

DATE ISSUED: June 1, 2005 REPORT NO. 05-128

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee
Agenda of June 8, 2005

SUBJECT: Update on Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee Activities

REFERENCE: Manager's Report No. 03-082, dated April 30, 2003

SUMMARY

THIS REPORT IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED BY THE COMMITTEE.

BACKGROUND

On April 30, 2003, City staff presented a report to the Natural Resources and Culture Committee (NR&C) on implementation of the Canyon Sewer Task Force recommendations, and a proposed structure for an Open Space Canyons Advisory Committee (OSCAC) to advise the City Manager. The report proposed that Committee representatives be appointed by the City Manager through recommendations from their respective departments, agencies or organizations, or based on previous experience and interest in urban canyon open space issues.

At the July 16, 2003 meeting, NR&C approved the following OSCAC membership as recommended by the City Manager, and requested progress reports on a bi-annual basis:

Community Planning Groups (2 representatives):

Steve Laub, College Area Community Council, President

Don Wetzel, Linda Vista Community Planning Committee, Vice Chair

Environmental Organizations (2 representatives):

Sierra Club: Eric Bowlby, Sierra Club Campaign Coordinator

California Native Plant Society, San Diego Chapter: Carrie Schneider, President

Recreational Organizations (1 representative):

San Diego Mountain Bike Association: John Holloway, Landscape Architect and Planner

Members at-large (2 representatives):

Victoria Touchstone

Vicki Granowitz

Building Industry Association (1 representative):

Matthew Adams

Disabled Community (1 representative):

Bonnie Hough, MD, Friends of Ruffin Canyon, Co-Chair

Agencies (3 representatives):

California Fish and Game Department: Libby Lucas, Environmental Scientist

Regional Water Quality Control Board: Stacey Baczowski, Environmental Scientist

San Diego Gas and Electric: Jeff Sykes, Land Manager

City Departments (8 representatives):

Development Services-Environmental Analysis Section: Eileen Lower, Senior Planner

Engineering and Capital Projects: Dick Rol, Senior Environmental Planner

General Services-Storm Water Pollution Prevention: Drew Kleis, Storm Water Specialist

Metropolitan Wastewater-Wastewater Collection: Chris Toth, Deputy Director

Park and Recreation-Open Space: Ann Hix, Deputy Director (Chair)

Planning-MSCP: Jeanne Krosch, Senior Planner

Transportation/Streets: Mauro Garcia, Assistant Deputy Director

Water: Bob Collins, Program Manager

The OSCAC's purpose is to advise the City Manager and City departments on broad policy issues related to open space canyons, not on individual projects. Due to the unique nature of the Committee, which is comprised of both City department staff and citizen and agency representatives, the group does not formally vote on issues. Instead, the Committee comes to agreements or decisions on recommendations through a discussion and consensus process. Committee recommendations are then implemented, as appropriate, by individual affected departments.

DISCUSSION

Since the last memorandum update to NR&C on April 14, 2004, the OSCAC has continued to meet monthly at the Metropolitan Wastewater Department (MWWD) Operations Building auditorium (although the Committee agreed in December of 2004 to begin meeting bi-monthly).

Topics Discussed

The Committee has had presentations on and discussed a number of canyon topics, including:

- Current MWWD canyon sewer main construction and repair projects.
- MWWD canyon restoration/revegetation/erosion control plans.
- MWWD and Engineering and Capital Projects Department (E&CP) Redirection of Flow analysis and public outreach presentations.
- Use of local vs. imported native seeds for canyon revegetation/erosion control.

- MWWD long term canyon sewer access program and Environmental Impact Report (EIR).
- Access to privately owned lands/easements within canyons.
- MWWD mitigation projects.
- Park and Recreation Open Space Division functions and resource management.
- Exotic invasive plant issues.
- Open Space Division/MWWD canyon trails and access paths issues.
- Revisions to Council Policy 600-23, Open Space Preservation and Maintenance.
- Potential use of volunteers for open space dedication survey work.
- City Department mitigation projects.
- Cultural resource procedures.
- Transportation Department Long-Term Drainage Maintenance Program.
- Brush Management Policies/Procedures.
- Grouped Mitigation for Capital Improvement Projects.

Committee Recommendations

The Committee has reached agreement on a number of canyon-related issues, which have been incorporated by City staff into open space canyon operating procedures and policies, including:

- Revegetation Priority List: Developed criteria to determine the revegetation priority of various canyons. This assists MWWD in prioritizing their list of canyons that are in need of revegetation/erosion control due to interim maintenance emergency repairs and capital improvement project impacts.
- Collection Range for Native Seeds: Recommendation to increase native seed collection area for MWWD erosion control/revegetation projects from 10 miles to 25 miles from coast due to drought related low seed production.
- Use of City Forces for Hydroseeding when Feasible: Supported the concept of MWWD purchasing erosion control equipment and training City staff to perform hydroseeding to supplement contracted staff when feasible.
- Grouped Mitigation for Capital Improvement Projects: Agreed that the concept of grouped mitigation for multiple Capital Improvement Projects should be explored, from a habitat sustainability and cost savings perspective.

The Committee also reached agreements on several operating procedures, including:

- Absentee Policy: After 3 consecutive unexcused absences or 4 total absences in one fiscal year, the Committee will vote to replace member or call their organization and ask for an alternate.
- Notification of Redirection of Flow Presentations and Public Workshops: Committee

will be notified by E&CP or MWWD of all public workshops and redirection of flow presentations related to canyon areas, so they can attend if interested.

- OSCAC Review Process: The Committee requested that Redirection of Flow Study information be given in advance so members can decide if discussion on individual canyons is warranted.
- Pilot Project Update and Priority List for Canyon Restoration Update: Updates on both topics will be presented to Committee as projects progress.
- Future Committee Meetings: The Committee agreed to meet every other month starting January 13, 2005.

Membership

Several changes in OSCAC membership have occurred, including withdrawal of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board in August 2004 due to staffing concerns. They have since agreed to send staff on an occasional basis to address specific topics such as water quality, storm water runoff, or erosion control. Other changes include Community Planning Committee representative Michael Sprague (City Heights) replacing Steve Laub (College Area); Transportation Department representative Anthony Raguine replacing Mauro Garcia (who transferred to Park and Recreation); Development Services Department representative Paul Schlitt replacing Eileen Lower; and Water Department representative Cathy Cibit replacing Bob Collins.

Future Meetings

The Committee will continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis to review programmatic and long term policy issues related to urban canyons, as well as any significant utility access proposals. Additional topics for future discussion include watershed management plans, opportunities to restore urban wetlands, incentives for private property owners to place habitat areas in conservation easements, and other canyon related issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Oppenheim, Director
Park and Recreation Department

Scott Tulloch, Director
Metropolitan Wastewater Department

Approved: Bruce Herring,
Deputy City Manager

Approved: Richard Mendes,
Deputy City Manager