

DATE ISSUED: January 14, 2004

REPORT NO. 04-016

ATTENTION: Rules Committee
Agenda of January 21, 2004

SUBJECT: Status Report on Community Forest Initiative

SUMMARY

Issue – Shall Rules Committee accept this status report on various aspects of the Community Forest Initiative?

Manager’s Recommendation – Accept this status report.

Other Recommendations – None.

Fiscal Impact – None with this action.

BACKGROUND

Status of Tree Canopy

The “Urban Ecosystem (Tree Canopy) Analysis” showed that in 2002 the City of San Diego’s “tree cover” was 13% overall. “Tree cover” is defined as “tree canopy comprised of trees (including riparian and woodland trees) and chaparral over six feet tall.” Considering San Diego’s existing tree cover, climate, rainfall and geography, the Analysis recommended a target goal of 25% tree cover overall. A little over one-tenth of the 2002 tree canopy, half of the shrubland and half of the grassland were within the boundaries of the “2003 Cedar Fire” in the City of San Diego. The percent of San Diego’s tree canopy actually lost to the fire is unknown, however, we do know that many trees within the boundary did not burn. Funding for a post-wildfire update of the Urban Ecosystem Analysis has been requested from the USDA Forest Service.

Public Education about How and Why to Build a Community Forest

Recently, the Community Forest Advisory Board oversaw completion of the text for urban forestry public education brochures, PowerPoint presentations for delivery to community groups, and a Community Forest Initiative web page for the City's web site. The Board is currently working on obtaining photos and illustrations to support this text.

Tree Tally

The Community Forest Initiative objective announced by Mayor Murphy in January 2002 is to plant 5,000 trees on public property each year for 20 years, for a total of 100,000 trees for San Diego. This target was exceeded in the first goal period. In Calendar Year 2003, the objective was not met, with only 3,479 additional trees planted on public property. Tree planting has been moving forward more slowly than expected, largely due to the reluctance of some residents to agree to water a new street tree. At current water rates, deep watering a tree 15 gallons a week costs just \$2 to \$3 per year. A new Watering Agreement is being implemented that is expected to better educate residents about the minor cost and major benefits of street trees in order to help motivate them to sign Watering Agreements. *Attachment 1* is a tally of trees planted on *public property* in the City of San Diego in Calendar Year 2003, excluding the trees planted as a result of a development permit requirement.

Two other tree planting efforts have helped to enhance our community forest in 2003.

1) San Diego Regional Energy Office's "2003 Cool Communities Shade Tree Program," in partnership with People for Trees and funded by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), planted 4,698 shade trees on *private and school property region-wide* in Calendar Year 2003. Of these, 712 shade trees were planted within the City of San Diego and are estimated to produce an average 100 kilowatt reduction in peak demand and 89,000 kilowatt-hours in energy savings.

The "2003 Cool Communities" program plans to plant another 3,640 shade trees region-wide by March, 2004, and has received a \$1.7 million grant from the CPUC to plant an additional 15,000 shade trees region-wide between March 2004 and December 2005 in the "2004-2005 Cool Communities" program. All of these trees will be planted on *private and school property*.

2) CalTrans planted 227 trees in the City of San Diego in 2003, as follows: a) At the junction of I-805/15 (58 trees); b) adjacent to I-5 at the international border Friendship Plaza (58 trees); c) under the junction of I-5/75 in Chicano Park (12 trees); d) on I-15 from Camino del Norte to Rancho Bernardo Rd. (2 trees); and e) On I-15 from Mercy Rd. to 0.6 kilometer south of the Route 56/15 separation (97 trees).

Fiscal Year 2004 Community Forest Budget Plan

The Community Forest Budget Plan for Fiscal Year 2004 considers all planned and potential funding sources, not just City funding sources. It is presented in *Attachment 2*. It includes planned and potential funding to plant an estimated 5,253 trees. Funding is sufficient to meet the target to plant 5,000 trees on public property in Fiscal Year 2004. However, achieving this goal will depend to a large extent on whether the new Watering Agreement is effective. The Budget Plan is updated as changes occur.

Tree Research

Planned Research

“Irrigated Acres Inventory”: The Water Department has contracted to obtain satellite imagery with 2.5 meter pixels focused on urban, irrigated vegetation and impervious surfaces in the entire City of San Diego, and analysis of that data to determine the actual acres of irrigated trees, shrubs and grass in the City, from which they can estimate the amount of irrigation water required. The imagery is ordered for late June 2004 and the report is due in early 2005. For the Community Forest Initiative, this information will be valuable when evaluating the cost/benefit of using San Diego’s precious water resources on more urban trees.

Potential Research

“Urban Ecosystem Analysis Update”: On January 9, 2004, the Mayor sent a letter to the USDA Forest Service requesting \$150,000 to repeat the Urban Ecosystem Analysis to measure what the City of San Diego lost in the 2003 wildfires, both in terms of acres of tree canopy and the air/water quality benefits trees provide, and to establish a baseline for developing our urban forest plans for the future. The project will overlay the pre-fire boundaries of chaparral onto the 2002 green data layer, and compare it to the post-fire green data layer, to determine how much of the tree canopy lost to the fire was chaparral versus other tree cover.

“STRATUM” (Street Tree Resource Analysis Tool for Urban forest Managers): A grant will be sought to obtain STRATUM, a tool developed by the Center for Urban Forest Research at U.C. Davis, to help measure the costs, benefits and future funding needs of the City’s street tree inventory.

Tree and Community Forest Ordinance

In Spring 2004, an amended draft “Tree and Community Forest Ordinance” is expected to be presented to the Community Forest Advisory Board and then to Rules Committee. If approved in concept, it will be sent to the Community Planners Committee and individual Community Planning Groups for a 45-day review/comment period.

Subsequently, it will be returned with any comments received to the Community Forest Advisory Board and Rules Committee, then docketed at City Council in mid-2004.

City Organizational Structure and Budgetary Elements for Trees

Regarding issues previously raised by the Rules Committee about the appropriate City department to be in charge of trees, and future budget plans for street/park/open space tree replacement planting, watering, pruning and tracking, the City Manager will be considering these during preparation of the Proposed FY 2005 Budget. Currently, one Program Manager is funded by the Water Department (50%) and a Community Development Block Grant to the Community Forest Initiative (50%), just through FY 2004. The Community Forest Advisory Board has identified as its top priority for FY 2005 continuation of this Program Manager position. The Board has requested that the position be filled by a Citywide Urban Forester with administrative qualifications who would: a) provide guidance and coordination of staff located in City departments and agencies whose activities, policies or decisions affect trees, b) provide liaison with relevant government and non-government organizations that have similar roles in relation to trees, and c) serve as staff representative to the Community Forest Advisory Board.

ALTERNATIVE

Do not accept this status report.

Respectfully submitted,

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Manager's Liaison to Community Forest
Advisory Board

George I. Loveland
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Attachments: [1. Tree Tally for Calendar Year 2003, dated January 12, 2004](#)
[2. Tree Budget Plan for Fiscal Year 2004, dated January 12, 2004](#)