUSSION

In preparation for its reopening, the Department developed the COVID-19 Reopening Plan ("Plan"), which is attached. The Plan, which is comprised of four phases for each park district, allows the Department to strategically reopen its parks and facilities in a safe manner. While each phase builds on the preceding phases, the triggers for when the districts transition from one phase to the next is not based on timing but rather trends in COVID-19 cases throughout the region, the Department's ability to secure cleaning supplies, and the ability to properly staff the parks.

The Plan enables each park district to start at Phase 1, and progress through the phases until full access and operations have resumed. However, should COVID-19 outbreaks occur in the region and threaten the health and safety of our visitors, residents, and staff, the Department can adjust operations by progressing or regressing through the phases seamlessly. For example, if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the San Francisco Bay Area, the Department may choose to adjust operations from Phase 4 to Phase 3 or Phase 2.

As of June 4, the Department is operating pursuant to Phase 1 of Plan and has seen record numbers in attendance throughout the system. Effective June 8, all districts except District 1 will transition to Phase 2. District 1 will remain in Phase 1.

Fiscal Impact

While operating pursuant to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Plan, the Department will not be generating revenue from reservations, special events, or vehicle entrance fees. It is unknown at this time how much revenue will be lost because of this since it is unclear how long the Department will be operating pursuant to Phase 1 and Phase 2.