



# CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

## COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**AGENDA DATE:** May 22, 2012

**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

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

**SUBJECT:** Challenge Cost Share Agreement With The United States Department Of Agriculture, Forest Service Los Padres National Forest And Acceptance Of Santa Barbara County Contribution For The Front Country Trails Program

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council:

- A. Authorize the Parks and Recreation Director to enter into a Five-Year Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service Los Padres National Forest for implementation of the Front Country Trails Program;
- B. Accept a contribution from the Santa Barbara County Community Services Department in the amount of \$10,000 for the Front Country Trails Program;
- C. Transfer \$10,000 from the Parks and Recreation Department's Fiscal Year 2012 Operating Budget from existing appropriations available from savings in the Department to the Fiscal Year 2012 Miscellaneous Grants Fund; and
- D. Increase revenues and appropriations by \$30,000 in the Parks and Recreation Department's Fiscal Year 2012 Miscellaneous Grants Fund for the Front Country Trails Program, funded from \$10,000 in contributions each from the Parks and Recreation Department, the Santa Barbara County Community Services Department, and the Forest Service, whose \$10,000 contribution will be paid on a reimbursement basis.

**DISCUSSION:**

### Background

The Front Country Trails (FCT) Program is a joint effort of the USDA, Forest Service Los Padres National Forest, Santa Barbara County Community Services Department, and the City of Santa Barbara Parks and Recreation Department. Located within the

Los Padres National Forest and unincorporated County, 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 and increased use. Originally constructed and maintained for equestrian use, the trails are popular for hiking, trail running, mountain biking, and nature walks. The trails provide a regular source of recreation for many South Coast residents and visitors.

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.

#### FCT Program Funding/Challenge Cost Share Agreement

In Fiscal Year 2009, the three agencies entered into a challenge cost share agreement (CCA) that formalized the three-agency partnership and provided the framework for agencies to share costs and resources and transfer funds between agencies. The CCA included an annual financial commitment of \$10,000 from each agency. Funding for the program is intended to support trail maintenance and management activities, education and outreach, and the development of a front country trails management plan. In Fiscal Year 2009 and Fiscal Year 2010, the City and the County each transferred \$10,000 to the Forest Service for implementation of the FCT Program. In Fiscal Year 2011, the three agencies determined that the allocation of resources for the FCT Program would have greater flexibility if program funds were transferred to and held by a local agency rather than the USDA, Forest Service. The three agencies determined that the City of Santa Barbara would serve as the fiscal agent for the FCT Program funds. Staff recommends that the funds be appropriated to a FCT Program account in the Department's Miscellaneous Grants Fund.

Since the CCA is the mechanism by which the Forest Service enters into cooperative agreements with other governmental agencies and private organizations, the proposed CCA provides the mechanism for the Forest Service to transfer its \$10,000 share to the City on an annual basis. With Council approval, the CCA will be in place for five years. As a result of long-standing working relationships and a history of developing mechanisms to jointly fund projects, County contributions will be transferred and appropriated on an annual basis as part of the City's annual budget approval process.

### FCT Program Implementation

Since 2009, FCT Program work efforts have focused on the implementation of trail user education and trail maintenance programs; data collection and assessment of trail conditions, management techniques, and trail use; implementation of trail fire restoration projects; annual volunteer trail work days and the expansion of volunteer trail maintenance programs; coordination with community trail user groups; and other related activities.

Key work efforts for 2012 and 2013 include trail maintenance projects, community volunteer work days, trail maintenance training programs, coordination with trail organizations, trail etiquette and outreach efforts, and other special projects, as feasible. All three agencies work closely with interested community members, trails organizations, and others to implement the FCT program.

### **BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:**

Each year the program budget will total \$30,000, and the three agencies will cooperatively develop spending priorities and develop an annual budget. The City will prepare annual expenditure reports. Any funds that remain unspent at the end of a fiscal year will carry into the new fiscal year and remain dedicated to the FCT program.

The City has already received the \$10,000 from the County; the funding from the Forest Service will be received on a reimbursement basis as the program expenditures are incurred. Staff recommends that the City's \$10,000 share of the Fiscal Year 2012 FCT Program be funded from savings in the Parks & Recreation Department. The entire program funding will be accounted for and appropriated to the Miscellaneous Grants Fund.

### **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.

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