

DATE ISSUED: April 23, 2003 REPORT NO. 03-082

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee
Agenda of April 30, 2003

SUBJECT: Update on Canyon Sewer Task Force Recommendations and Formation of
Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee

REFERENCE: Manager's Report No. 01-146, dated July 17, 2001

SUMMARY

Issue – Should the City Council Natural Resources and Culture Committee: 1) accept the progress report on implementation of the Canyon Sewer Task Force recommendations; and 2) approve the structure for an Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee?

Manager's Recommendation – Accept the report, and approve the proposal to create an 18-member Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee comprised of the following positions:

City of San Diego: 8 senior-level department representatives from
Park & Recreation; Engineering & Capital Projects; Metro Wastewater;
Water, Transportation-Streets, General Services-Storm Water; Planning-
MSCP; and Development Services-EAS.

California Department of Fish and Game: 1 representative
Regional Water Quality Control Board: 1 representative
SDG&E: 1 representative
Community Planning Groups: 2 representatives
Environmental Organizations: 2 representatives
Recreational Organizations: 1 representative
Building Industry: 1 representative
Business: 1 representative

Committee representatives would be appointed by the City Manager through recommendations from their respective departments, agencies or organizations and based

on previous experience and interest in urban canyon open space issues.

Fiscal Impact – None with this action.

BACKGROUND

On February 9, 2000, the Natural Resources and Culture (NR&C) Committee authorized the creation of a citywide citizen task force to assist in the development of city-wide policies for operating, maintaining, and accessing the sewer collection system, while protecting environmental health and public safety, and eliminating or minimizing impacts to San Diego's urban canyons. On March 28, 2001, the Citywide Canyon Sewer Maintenance Task Force presented their final report and proposed policies and recommendations to the NR&C Committee. On July 18, 2001, City staff presented recommendations to the NR&C Committee based on the Citywide Canyon Sewer Maintenance Task Force Report. The NR&C Committee took the following actions at the July 18 meeting:

1. Adopted the City Manager's recommendations to create a new entity within Park and Recreation that would be responsible for managing open space lands, including publicly-owned canyons and lands acquired under the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), pending review of the actual program and the personnel and budgetary requirements for that program.
2. Approved the two proposed Council Policies, with some revisions: *Redirection of Sewage Discharge Away from Canyons and Other Environmentally Sensitive Lands*; and, *Management of Sewer Facilities Located in Canyons and other Environmentally Sensitive Lands*.
3. Directed the City Manager to return to the NR&C Committee with an implementation strategy to include specific plans, projects, cost estimates, time lines, and priority categories. (An initial status report was provided in December 2001.)

DISCUSSION

The following provides a summary of progress made on the NR&C Committee direction as provided at the July 18, 2001 meeting.

Canyon Management Entity

Park and Recreation Open Space Division

In response to the direction from NR&C to create "an entity responsible for canyon oversight," and as a result of the significant increase in city-owned open space acreage--including lands acquired to implement the Multiple Species Conservation Program--and commensurate open space management responsibilities, a new Open Space Division was formed in the Park and Recreation Department. This Division was created as part of a larger reorganization of the

Department, which was deliberated during the FY 2003 budget process, and went into effect on September 1, 2002.

The Open Space Division is responsible for the management of roughly 21,000 acres of city-owned open space, including all open space parks (Mission Trails, Tecolote/Marian Bear/Rose Canyons, Los Penasquitos, Black Mountain, Otay Valley), as well as many open space canyons and watersheds throughout San Diego. The Division encompasses the park ranger program, brush management, maintenance and litter control, and natural resource planning. Additionally, the Open Space Division manages the City's 37 Maintenance Assessment Districts and all of the enhanced Gas Tax/Transnet funded street medians.

Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee

Currently, 11 city departments with canyon construction activities or access needs meet monthly to share information, coordinate schedules, and discuss and resolve environmental issues. These departments include Metropolitan Wastewater, Water, Park and Recreation, Engineering and Capital Projects, Transportation-Streets, Development Services-EAS, Planning-MSCP, Police, Fire, READ, General Services-Storm Water, and Environmental Services. In response to citizen and environmental group concerns about canyon access issues, this staff committee has also met on an ad hoc basis with representatives from several groups to discuss erosion control and re-vegetation of canyon areas, and has selected some pilot areas to try various potential re-vegetation options.

In order to provide on-going input on canyon issues, the City Manager recommends the formation of a joint 18-member citizen/staff Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee. This Committee would meet regularly to review programmatic and long term policy issues related to urban canyons, as well as any significant utility access proposals, and would advise the City Manager and City departments. The Committee would also coordinate its activities with the Public Utilities Advisory Commission.

