



CITY OF COSTA MESA

Agenda Report

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

File #: 25-135

Meeting Date: 8/5/2025

TITLE:

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH ENDEMIC ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES INC. FOR THE FAIRVIEW PARK MESA RESTORATION PROJECT AND ADDENDUM TO THE 1997 INITIAL STUDY/MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION FOR FAIRVIEW PARK

DEPARTMENT: PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

PRESENTED BY: BRIAN GRUNER, PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
DIRECTOR

CONTACT INFORMATION: KELLY DALTON, FAIRVIEW PARK ADMINISTRATOR, (714) 754-5135

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

1. Approve the Addendum (Attachment 2) to the 1997 Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for Fairview Park to address new information regarding biological resources pertinent to the project.
2. Award a Professional Services Agreement (PSA) with Endemic Environmental Services Inc., 110 E Wilshire Avenue, Suite 305, Fullerton, CA 92832, for a term of 7 years for professional habitat restoration and monitoring services for the Fairview Park Mesa Restoration Project in an amount not-to-exceed \$1,311,062.
3. Authorize a ten percent (10%) contingency in the amount of \$131,106 for any unforeseen costs that may arise.
4. Authorize the City Manager and the City Clerk to execute the Professional Services Agreement and future amendments to the agreement within City Council-authorized limits.

BACKGROUND:

Fairview Park is the City's largest park, hosting 195 acres of natural open space area and 13 acres of developed lawn parkland for a total of 208 acres. Within the 195 acres of open space there are Native American Nationally Registered Historic Sites, and five different habitat ecosystems which are home to a wide array of sensitive, rare and endangered plant and animal species. The park's significant resources and sensitive habitat areas entail a multitude of local, state, and federal regulatory provisions for environmental resource conservation and preservation. The park also offers users multiple passive recreational opportunities, including several miles of trails for walking, running,

bicycling, wildlife observation, and environmental interpretation throughout the park's different ecosystems.

Several key factors establish Fairview Park as an ecological resource of regional significance:

- **Habitat diversity:** Fairview Park encompasses several distinct habitat types, including wetlands, riparian areas, coastal sage scrub, coastal bluff scrub, and flower fields. These habitats support a wide array of plant and animal species, many of which are designated as endangered, rare, or special-status wildlife.
- **Vernal pools:** The park is home to vernal pools, which are ephemeral wetlands that provide critical habitat for a variety of unique and specialized organisms, including the San Diego fairy shrimp and Riverside fairy shrimp, both listed as endangered by the federal government.
- **Wildlife corridor:** Fairview Park serves as a crucial wildlife corridor, connecting the Santa Ana River system of trails and parks to other open spaces in the region, including the Talbert Nature Preserve, the Randall Preserve, and the Huntington Beach Wetlands. This connectivity facilitates the movement of species between habitats and promotes genetic diversity, which is essential to the continued survival of wildlife populations fragmented by urban development.
- **Cultural and historical significance:** The park contains two nationally registered cultural resources historic sites, highlighting the area's rich human history and its connection to the natural environment.
- **Wildlife refuge and human ecology:** Fairview Park provides a valuable refuge for wildlife amidst the urban landscape and offers a unique space for people to connect with nature and learn about the importance of preserving biodiversity for local, regional and global sustainability.

Fairview Park Master Plan

Due to these characteristics and the City's Fairview Park Master Plan, which calls for long-term restoration of the park's natural vegetation communities, the site of Fairview Park has historically been a strong candidate for conservation grants and environmental mitigation agreements with outside entities. Since 1996, the City has completed over 50 acres of successful habitat restoration of multiple vegetation communities, including vernal pools, coastal sage scrub, riparian, wetlands, woodlands and other habitats.

The Fairview Park Master Plan was last revised in 2008 and is currently in the process of being updated. The City's Master Plan calls for the restoration of the natural vegetation communities of the 50-acre Fairview Park Mesa to ecologically appropriate native grasses, flowers, shrubs and other plants to provide habitat for native wildlife. The Master Plan also calls for the establishment of a designated trail system to provide passive recreational opportunities throughout the park's various environs, while protecting sensitive features. In addition, the Fairview Park Master Plan Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) calls for the Fairview Park Cultural Resources sites to be restored to vegetation indigenous to the pre-European contact period, as the established and restored vegetation communities function as a buffer to preserve the site from unauthorized off-trail degradation and disturbance.

The Mesa Restoration project area encompasses 15 acres of native vegetation in the northern mesa and bluffs. (See Attachment 1 for a map of the restoration area.) The project fulfills both Biological Resources and Cultural Resources mitigation measures of the original Fairview Park IS/MND and accomplishes a long-standing ecological restoration priority by restoring and enhancing over 15 acres of vegetation in the northern mesa and bluffs.

