



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: PARKS

File #: 21-756

Board Meeting Date: 9/28/2021

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Nicholas J. Calderon, Parks Director

Subject: Operating Agreement with the California Department of Parks and Recreation for the County's management of San Bruno Mountain State and County Park

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing the President of the Board of Supervisors to execute an Operating Agreement with the California Department of Parks and Recreation authorizing the San Mateo County Parks Department to manage state-owned land at San Bruno Mountain State and County Park.

BACKGROUND:

San Bruno Mountain State and County Park ("San Bruno Mountain") is located in Northern San Mateo County, and is bordered by the cities of Brisbane, Colma, Daly City, and South San Francisco. San Bruno Mountain is approximately 2,400 acres in size, and offers 12 miles of hiking trails, a drop-in picnic area with barbeques and a meadow for free play, a youth group camp area, and an amphitheater for programmed events. Because of its geography, San Bruno Mountain provides desirable hiking opportunities with views of the San Francisco Bay, Peninsula, and San Francisco.

Complementing its recreation resources, San Bruno Mountain is home to 14 species of rare or endangered plant life, as well as host and nectar plants of endangered butterfly species. The endangered or threatened butterflies (San Bruno Elfin, Mission Blue, Callippe Silverspot, and Bay Checkerspot) are found in only a few other places in the world. A Habitat Conservation Plan, adopted in the mid-1980's, helps ensure the protection of the endangered species and their habitats.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, San Bruno Mountain has experienced an unprecedented increase in visitation. In fact, San Bruno Mountain served 137,986 visitors during FY 2019-20, which was a new record that lasted only until FY 2020-21 when the park served 242,064 visitors.

The California Department of Parks and Recreation ("State Parks") owns a portion of San Bruno Mountain that is commonly referred to as the "Saddle Area" (shown on Attachment 1). The Saddle Area, which serves as the primary entrance to San Bruno Mountain, is the site of the park's main

parking lot, Crocker Gate Entrance, restrooms, picnic areas, and the Edward Bacciocco Jr. Youth Camp Area.

The San Mateo County Parks Department ("Department") has managed the Saddle Area for State Parks since the early 1980's pursuant to an Operating Agreement between the parties. Because San Bruno Mountain is an important recreation resource for residents throughout the Bay Area, especially residents of Northern San Mateo County, and because the continued protection of its rare, threatened, and endangered plant and butterfly species is a top priority for the County, the Department and State Parks have negotiated a new Operating Agreement by which the Department would continue to manage the Saddle Area on State Parks' behalf.

DISCUSSION:

The Department and State Parks have negotiated a new Operating Agreement by which the Department would continue to manage the Saddle Area for a term of 15 years, with the option to extend the term for an additional 10 years. The Department will be responsible for developing, operating, controlling, and maintaining State Parks' land for the use and enjoyment of the general public. This obligation includes, but is not limited to, restoring and preserving habitat throughout the Saddle Area; maintaining and upgrading restrooms, the youth group camp area, and picnic sites; conducting garbage and recycling collection services; brushing, maintaining, and improving recreational trails; and maintaining and upgrading visitor amenities. The Department will also be responsible for conducting all fire fuel reduction efforts on State Parks land. Should a fire occur, the County would be responsible for repairing all damage to the Saddle Area, in consultation with the State.

Pursuant to the Operating Agreement, the Department assumes all financial obligations associated with managing, operating, improving, maintaining, and upgrading facilities in the Saddle Area as well as preserving and restoring sensitive habitat. The Operating Agreement authorizes the County to establish a Facility Maintenance/Improvement Account (FMIA) in accordance with Public Resources Code § 5080.32(b)(2) to fund any improvements, maintenance and upgrades needed.

Because the Saddle Area is owned by State Parks, management and improvement of the area must be performed in accordance with State Parks rules and regulations. Therefore, any improvement of or modification to the landscape or visitor amenities in the Saddle Area must first be approved by State Parks.

Further, in accordance with the Operating Agreement, a one-time allocation of \$175,000 will be transferred to the Department for the following projects:

- 1) Old Guadalupe Trail Safety Corridor Project - \$125,000 (involves vegetation management and fuel reduction from the main entrance heading northwest along the trail towards the Crocker gate, and includes minor upgrades to the youth group camp area).
- 2) Seed Collection and Expansion Project - \$20,000 (to facilitate restoration of areas with native seed collected from premises).
- 3) Bog Area Stewardship Program - \$30,000 (to further ongoing exotic invasive control and restoration planting in Colma Creek and Bog Trail areas previously restored).

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding to manage, improve, maintain, and operate facilities, and to restore and preserve habitat at San Bruno Mountain is provided by different sources, including County funding, donations, and fees from the San Bruno Mountain Habitat Conservation Plan. Annual County funding for the management of San Bruno Mountain is approximately \$200,000. Sufficient funding for this agreement is included in the Parks Department's FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23 Adopted budget, and will be included in future budgets.