



Legislation Text

File #: 14-0739, **Version:** 1

Receive and Approve the Parks and Recreation 2014/16 Work Plan from the Department of Resource Management, Parks and Recreation Division

Published Notice Required? Yes No
Public Hearing Required? Yes No

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The Department of Resource Management, Parks and Recreation Division recommends that the Board of Supervisors receive and approve the Parks and Recreation 2014/16 Work Plan.

SUMMARY:

The Parks and Recreation Work Plan (Attachment A) includes the major projects and initiatives that the Division plans to complete or start in FY2014/15 and FY2015/16. Several are already underway. The Work Plan reflects a commitment to increase park services to the public, increase public awareness of the parks, and preserve the quality of the park facilities and natural resources under the Division's stewardship, while continuing to closely manage the level of General Fund support.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The 2014/16 Work Plan projects and initiatives are funded by a combination of grants, park-generated fees, property taxes and the General Fund.

DISCUSSION:

Parks and Recreation Division

The Parks and Recreation Division (Division) is one of seven operational divisions within the Department of Resource Management. The Division is responsible for providing park services to approximately 190,000 annual visitors at Solano County's four parks, Sandy Beach County Park, Lake Solano County Park, Belden's Landing Water Access Facility and Lynch Canyon Open Space Park. The functions of the Division include ensuring customer service and safety for its park patrons, park revenue fee collection, park facility maintenance, and protecting the parks' natural resources.

The Division is responsible for operations and maintenance of three campgrounds, two picnic areas, one sand beach, two motorized boat launches, one small craft boat launch, two fishing piers, and the Lake Solano Nature Center. Additional responsibilities include patrolling 10 miles of open space trails, and ongoing maintenance of 12 restroom and shower buildings, a fishing pond, water wells, sewage systems, interpretive exhibits, kiosks and over 200 acres of turf and landscaping. The Division, with the assistance of two contracted volunteer coordinators, administers a Volunteer Program that provides public outreach for the parks via guided tours, as well as volunteer camp hosts and labor for native planting and trail projects.

In recent years, the Division has been working on a variety of projects that have set the foundation for the 2014/16 Work Plan. This includes over \$600,000 in project work since 2011 to address deferred maintenance

and park safety. Of this total, approximately \$350,000 was funded by grants that paid for new picnic tables and grills, interpretive exhibits and improved landscaped areas. Other maintenance projects included sewage and irrigation repairs, road and parking lot repaving, safety pruning of over 50 hazardous trees, water safety equipment, and updating the Parks' aging inventory of directional signs, tools and utility vehicles.

The Division prepared a County Parks Marketing Plan in 2012, created a new logo in 2013 and an updated parks brochure in 2014. Parks Staff is now redesigning its uniform patches and vehicle insignia to include the new logo. The Division introduced its first on-line camping reservation system in 2013, and has been keeping the Parks' online homepage continuously updated with current, park and event information. The Division continues to evaluate the results of these recent efforts. As one positive measure, the annual revenue from fees for service (camping, parking and boat launch fees) have improved by approximately 17% between 2011 and 2014, increasing from \$443,000 to \$520,000 per year.

2014/16 Work Plan

The 2014/16 Work Plan reflects a continuing effort to increase park services and improve park facilities within existing funding levels. Several of the Work Plan projects are grant-funded and designed to add park amenities at Sandy Beach, Belden's Landing and Lake Solano Parks. Other highlights include efforts to improve the health and safety of park visitors by addressing incidents of peak-day overcrowding, and considering additional regulations for smoking and alcohol use. Parks' staffing and management are also addressed, with an updated staffing model and changes to the nature of park ranger duties. There will also be a renewed effort to update staff training, manuals and maintenance standards to form a solid foundation of quality work for the future.

The Division continues to seek ways to improve financial sustainability, both by improving revenues and finding more cost-effective ways to provide public services to the parks. This includes efforts to seek grants, build partnerships with related agencies, maintain park fees at market rates, and look for concessionaire and vendor opportunities. Longer-term projects will include building public awareness through marketing efforts and offering park activities that bring in new visitors, as well as updating older park planning documents to keep them relevant. These projects are in addition to daily park operations and regular, annual projects such as administering the Fish and Wildlife Propagation Fund grant program.

Included in the long-term strategy is a commitment of Parks Staff hours towards the exploratory efforts to create a regional parks system in Solano County. This is, in part, in response to community and Board member interest in the issue. It is also in recognition of several factors contributing to the need for this discussion to be elevated. These include the expansion of the open space network acquired by the Solano Land Trust in recent decades, challenges in funding of regional-type parks, and the uncertainty of future funding for existing State Parks in the County.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board of Supervisors could choose to not accept the 2014/16 Parks and Recreation Work Plan. This is not recommended because the proposed work plan addresses adopted budget goals for FY2014/15, continues with ongoing efforts and budget goals from prior years, and reflects achievable levels of production with available staff and funding.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

The Department developed the Work Plan with input from the Solano County Park and Recreation Commission and analyst staff from the County Administrator's Office.

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION