



# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** April 28, 2009

**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**FROM:** Administration Division, Parks and Recreation Department

**SUBJECT:** Challenge Cost Share Agreement Between The City Of Santa Barbara, County Of Santa Barbara, And United States Department Of Agriculture Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council authorize the Parks and Recreation Director to enter into a Challenge Cost Share Agreement for \$10,000 with the County of Santa Barbara (County) and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Los Padres National Forest (Forest Service) for implementation of the Front Country Trails Management Recommendations.

### **DISCUSSION:**

#### Background

Located within the front range of the Santa Ynez Mountains, the Santa Barbara Front Country Trails (FCT) include: Jesusita, Tunnel, Rattlesnake, West Fork Cold Springs, East Fork Cold Springs, San Ysidro, and Romero Canyon. Largely within the Los Padres National Forest, the FCT provide over 30 miles of trails for equestrians, hikers, trail runners, and mountain bikers. Historically, the Forest Service has managed and maintained the FCT. In recent years, management of the trails has become more challenging due to reduced funding, increased use, and trail conflicts. Although originally constructed and maintained for equestrian use, and popular as hiking trails, use of the FCT has expanded to include cross country and downhill mountain biking.

In an effort to begin addressing these issues and broaden management responsibility for the FCT, the City, County, and Forest Service formed the FCT Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force in 2006. The purpose of the Task Force was to develop recommendations to foster comprehensive and coordinated management of the FCT. After many public meetings and stakeholder input, the Task Force completed a set of management recommendations for the FCT in February 2008. These recommendations were accepted by the City Council, County Board of Supervisors, and the Los Padres Forest Supervisor in May 2008. At that time, the City Council and the Board of Supervisors also directed staff to develop a cooperative agreement among the three agencies that would guide comprehensive and coordinated management of the Santa Barbara FCT system.

### Challenge Cost Share Agreement (CCA)

The CCA is the mechanism by which the Forest Service enters into cooperative agreements with other governmental agencies and private organizations. The CCA establishes the terms of the partnership and provides the framework for agencies to share costs and resources as well as transfer of funds between agencies. A CCA is in place for up to 5 years, and any funding associated with the agreement is approved on an annual basis.

The purpose of the CCA between the City, County, and Forest Service is to establish a partnership for the purposes of implementing the 2008 FCT Management Recommendations. Developed by the three agencies, the CCA establishes the intent and expectations of the partnership, respective agencies roles and responsibilities, and the planning and decision-making framework. The CCA outlines shared commitments of all three agencies, such as:

- Develop cooperative procedures and practices that establish trail use standards for general public use and for those uses that require permits.
- Produce and approve a FCT management strategy and funding plan for trails planning, management, and project priorities, and establish an annual operating and capital project budget.
- Work cooperatively to prepare an annual work plan that identifies common projects resulting in interagency cost efficiencies.
- Develop, to the extent practicable, operating procedures and standards to ensure joint accomplishments of FCT management activities.
- Designate a staff liaison for purposes of discussing and resolving coordination matters.
- Establish mechanisms to allow the transfer of funds between agencies for specific purposes.
- Establish an inter-agency coordinator for implementation of the FCT Strategy and funding plan, grant writing, education and outreach, and coordination with trail user groups and volunteers.

The CCA also provides the framework for the three agencies to jointly fund projects that benefit the FCT system. To better define these costs and institutionalize the partnership, City, County, and Forest Service staff will be developing a work plan that outlines short-term and long-term resource needs. It is anticipated that the three agencies will also seek grant opportunities for specific projects and work closely with the trails community. Given limited staff resources and funding, trails organizations and volunteers will be critical to the successful implementation of the recommendations.

**BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Once signed by all 3 agencies, the proposed CCA would be in place until September 30, 2013. For the first year of the agreement, the three agencies propose that each agency contribute \$10,000 for a total of \$30,000. These funds would be used to support the inter-agency coordinator and the development of the FCT Strategy and multi-year work plan. These funds would also support agency efforts to coordinate and train trails organizations to implement volunteer trail maintenance projects. The City's \$10,000 share is included in the Parks and Recreation Department's proposed Fiscal Year 2010 budget.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:**

In addition to providing valuable recreation opportunities to South Coast residents, the Santa Barbara front country of the Los Padres National Forest provides valuable natural habitat including oak and riparian woodlands, grasslands, coastal sage scrub, and chaparral. The Los Padres National Forest is home to more than 468 fish and wildlife species. Sustainable management of the FCT will ensure that these habitats and the species they support are protected and enhanced.

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

**SUBMITTED BY:** Nancy L. Rapp, Parks and Recreation Director

**APPROVED BY:** City Administrator's Office