



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: October 7, 2014

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Facilities Planning and Development Division, Airport Department

SUBJECT: Contract For Santa Barbara Airport Wildlife Hazard Assessment And Wildlife Hazard Management Plan Update

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council approve and authorize the Airport Director to execute a contract with Dudek, Inc., for preparation of a Wildlife Hazard Assessment and Wildlife Hazard Management Plan update in an amount not to exceed \$133,507.

DISCUSSION:

On September 9, 2014 the Airport Department signed a grant agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for \$125,389, to fund 90.66% of the cost of completing a Wildlife Hazard Assessment (WHA) and an update to the Airport's Wildlife Hazard Management Plan (WHMP).

A WHA is a year-long review of wildlife behavior and attractants both on the Airport and within a 5-mile radius. Wildlife biologists will visit 20 locations on and off the Airport roughly every two weeks for 26 weeks (at randomized times) to count and identify wildlife (with particular attention to birds). The result of the WHA will inform the update of the WHMP which may include revisions to existing procedures or propose new projects or programs to minimize wildlife strike risk.

Background

In 2013 Airport staff noticed a significant increase in migratory waterfowl (ducks, geese, coots, etc.) using the Goleta Slough. This raised concerns about a potential increase in bird-strike hazard. In response to this, the Airport obtained emergency permits to install a temporary siphon to lower the Slough water level. While this did lower water level, it was slow, prone to failure, and was ultimately destroyed by wave action. In response to this change in condition the Airport sought federal funding to assess the potential hazard and identify hazard mitigation strategies.

The previous WHA was conducted in 2004. In the past decade the Airport has restored 40 acres of wetland habitat and relocated two creeks and the main instrument runway, creating a very different on-Airport wildlife environment. Habitat restoration and development projects off the Airport may have changed wildlife behavior.

Goleta Slough

The most significant wildlife attractant is the Goleta Slough State Ecological Reserve on Airport property. This 480-acre estuarine wetland is home to over 300 wildlife species including the federally-listed endangered tidewater goby, and the state-listed loggerhead shrike and Belding's savannah sparrow. Because of its location on the coast, Goleta Slough constitutes the northernmost extent of dozens of southern California species.

Since 2012, there has been no management program for keeping the Goleta Slough mouth open to the ocean. This means that the mouth is closed seasonally by a sand berm and is only opened by a significant increase in creek flows (i.e. rainstorms). A combination of low rainfall and ocean currents has closed the Slough mouth in November 2012, March 2013, and July 2014. This results in extended periods where the Goleta Slough functions as a closed fresh-water wetland instead of an open tidal wetland. While this appears to be a significant change, it needs to be assessed in the WHA.

Consultant Selection

In May 2014, the Airport solicited a Request for Qualifications to biological consulting with FAA-certified wildlife biologists on staff. Eight firms provided statements of qualifications and the top three firms were interviewed by Airport Staff. The three firms were ranked based on qualifications, experience, and ability to perform the work required. Dudek, Inc. was selected and a contract scope and cost was negotiated.

Funding

This contract is partially funded by a 90.66% grant from the FAA Airport Improvement Program. There are sufficient funds in Airport reserves above policy requirements to cover the Airport's 9.34% share of the cost.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

The purpose of this contract is to ensure the safety of the flying public with minimal impact to the environment. The update to the Wildlife Hazard Management Plan will identify maintenance, operational, and capital projects that will reduce wildlife-aircraft strikes.

PREPARED BY: Andrew Bermond, AICP, Project Planner
SUBMITTED BY: Hazel Johns, Airport Director
APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office