



Santa Barbara County Park Commission

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY PARK COMMISSION Regular Meeting of May 28, 2009

MINUTES

The Santa Barbara County Park Commission met at the BOS Conference Room, 105 E. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, California.

Call to Order: Chairperson Darlene Chirman called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m.

1. Roll Call

Present: Commissioners: Darlene Chirman, Judith Dale, Gene Petersen, Bailey Hudson,

Absent: Commissioner Perkins.

County Staff in Attendance: Dan Hernandez-Director, Erik Axelson-Deputy Director, South County; Sonia Thompson, Administrative Professional.

2. Action

A. Minutes from the April 23, 2009 meeting:

A motion was made by Commissioner Petersen, seconded by Commissioner Hudson to approve the minutes. Commissioner Dale abstained.

Motion passed.

3. Public Comment Period

No members of the public addressed the Commission.

4. San Marcos Preserve – Jesusita Fire Burn Area Update

Mr. Axelson reported. The Jesusita Fire was the second fire in the South Coast community within the last six month period. This fire had a significant impact on the trail systems and on the most recent acquisition here in the South County, San Marcos Foothills Preserve. Mr. Axelson thanked the maintenance staff for stepping up and commended everyone for their ideal participation. The Rocky Nook office was evacuated on the first day of the fire and moved to the South County Maintenance yard. The maintenance had to return amid the

burning smoke to assist in moving necessary office equipment and files. Mr. Axelson stated items were eventually moved to the Goleta Beach maintenance storage area. Mr. Axelson wanted to be sure the staff was commended for their great work.

Front Country Trails Update – the Front Country Trails run from San Marcos Foothills Preserve to the east, north of Foothill Road going up to the Santa Ynez Mountains up to Camino Cielo and this is approximately where the fire began; somewhere along the Jesusita Trail above the Cater Water Treatment Plant. The Jesusita Trail, Arroyo Burro Trail, Tunnel Trail, and Rattlesnake Canyon Trail the entire trails just mentioned are closed and several of these have sustained significant damage both from the fire itself and from slides of unstable rock on to the trail. The County is working with its sister agencies the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation and the U. S. Forest Service in assessing the extent of the damage and determining what is necessary to bring them up to a condition that will be safe enough to be open to the public. Yesterday, the County received word that the fire investigation has been completed. Mr. Axelson stated that there is some concern among the neighbors that have access along Tunnel Road about people using the trails illegally, so the County is working with the County Office of Emergency Services and City of Santa Barbara and the Forest Service on a more rigorously regimen of no parking signs and enforcement and trails closed signage. The San Antonio Creek Trail which is a County Parks trail; runs from Hwy 154 at the northbound to the south to Tucker's Grove Park - - the trail along the 154 was scorched by the fire that advanced across the highway. The trail is in basically good condition; Mr. Axelson reported that there was minor damage to the vegetation.

San Marcos Foothills Preserve – this is a 200 acre preserve that the County took title to in February 2007 and it adjoins several other parcels. The good news is that the main entrance to the San Marcos Foothills Preserve at Via Gaitero where the County recently constructed at gate, this area was completely unharmed by the fire. The fire did burn about 70% of the land area. Mr. Axelson reported that Commissioner Chirman is part of a group of stakeholders of San Marcos Foothills Preserve who hiked the site last week along with Erik Axelson, Claude Garciacelay and Supervisor Wolf's office. Mr. Axelson reported that the fire did light scorching. Mr. Axelson added that there will be another site inspection on Thursday and they will walk the eastern portion of the Preserve. Mr. Axelson commented that these site walks are accelerating the process of assessing existing trails and old ranch roads should be focus of a trail system for the public. Mr. Axelson also reported that in terms of invasive plants they are looking at best practice strategies used by sister agencies; for example, the City of Santa Barbara and the Forest Services are currently facing the issue of dealing with invasive plants in Parma Park which was affected by the TEA Fire. They are using federal stimulus money to hire people previously unemployed to work on removal of invasive plants by hand. Mr. Axelson stated that they will be exploring these possibilities. County Parks staff met with environmental consultants and the operations staff from Bermant Development. The developer has been very helpful in providing easements in areas of the preserve which would be difficult to access without their cooperation. Commissioner Petersen addressed Mr. Axelson's discussion about the opportunity to look at the management of this property now that this fire has occurred; Commissioner Petersen inquired about the other 30% of the Preserve, asking if County Parks is being proactive on the part of the property that did not burn and what type of management plan should be put in place. Mr. Axelson responded that the approach has been conservative; they are taking time to