OCTA Mitigation

In addition to fulfilling long-term restoration and preservation objectives envisioned in the Fairview Park Master Plan, the Mesa Restoration project also fulfills the City's remaining obligation to Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) and its Environmental Mitigation Program. In 2011, the City was awarded \$2.0M from OCTA towards the Fairview Park Wetlands and Riparian Habitat project ("wetlands project") to restore various vegetation communities in Fairview Park. The City's wetlands project is committed to restoring 23 acres of four distinct vegetation communities, which were part of OCTA's environmental mitigation requirements associated with its Measure 2 (M2) Freeway Improvement Projects. As of its latest monitoring report for the Fairview Park Wetlands and Riparian Habitat project, the City owes OCTA an additional 9.5 acres of restoration to fulfill its contractual obligations to OCTA. These 9.5 acres of restoration in Fairview Park are also required to fulfill the requirements of wildlife agencies who oversee OCTA's Environmental Mitigation Program and the OCTA M2 Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP), which includes the 23-acre Fairview Park Restoration project in its final environmental documents.

City staff has been coordinating closely with staff from OCTA, California Department of Fish and Wildlife ("CDFW"), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("USFWS") during the preparation of the restoration plan and resource permitting discussions since 2022, in addition to presenting regular updates to the OCTA Environmental Oversight Committee on the status of the project. This coordination is an essential task of this project due to the presence of state-listed and federally-listed wildlife resources present at the Fairview Park site, and due to the wildlife agencies' oversight role in the OCTA Environmental Mitigation Program. The City and the awarded implementation consultant will continue to coordinate closely with OCTA and the wildlife agencies throughout the implementation period (anticipated to occur from 2025 through 2032). The awarded consultant will be tasked with preparing regular monitoring reports documenting the progress and conditions of the restoration site through project completion and wildlife agency sign-off.

Upon completion, the Fairview Park Mesa Restoration project fulfills several goals and objectives of the City and the Fairview Park Master Plan, including:

- Enhancing the site's environmental quality and complementing the conservation value of 50+ acres of completed habitat restoration and enhancement.
- Improving and enhancing the experience of residents seeking a unique place to connect with nature, engage in citizen science, and improve their mental and physical wellbeing through passive recreational opportunities.
- Improving the ecological value of the site for rare and endangered wildlife.
- Fulfilling the City's habitat restoration contractual obligations to OCTA and completing additional voluntary habitat restoration and enhancement.

- Protecting, enhancing and preserving the site's existing biological and cultural resources, and underscoring the City's position as a steward of Fairview Park and its environmental resources.

Addendum to the 1997 Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration

During the preparation of the Restoration Plan, the City's consultant reviewed the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental documentation on file for Fairview Park. Pursuant to Government Code Section 15162(b), if changes to a project or its circumstances occur or new information becomes available after adoption of a negative declaration, the lead agency shall determine whether to prepare a subsequent negative declaration, an addendum, or no further documentation. Due to updated species listing designations for Crotch's bumble bee (CBB) and Western Burrowing Owl (BUOW) under the California Endangered Species Act since the adoption of the 1997 Fairview Park Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND), the consultant prepared an addendum to the 1997 IS/MND to address new information regarding biological resources pertinent to the project (Attachment 2). This addendum also discusses the project's avoidance and minimization measures (AMMs) that achieve a long-term net uplift for Crotch's bumble bee, Western Burrowing Owl, and other biological resources present at the project site. The City's approval of the addendum is required to obtain the Restoration Management Permit from CDFW, which will authorize the City to begin implementation of the project in accordance with CDFW's permit conditions.

In January 2024, the City contracted with an environmental planning consultant (MIG) to provide habitat restoration and monitoring design, CEQA, biological resource coordination, and archeological monitoring planning services for the project. The consultant completed the restoration design in August 2024.

ANALYSIS:

On September 10, 2024, the City released a Request for Proposal (RFP) on planet-bids for professional habitat restoration and monitoring services for the Fairview Park Mesa Restoration project. Six (6) proposals were received to provide these services; a summary of the bid results is included as Attachment 4.

Proposals were screened for compliance with the City's RFP and were evaluated based on the method of approach, qualifications, and experience, staffing and cost proposal.

To ensure an objective selection process, an evaluation committee was assembled, and all members evaluated proposals independently. After a thorough evaluation of the proposals, it was determined that interviews were needed for the top three (3) proposers. Following the interviews held on May 5, 2025, and combining the scores of the proposal evaluations and interviews, the evaluation committee found Endemic Environmental Services Inc. to be well qualified to perform the requested services. Endemic's expertise in wildlife biology, biological monitoring, and environmental compliance will be a critical asset to the successful execution of this project, given the highly sensitive nature of the site.

