



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: May 18, 2006 REPORT NO. 06-060

ATTENTION: Natural Resources and Culture Committee
Agenda of May 24, 2006

SUBJECT: San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan with City of San Diego
Addendum

REQUESTED ACTION:

Review the San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan and the City of San Diego Addendum and provide a recommendation to City Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Forward the San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan with the City of San Diego Addendum to the City Council with a recommendation to acknowledge and accept.

SUMMARY:

BACKGROUND:

The San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority (JPA) was first introduced as a task force established by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Board of Directors in August 1987. The task force's assignment was to create an open space greenway and open space park system within the San Dieguito River Valley. In June 1989, the task force officially became a Joint Powers Authority through an agreement between its member agencies (the county of San Diego and the cities of San Diego, Del Mar, Escondido, Poway, and Solana Beach). The JPA has been empowered by its member agencies to plan and maintain a regional park focused on the San Dieguito River Valley, now formally known as the San Dieguito River Park. The JPA is responsible for the acquisition and disposition of property for park purposes, as well as the improvement, operation, management, and maintenance of the San Dieguito River Park.

The San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan (Concept Plan) has been prepared by staff from the JPA to provide a conceptual framework for the development of the San Dieguito River Park. The planning effort was initiated to ensure the preservation of the San Dieguito River Valley's sensitive resources, rural character, and visual quality. The Concept Plan, prepared by the JPA

with input from volunteers, consultants, and a Citizens Advisory Committee, provides for the protection of natural habitats along the San Dieguito River Valley while creating recreational opportunities within areas of the river valley that contain the least sensitive biological resources. The area ultimately adopted as the regional planning boundary for the park, referred to as the Focused Planning Area (FPA), incorporates the entire watershed of the river valley, its major tributary canyons, and a high desert linkage to Anza Borrego State Park. The FPA extends for 55 miles from the ocean at Del Mar to the desert just east of Volcan Mountain.

The Concept Plan was adopted by the JPA Board of Directors in February 1994, and updated to include administrative changes in February 2002. The administrative changes updated descriptions of the existing conditions within the FPA and recognized existing park proposals, new park proposals for possible future implementation, and added a description of the City of San Diego's Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), as well as other minor revisions to sections of the Concept Plan.

Since the JPA itself does not have land use authority over the properties within the FPA, the JPA is recommending that its member agencies, beginning with the City of San Diego, take formal action recognizing the February 2002 Concept Plan. If recognized by its member agencies, the Concept Plan can effectively serve as a tool for implementing the goals for the San Dieguito River Valley. Upon formal action by the City Council to Acknowledge and Accept the Concept Plan, consistency with the Concept Plan's goals and recommendations will be considered by the City of San Diego when making decisions regarding appropriate land uses as well as park and development projects within and surrounding the river valley.

In addition to acknowledgement and acceptance of the February 2002 Concept Plan, City of San Diego staff is recommending that the City Council include a one-page City of San Diego Addendum as part of their formal action. The purpose of the addendum is to clarify certain issues specific to the City of San Diego and identify procedures for City staff review, should a conflict arise between adopted City policies and ordinances, and the Concept Plan. The addendum was prepared as a result of a thorough review of the Concept Plan by a multidisciplinary team of City staff and a comprehensive public outreach effort in which the Torrey Pines, Carmel Valley, Rancho Bernardo and San Pasqual/Lake Hodges planning committees made recommendations regarding the Concept Plan. Finally, JPA staff has also reviewed the addendum and supports City staff's recommendation.

DISCUSSION:

Purpose of the Concept Plan

The Concept Plan provides the planning framework that will enable the realization of the overall objectives to create a regional open space park to protect the area's natural waterways and ecosystems, preserve its unique natural, cultural and agricultural resources, retain a regional network of wildlife corridors, and provide meaningful open space recreation areas for public enjoyment. As a framework document, this Concept Plan is not intended to contain the detailed background information that is provided in previous planning studies for this area, nor does this plan contain the level of specificity that future park master plans will provide. The purpose of

the Concept Plan is to merge the goals and recommendations of previous planning efforts into one overall conceptual plan that represents the unified expression of the desires of the citizens of San Diego County for the San Dieguito River Valley.

City of San Diego Review of Concept Plan

On November 6, 2002, the City of San Diego's Land Use and Housing Committee directed that City staff perform a comprehensive analysis of the February 2002 Concept Plan to determine its consistency with the City's adopted plans and policies. A multidisciplinary team of City staff from the Planning, Real Estate Assets, Water, and Park and Recreation departments conducted a detailed review of the Concept Plan and identified several areas of concern in which further analysis was to take place. Following further analysis and discussion with the JPA and a public outreach effort involving four City community planning groups, it was determined that the addition of a City of San Diego Addendum would address any of the concerns raised by staff and the community. The purpose of the addendum is to establish that the Concept Plan is to serve as a guiding document for regional park planning and park facilities in the FPA and that its acknowledgement and acceptance by the City of San Diego does not result in any modification of existing jurisdictional boundaries, change existing zoning or land use plans or add new development regulations.

Implementation

In addition to the Concept Plan, detailed master plans will be prepared for the individual planning units within the FPA (a master plan for the coastal area has already been prepared). These future master plans will establish policies for the restoration, enhancement and or preservation, and management of sensitive resources; address park maintenance and management policies; propose specific amenities such as trails, staging areas, and interpretive facilities; and further define the design standards for all activities within the FPA. Any master plans developed for areas within the City of San Diego would be required to be consistent with City of San Diego policies and ordinances.

The implementation of the river park is an ongoing process. Some park amenities have already been implemented and/or funded, such as the East San Pasqual Trails, the Highland Valley Road Trail, Mule Hill/San Pasqual Valley Trail, and the San Dieguito Wetlands Restoration Project, while other park proposals, such as the construction of interpretive centers, are being planned for future implementation as funds become available.

Environmental Impact

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared and certified by the JPA that examined the significant direct, indirect, and cumulative impacts of implementing the overall goals and proposals described in the Concept Plan. As subsequent activities are proposed that implement the goals of the Concept Plan, an initial study will be used to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared. No action related to the previously certified environmental document is required by the City of San Diego to Acknowledge and Accept the Concept Plan.

The JPA, as lead agency pursuant to CEQA, prepared and certified an EIR for the Concept Plan (SCH No. 91121059; dated November 1993). Amendments to the Concept Plan, adopted on February 15, 2002, do not involve substantial changes or substantial new information requiring further environmental review pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21166.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS:

City of San Diego staff has reviewed the Concept Plan as a General Fund activity. No additional costs are anticipated with this action.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTION:

On November 6, 2002, the City of San Diego's Land Use and Housing Committee directed City staff to analyze the Concept Plan for consistency with the City's existing plans and policies.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS:

In January and February of 2005, the updated Concept Plan was presented to the Torrey Pines, Carmel Valley, San Pasqual/Lake Hodges, and Rancho Bernardo planning groups for recommendations. Both the Torrey Pines and Carmel Valley planning groups voted in favor of the City Council approving the adoption of the plan, while the San Pasqual/Lake Hodges planning group voted to deny the plan based upon several ambiguities, which have now been addressed in the addendum, and the Rancho Bernardo Planning Board voted that the City "Acknowledge and Accept" the plan with conditions, all of which have now been incorporated into the addendum.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS & PROJECTED IMPACTS:

The San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan was developed in partnership with a Citizens Advisory Committee made up of community planning group members, homeowners associations, representatives from professional organizations, property owners within the FPA, and interested planning, environmental, and other special interest organizations, as well as other individuals, as identified by the JPA Board of Directors.

No impacts on a City resident or business are anticipated as a result of this action, as the City's previously adopted plans and policies, including the Progress Guide and General Plan, the San Pasqual Valley Plan, the Rancho Bernardo Community Plan, the Torrey Pines Community Plan, the Carmel Valley Community Plan, the Subarea II Plan, the Pacific Highlands Ranch Subarea Plan, and the MSCP Subarea Plan already provide the comprehensive land use policy framework for the subject area.

Respectfully submitted,

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Acting Planning Director

James T. Waring, Deputy Chief
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WARING/MCCULLOUGH/BS/ah

- Attachments [1. City of San Diego Addendum](#)
[2. San Dieguito River Park Concept Plan, February 15, 2002](#)

Due to the size of the attachments, distribution will be limited to LU&H Committee binders. A copy is available in the Office of the City Clerk.