understand the property and not rush into a particular strategy.

5. Reports – Park Operation Reports

A. Director's Report

Mr. Hernandez reported that County Parks has adopted an alcohol restriction ordinance at the Isla Vista beaches in response to the "Floatopia" incidents. Mr. Hernandez commented that he was pleasantly surprised by the support they received from students; he stated that there were student organizations that came to the BOS Hearing and spoke in favor of the ordinance. Many students were not in favor of the environmental damage that had taken place. Mr. Hernandez added that this program will go back to the BOS within the next six months and they will decide if the program will stay in place. Mr. Hernandez also reported that County Parks met with Supervisor Farr and representatives from Buellton and Solvang regarding the feasibility of an RV Campground at Nojoqui Park. The RV Campground would be designed to accommodate approximately 50-75 RV stalls. Mr. Hernandez stated that there is a development plan in place to eliminate the RV Campground in Buellton; so this would be filling a need for an RV Campground Park. Mr. Hernandez commented that this would be a unique opportunity for this area as well creating additional revenue for County Parks. Mr. Hernandez also gave an update on the Budget. County Parks submitted the budget which included approximately \$419K in cuts from the current budget and this is after the \$300K that was cut last year. Mr. Hernandez commented that the new concession agreements that have been renegotiated at Jalama and Arroyo Burro Beaches and the increase in camping fees have generated additional revenues which have helped out as well. Mr. Hernandez reported that the department recovers about 60% of the Parks Department operational costs which is above the average for most park agencies. The Resource Management Plan for Lake Cachuma will be coming to a close; it is out for recirculation. Once the Parks Department is able to negotiate a long term agreement they will then be able to enter negotiations with the concessioners for the restaurant as well as the boat launch facility and snack shop, this will provide an opportunity to generate additional revenues. The leases for the current concessionaires are on a month-to-month term this is due to the fact that there is not a long-term agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation on the property. Mr. Hernandez reported that the Parks Department is submitting a "Challenge Award" to the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) for the Quagga Prevention Program at Lake Cachuma. Mr. Hernandez commented that they are very proud of the fact that Santa Barbara County Parks has been on the leading edge for the inspection and protocols for Quagga Prevention. One of the unique features was the boat launch tag system; County Parks was the first in the state to implement this system. This program has been adopted by many other agencies. Mr. Hernandez also reported that as of today there have been no signs of Quagga mussels. Lake Cachuma is entering the busy season so they will be tracking how the economy has impacted the camping levels; Mr. Hernandez commented that Jalama is always busy, but Lake Cachuma receives a lot of out of town traffic. Mr. Hernandez also reported that they are winding down the educational programs at Lake Cachuma. Mr. Hernandez passed on a compliment from Scott McGolpin, Public Works Director; Mr. McGolpin attended a field trip with his son's class at Lake Cachuma and was very impressed with the program and the staff and the Naturalist, Liz Mason. Mr. Hernandez also reported that they have recently increased the Sheriff Patrols at Jalama as well as Lake Cachuma for the

summer season. During this time of year County Parks contracts with the Sheriff Department.