This committee would be chaired by the Park and Recreation Department Open Space Division Deputy Director, or the recently-created and filled Open Space Lands Coordinator/Senior Planner position. The committee membership would be comprised of eight City employees, seven members from the public and three members from other agencies, as follows:

- City of San Diego: 8 senior-level department representatives from:
 - Park & Recreation; Engineering & Capital Projects; Metro Wastewater; Water, Transportation-Streets, General Services-Storm Water; Planning-MSCP; and Development Services-EAS.
- California Department of Fish and Game: 1 representative
- Regional Water Quality Control Board: 1 representative
- SDG&E: 1 representative
- Community Planning Groups: 2 representatives
- Environmental Organizations: 2 representatives

Recreational Organizations: 1 representative

Building Industry: 1 representative

Business: 1 representative

Committee representatives would be appointed by the City Manager through recommendations from their respective organizations, agencies or departments and based on previous experience and interest in urban canyon open space issues as follows: The eight City department representatives would be recommended by their department directors; the two public agency representatives by agency directors; and the private utility representative by its management. The seven public members would be appointed for an initial two-year term, based on recommendations from the Community Planning Committee (CPC) for the planning group representatives; from the environmental community for the environmental organizations representative; from the Building Industry Association (BIA) for the building industry representative; and from the local business community for the business representative.

New City Council Policies Implementation

On January 22, 2002, the City Council adopted two Council Policies that were approved by the Natural Resources and Culture Committee that clarified under what conditions long-term maintenance access could be created to access sewers in canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands: *400-13 Planning for Management of Sewer Facilities Located in Canyons and other Environmentally Sensitive Lands*; and *400-14 Planning for Redirection of Sewage Discharge Away from Canyons and Other Environmentally Sensitive Land*. These policies were developed in conjunction with the city-wide Canyon Sewer Task Force.

Council Policy 400-13 identifies the need to provide maintenance access to all existing sewer lines in order to reduce the potential for sewer spills. The policy requires that environmental impacts from access paths in environmentally sensitive areas should be minimized to the extent possible through the use of sensitive access path design, canyon proficient maintenance vehicles, and preparation of plans that dictate routine maintenance and emergency access procedures.

Council Policy 400-14 includes a general goal of redirecting sewage flow out of canyons and other environmentally sensitive lands and into streets or other accessible locations. The policy includes a procedure, including a cost/benefit analysis, environmental analysis, and public input, for staff to use to recommend whether flow should be redirected. Redirection of all or part of flow from an environmentally sensitive area could occur under the policy, and individually-owned sewage pumps could be required to redirect flows. Where the life cycle cost of redirecting flow is less than 35% more than the life cycle cost of leaving the flow in place, the policy dictates that redirection if feasible should be undertaken. In general this policy provides for relocating sewer infrastructure to less sensitive areas in and outside of canyon areas.

Interim Canyon Sewer Cleaning Activities

Of the 2,894 miles of sewer lines in the City of San Diego, 253 miles currently are situated in 263 canyons and other distinct sensitive areas. Many pipelines and manholes outside of the paved right-of-way have historically had limited cleaning because maintenance roads, created when sewer infrastructure originally was built, have not been maintained. Major sewer spills

have resulted in Regional Water Quality Control Board fines, and the recent United States Environmental Protection Agency's *Administrative Order* has provided a basis for the current requirement that all sewers be cleaned by March 31, 2004. The City of San Diego's Canyon Sewer Cleaning Program is a component of this overall sewer collection system maintenance goal. Since FY 2000, canyon area sewer spills have been reduced by 68%, with only 7 spills occurring in FY 2002. To-date 38 of 45 major canyon areas have been inspected and cleaned. All appropriate regulatory agency environmental permits or emergency exemptions have been obtained and full technical documentation of interim canyon access activities has been developed on a canyon-specific basis.

Long-term Canyon Sewer Maintenance Activities

Recognizing the need for continuation of periodic inspection, cleaning, and maintenance of canyon sewer infrastructure, the City has proposed the Long-Term Canyon Sewer Maintenance Program. On a canyon-specific basis, evaluation of options to redirect sewage flows out of canyons and into accessible areas will be finalized prior to permanent access path evaluations. These evaluations of sewer lines in canyons and other sensitive lands are based on Council Policies 400-13 and 400-14 and now are on-going. This long-range Program will identify and implement efficient, effective, and environmentally sensitive means to accomplish the necessary canyon sewer cleaning activities, recognizing that the current inaccessibility of much of the sewer infrastructure is due to the presence of dense vegetation, wetlands, and other environmental resources. A programmatic *Environmental Impact Report for the Canyon Sewer Cleaning Program and the Long-Term Canyon Sewer Maintenance Program* is scheduled for public review in May, 2003. This programmatic document will provide a basis for subsequent plans, costs, and canyon access alternatives to be developed in the coming months, a process which will involve input from the proposed Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee.

ALTERNATIVES

Consider a different Committee structure, or do not form an advisory committee.

Respectfully submitted,

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Park and Recreation Department

Scott Tulloch, Director
Metropolitan Wastewater Department

Approved: Bruce Herring,
Deputy City Manager

Approved: Richard Mendes,
D e p u t y C i t y
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