



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 27, 2008

TO: Park and Recreation Commission

FROM: Administrative Division, Parks and Recreation Department

SUBJECT: Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force Management Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission concur with the Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force (Task Force) Management Recommendations for the Front Country Trails, and forward the recommendations to the Santa Barbara City Council, Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, and the Los Padres National Forest Supervisor.

DISCUSSION:

Background

The Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force (Task Force) was formed in late 2006 and began meeting in January 2007. The FCT Task Force includes two members from the City Park and Recreation Commission, two members from the County of Santa Barbara Parks Commission, and two members from the U.S. Forest Service. The purpose of the Task Force is to develop recommendations to foster coordinated and comprehensive management of Santa Barbara's front country trails. Coordinated by the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department, the FCT Task Force also received staff support from the County of Santa Barbara Parks Department and Los Padres National Forest.

Over the course of 2007, the Task Force held nine public meetings to review and discuss trail management, maintenance and regulatory issues, trail classification systems, user education strategies, trails management funding, and natural resource protection considerations. The Task Force also received presentations by a range of trail use stakeholders, including the Los Padres Forest Association, Santa Barbara Mountain Bike Trail Volunteers, Montecito Trails Foundation, Los Padres Chapter of the Sierra Club, Santa Barbara County Trails Council, Los Padres Trail Riders, Santa Barbara County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Council (CRAHTAC), Multi-Use Trails Coalition, and the Santa Barbara New Trails Committee. On a regular basis, between 35 and 55 members of the public attended the Task Force meetings.

FCT Management Recommendations

The FCT Task Force held a work session on Saturday November 17, 2007, to consider a number of management recommendations for the front country trail system. On February 6, 2008, the Task Force subsequently approved these recommendations and referred them to the City Park and Recreation Commission, County Parks Commission, and the Los Padres Forest Supervisor. Included as Attachment 1 to this staff report, the recommendations represent the culmination of Task Force discussion during nine public meetings, public input, trails management research, and an assessment of the conditions, opportunities, and constraints within the Santa Barbara front country.

The recommendations are organized under three topic areas, including: Administration/Organization, Community Outreach/Education, and Trail Management and Maintenance. The administrative/organizational recommendations include:

- Develop an inter-agency memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the City, County, and Forest Service for trail management, maintenance, and funding.
- Develop a Front Country Trails Strategy
- Develop a funding plan to address trails planning and maintenance, capital projects, enforcement, and education and outreach
- Establish an inter-agency FCT Coordinator staff position.
- Foster development of an umbrella non-profit community organization to assist with trail maintenance, education, fundraising, and community support. Confirm/Maintain multi-agency/non-profit partner agreements.

The Community Outreach/Education Recommendations include:

- Re-implement education efforts, including trail signage, trail hosts, and other sources of information
- Develop interim voluntary trail use guidelines.
- Build broader community support for the FCT by working with trail user groups to sponsor quarterly events/work days and an annual event to recognize volunteers and collaborative partnerships, among others.

The Trail Management/Maintenance Recommendations include:

- Conduct an assessment of existing trail conditions and use to evaluate the application and scope of a trail classification system
- Develop a trail classification system and trail standards that are appropriate to Santa Barbara's front country.

- Explore developing consistent standards for trails planning, policy, permits, and regulations.
- Explore a Pilot Program with Trail Use Designations

Attachment 1 provides discussion for each of these recommendations, and Attachment 2 outlines a preliminary implementation matrix.

Next Steps

The next steps for the FCT Management Recommendations are outlined below.

- Step 1: Forward the recommendations to the Los Padres National Forest Supervisor, City Park and Recreation Commission, and County Parks Commission. (February/March 2008)
- Step 2: Following consideration and concurrence with the Task Force, forward the recommendations to the County Board of Supervisors and the Santa Barbara City Council. At that time, seek authority to begin developing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from the Supervisors and Council. (April – May 2008)
- Step 3: Draft MOU language for consideration by the Task Force prior to returning to the respective Commissions, and then the Board of Supervisors and City Council for approval. (May – June 2008)
- Step 4: With an MOU in place, the Forest Service, County, and City will have established the framework from which to implement the recommendations as shown in the attached matrix. (June 2008 -)

Task Force Meeting Schedule and Topics

The FCT Task will continue to meet in 2008 to provide direction and review results related to the management recommendations. These public meetings will be held in June 4, September 3, and December 3 and will continue to be televised and held at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Management Recommendations for the Front Country Trails
2. Implementation Matrix

SUBMITTED BY: Jill E. Zachary, Assistant Parks and Recreation Director

APPROVED BY: Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director