During the evaluation, Endemic Environmental Services Inc. presented their firm as possessing a thorough understanding of the project and demonstrated extensive experience and technical ability to perform the outlined scope of work in the RFP. Endemic has supported the City with biological resources management and monitoring, and restoration services since 2009, and has coordinated

with the City on multiple restoration projects in the past involving biological resources and cultural resources. Endemic's expertise in wildlife biology, biological monitoring, and environmental compliance will be a critical asset to the successful execution of this project, given the highly sensitive nature of the site. In addition, Endemic's deep understanding of the site's existing resources will be of great value to the project, as the restoration's success will rely on precise implementation and adaptive management to avoid impacts to sensitive resources during the implementation process. In addition to successful performance under its contractual scope, Endemic has also contributed to public conservation activities at Fairview Park and Canyon Park over the years. Endemic and its non-profit branch ICRE (Institute for Conservation Research and Education) have a rich history of providing nature tours, community-based restoration activities, and other programs to engage community residents in local environmental stewardship activities.

Therefore, staff recommends award of a PSA to Endemic Environmental Services Inc. (Attachment 3) for 7 years in a not to exceed amount of \$1,311,062.

Cultural Resource Protection and Preservation

Most of Fairview Park's undeveloped land contains sensitive resources, including protected archeological resources (e.g., indigenous village use area, including CA-ORA-58, a nationally registered cultural resource historic site), sensitive vegetation communities, and protected wildlife. The Mesa Restoration Project will benefit native plant and wildlife populations by restoring native flower fields and coastal sage scrub habitats, and the establishment of native plant cover will help to protect culturally significant resources by reclaiming informal trails and otherwise reducing soil disturbance.

Disturbance to existing native vegetation/wildlife habitat, and cultural resources will be minimal during project implementation with the prescribed avoidance measures. Nevertheless, actions required for site preparation, such as initial dethatch of nonnative weeds, digging planting basins for container plants, or substantial digging required for the removal of perennial invasive plant species during weed management activities could potentially disturb *in situ* culturally significant resources or disturb nesting birds in nearby areas. The Mesa Restoration Project will implement avoidance and minimization measures to protect sensitive biological resources through biological monitoring, activity buffers, and adjusting the timing of restoration activities.

Avoiding impacts to culturally significant materials is more complicated and therefore-following the guidelines of a separate cultural resource monitoring plan developed by the City's cultural resources consultant-areas discovered to have artifacts or culturally significant materials at or near the surface will be buffered and excluded from restoration project activities until the appropriate actions can be taken. To provide leeway for this possibility, which could delay or disrupt the overall habitat restoration project, the City has identified a total of 11.91 acres suitable for restoration, so that up to 2.41 acres can be temporarily set aside while still providing the outstanding 9.5 acres of mitigation in a timely manner. If culturally significant materials are discovered within the project area, habitat restoration activities may need to be adjusted to protect and buffer these areas. In such cases, the restoration crew will avoid these locations until the City has determined that it is appropriate to proceed with the restoration implementation in those areas. The Cultural Resources Monitoring Plan was prepared by the City's sub-consultant, Cogstone Resource Management, and was developed in coordination with the City's Tribal Advisory Group for the Fairview Park site. Cogstone is named on

Endemic's proposal as a sub-consultant to provide support with cultural resources monitoring and reporting services. Cogstone's involvement in the Mesa Restoration planning and design process and ongoing work with the Fairview Park Master Plan Update will facilitate a seamless transition into the project's implementation phase.

Implementation Tasks and Timeline

Due to the environmental factors of the site, the size and scale of the project, and the intensive effort involved with restoring degraded vegetation communities to their ecologically appropriate habitat conditions, the implementation process for this restoration is anticipated to take place over an eight-year timeline from 2025 through 2032. The project will consist of an initial site preparation and active restoration phase early in the project, followed by several years of regular maintenance and monitoring to evaluate progress and implement corrective actions during the establishment period. The implementation schedule consists of the following primary activities and tasks to be performed over the duration of the project:

- Site Protection, Initial Dethatch, Cultural Resources Protection Monitoring, and Temporary Irrigation
- Native Revegetation Buffer (Area 4) and Drainages in Area 1 Container Planting, Irrigation, and Maintenance
- Weed Management Buffer (Area 5) Weed Maintenance
- Pre-Seed Installation Adaptive Weed Management
- Native Seed Collection and Installation
- Maintenance After Seed Collection
- Biological Monitoring and Reporting

Upon completion of the project and prior to sign-off, the City is required to place a conservation easement, deed restriction, or other Wildlife Agencies-approved conservation mechanism over the project site specifying that the area will be retained in perpetuity as open space for the purpose of native habitat conservation.

ALTERNATIVES:

Staff does not recommend any alternatives at this time.

FISCAL REVIEW:

The total amount of the proposed contract and contingency is funded through State Grant Funds (Fund 231) from the California Department of Parks and Recreation through the Office of Congressman Dave Min. Funding is available for the entire term of the proposed agreement.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's office has prepared and approved the Professional Services Agreement as to form.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This item supports the following City Council Goal:

- Advance Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resiliency

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends the City Council:

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