

COUNTY OF SACRAMENTO
Department of Regional Parks

For the Agenda of:
February 21, 2014

To: American River Parkway Advisory Committee

From: Department of Regional Parks

Subject: Approve Expansion of Rossmoor Bar Mitigation Site

Contact: Mary Maret, Senior Natural Resource Specialist, 875-4918

Overview

The proposed project would allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to plant and maintain 14 acres of oak woodland habitat on existing fallow farm field at Rossmoor Bar on the American River Parkway (ARP) (Attachment A). The American River Parkway Plan (ARP Plan) recognizes that this agricultural field of Rossmoor Bar offers an opportunity to test the workability of restoring a large area on the south bank of the river, and that the site is suitable site for oak tree restoration.

The proposed site is located adjacent to an existing 57-acre planted oak woodland. This addition would compensate for expected impacts to oak woodland habitat associated with Phase V improvements to Folsom Dam. The 14 acres would have a temporary perimeter deer fence, which would be removed when the trees and shrubs have grown to a sufficient size.

Recommendations

1. Conceptually approve the Corps to plant an additional 14 acres for oak woodland mitigation plantings; and
2. Direct staff to bring to the Recreation and Park Commission for final approval.

Measures/Evaluations

Not applicable.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no additional net County Cost associated with this project. The Department would receive \$175,000 (\$12,500 per acre) for the Habitat Restoration Program Fee fund, and an additional \$10,000 Consultation/Coordination Deposit.

BACKGROUND

As part of Phase V of the Joint Federal Project at Folsom Dam, the Corps will be required to plant an estimated 14 acres of oak woodland as compensation for impacts at the Dam project site. The American River Parkway Plan (ARP Plan) identified the space adjacent to an existing 57-acre oak woodland mitigation site at Rossmoor Bar as desirable for oak woodland expansion. The existing planted site was installed in the winter of 2009/2010 to compensate for habitat impacts from the Folsom Dam Bridge project. The proposed expansion area is designated "Protected Area" in the 2008 ARP Plan and is presently fallow farm field. The Rossmoor Bar

Area plan identifies this field as suitable for oak restoration. To ease the recreational and aesthetic impacts of additional perimeter deer fencing, the Corps has agreed to fence the additional acres in a way to allow the fencing around larger, older site to be removed in January 2015, while allowing the proposed smaller site to remain fenced until its trees are tall enough to withstand deer browse.

DISCUSSION

The development of habitat mitigation sites can present a beneficial opportunity for the American River Parkway. When planned for degraded habitats, such as a fallow farm field, habitat mitigation provides an opportunity to accomplish desired habitat restoration and enhancement at no financial cost to Regional Parks. Furthermore, the project applicant provides the County with Habitat Restoration Program Fees, which provide additional resources for project or land acquisition on the American River Parkway.

However, land use planning for mitigation sites is very important to avoid future conflicts with operations and maintenance of the ARP. The Rossmoor site is designated “Protected Area” and has also been identified in the Rossmoor Bar Area Plan as suitable and desirable for habitat enhancement:

The agricultural area located in the western portion of Rossmoor Bar offers an opportunity to test the workability of restoring a large area to a condition approximating native riparian habitat and providing in the long term a native riparian habitat for enjoyment on the left bank (south side) of the river. This area would be a suitable site for oak tree restoration (ARP Plan 2008, page 139).

The proposed oak woodland mitigation would also expand and enhance the habitat values of the existing planted oak woodland, while limiting project impacts, as a smaller addition to an existing site.

The planting proposal includes keeping maintenance/fire access roads and firebreaks for the entire mitigation area (existing and proposed), as well as perimeter deer fencing to allow young trees to establish without excessive pressure from deer browse. The Corps has agreed to strategically add fencing to the proposed addition, so that the existing fencing around the older site may be removed in January 2015.

Parks staff recommends approval of this oak woodland mitigation site expansion as it is a suitable use for this site and beneficial to the American River Parkway.

Public Input

The Board of Supervisors adopted the Early Notification Procedures which requires public notification for projects that fall within the American River Parkway. During the early phase of Project Design/Planning, applicants shall engage community members in discussion regarding new facilities or changes in uses that could impact the neighborhood and park users. Project proposals are typically presented by the applicant to neighborhood organizations representing community interests in the vicinity of the project footprint, Parkway stakeholder groups, the American River Parkway Advisory Committee, and the Recreation and Parks Commission. In effort to expand our notification to the surrounding community the Director of Regional Parks presented this project to the Rancho Cordova City Council on January 21, 2014. Additionally,

an Early Notification Notice was mailed to residents within 500 feet of the proposed project and mailed and/or emailed to the Department's American River Parkway stakeholder list.

MEASURES/EVALUATIONS

Not applicable.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no additional net County Cost associated with this project. The Department would receive \$175,000 (\$12,500 per acre) for the Habitat Restoration Program Fee fund, and an additional \$10,000 Consultation/Coordination Deposit.

CONCLUSION

The Department recommends that the American River Parkway Advisory Committee conceptually approve the Corps to expand the existing 57-acre mitigation site at Rossmoor Bar by an additional 14 acres for oak woodland mitigation plantings, and direct staff to bring the item to the Recreation and Park Commission for final approval.

Respectfully submitted,

JEFFREY R. LEATHERMAN, Director
Department of Regional Parks

Attachments:

1. 500 feet notification letter
2. Map of Proposed Mitigation Site

Attachment A: Map of Proposed Oak Woodland Mitigation Area