B. South County Division

Mr. Axelson gave a brief update on the County Park Foundation for Santa Barbara. Mr. Axelson announced that the coffee being served at the Park Commission meeting was new Park Blend coffee. The Coffee Cat created a special blend name in honor of the Park Foundation and will be brewed on Tuesday and sold everyday by the pound. The Coffee Cat will donate 25% of the proceeds to the Foundation. Mr. Axelson commented that this is a good example of the kind of partnership that the Foundation is seeking to develop with other local businesses. The Foundation is working to form a partnership with Decker's Outdoor Corporation. John Venable, Park Foundation Board of Director, and President of the Montecito Trails Foundation will be setting up a meeting with Decker's to discuss becoming a possible sponsor for some of the programs, such as the film series. Mr. Axelson reported that there are the film series is underway at several park locations. The first film screening was at Lake Cachuma in April and there is another film screening scheduled for August 14 in North County; this is a joint venture with the City of Lompoc. The Foundation is looking at a couple more locations in North County for outdoor films. The Foundation is also working with the Downtown Organization to coordinate the film series with the First Thursdays in Santa Barbara. The Foundation is sponsoring a walk on June 6 at Pt. Sal; the walk will begin at the parking lot at Rancho Guadalupe Dunes at 8:30AM and should be about a 4 hour walk. Recruitment of Board of Directors continues. The next Park Foundation meeting is June 11 and will be held at Waller Park. Arroyo Burro Beach instituted a landscaping partnership with the Chumash Maritime Association. Every September this group does a crossing out to Santa Cruz Island in a redwood plank canoe; the canoe is stored at the Arroyo Burro Watershed Resource Center. The landscaping around the Watershed Resource Center includes many plants that have significant cultural heritage to the Chumash. The County staff is working with this organization to restore the plantings to the original condition.

Coastal Art Installation – received two proposals from contractors to complete the Overlook Art Installation. The proposals are under review and the contractor should be selected within two to three weeks. Once in place they will be able to go to donors and give them specific details on what costs are needed to complete this project.

County Sustainability Initiative – This is a series of working groups established by the County Energy Manager, this is a new group within the County. Erik Axelson is part of this group and he is involved with grounds maintenance. Commissioner Chirman commented that it would be interesting to look at facilities and the potential for solar facilities. Mr. Axelson responded that regarding the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) they are looking at some possible projects and one project is designed to include solar at the South County Maintenance Yard.

C. North County Division

Commissioner Hudson inquired about the recreation activities at Orcutt Park. Mr. Hernandez reported that Parks is in negotiations with different sport associations to finalize lease

agreements; league play has not started for the season. Commissioner Dale inquired about Santa Ynez Community Plan and some of the trails along the river proposed in the plan. Mr. Hernandez did not have details but said he would follow-up about this item. Commissioner Dale commented that landowners along the river expressed concern about the public coming on their property. Mr. Hernandez also stated that he would set up a parks tour for Commissioner Dale. Commissioner Chirman inquired about Guadalupe Dunes asking if Parks was aware that there is an application for federal recovery money and the awards for the grants are due. Mr. Hernandez responded that there is a significant challenge with Guadalupe Dunes, stated that it is on the budget for an expansion item, the Center for Lands Management has been managing the facility for a few years, and their endowment is scheduled to be finished by March 2010. The Parks Department is going to the BOS requesting an additional \$260K to keep the park running; if the Parks is unable to obtain the funds they will have to look at alternatives of limiting access to the facility, because there is not the manpower to staff the park. Mr. Hernandez also stated that even if the park is closed the Parks Department will continue to have the obligation to provide Snowy Plover monitoring and to provide security. This will be contingent on what the Board of Supervisors decides.

D. Capital Projects Report

Mr. Hernandez gave a brief update. Ocean Beach Park item was approved and the documentation will be going forward to the Coastal Commission.

6. Receive and File Reports

- A. Trails Planning & Development Report
- B. Capital Projects Report
- C. Project Status Report
- D. Park Donations
- E. Park Mitigation Fee Status Report
- F. Monthly Concession Report
- G. Park Visitor Customer Survey Report

Commissioners' Non-agenda Items

Motion to adjourn: Commissioner Petersen moved to adjourn; Commissioner Hudson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.



Daniel Hernandez, Director of Parks