

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MEETING

MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2013 - 7:00 P.M.

Community Meeting Chambers, Los Altos City Hall
One North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, California

ESTABLISH QUORUM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Members of the audience may bring to the Commission's attention any item that is not on the agenda. Please complete a "Request to Speak" form and submit it to the Staff Liaison. Speakers are generally given two or three minutes, at the discretion of the Chair. Please be advised that, by law, the Commission is unable to discuss or take action on issues presented during the Public Comment Period. According to State Law (also known as "the Brown Act") items must first be noticed on the agenda before any discussion or action.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/ACTION

1. Commission Minutes
Approve minutes of the meeting of May 13, 2013
2. Redwood Grove Restoration Project and Aquatic Habitat Quality Study of Permanente Creek
Receive Presentation from Acterra
3. Environmental Public Information Forums
Review and discuss opportunities, topics and methodology for public education and outreach
4. Environmental Commission Website
 - a. Receive update on website activity and migration to new City website
 - b. Review draft article for website – Fostering Bird Habitat
5. Environmental Commission FY 2013/14 Work Plan
Discuss and update progress on FY 2013/14 Work Plan

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

6. Los Altos Climate Action Plan
Receive staff update on progress of the Climate Action Plan
7. Disposal and Management of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) and Reusable Bags
Receive staff report on status of reusable bag ordinance outreach activities and EPS
8. Increasing Watershed Awareness and Stewardship in Los Altos
Receive Subcommittee and staff update on watershed signage on roads crossing creeks
9. Monthly Staff Report
Receive information and announcements from City Staff
 - a. Process for joint commission meeting
 - b. No teleconferencing for meeting attendance
 - c. Electric Vehicle Charging Ordinance change
 - d. Mission Trails Public Education Plan and Community Events Guide
 - e. Council Reports and Council Meeting Attendance
June 11, 2013; Vice Chair Hedden; June 25, 2013; Commissioner Ardehali

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

POTENTIAL FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURNMENT

SPECIAL NOTICES TO PUBLIC

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the City of Los Altos will make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. If you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk at least 48 hours prior to the meeting at (650) 947-2720.

Agendas, Staff Reports and some associated documents for the Environmental Commission items may be viewed on the Internet at <http://losaltosca.gov/committees-commissions/environmental/meetings.html>

If you wish to provide written materials, please provide the Commission Staff Liaison with **10 copies** of any document that you would like to submit to the Commissioners in order for it to become part of the public record.

For other questions regarding the meeting proceedings, please contact the City Clerk at (650) 947-2720.



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 2

TO: Environmental Commission
FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Creek Restoration and Habitat Improvement

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive presentation from Acterra on Redwood Grove Restoration Project and Aquatic Habitat Quality Study of Permanente Creek

BACKGROUND

On May 12, 2009, the Parks, Arts & Recreation Commission recommended that the City Council enter into a partnership with Acterra to provide habitat restoration and land stewardship services at Redwood Grove. An Agreement soon followed this recommendation. Work within Redwood Grove has included the removal of non-native plants by volunteers supervised by Acterra staff. Areas where non-native plants are removed are replanted using native plants from Acterra's nursery.

This spring, Acterra launched a program involving Mountain View High School science classes in collecting and analyzing benthic macroinvertebrates to assess the health of Permanente Creek. Because some species of "creek bugs" are more pollution-sensitive than others, identifying the macroinvertebrate species present in a creek can provide valuable data on aquatic habitat quality. This program is funded by a grant from Google and has involved over 340 students to date. In addition, Acterra has been working with GreenTown Los Altos to host "World Water Quality Monitoring Day" events to educate the public about watershed health.

Acterra is a local, non-profit organization with a mission to bring people together to create local solutions for a healthy planet. The Acterra Stewardship program provides opportunities for individuals to participate in restoration work. Acterra is one of only a few full-service organizations of its type in the Bay Area.

DISCUSSION

Acterra staff will present an update and review of activities providing for creek restoration and habitat improvement at Redwood Grove. In addition, Acterra staff will share information about Acterra's new program to involve high school students and community members in assessing the health of local streams by examining the benthic macroinvertebrate populations.

Attachments:

- A. Redwood Grove Creek Restoration Project and Aquatic Habitat Quality Study of Permanente Creek



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 3

TO: Environmental Commission
FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Environmental Public Information Forums

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and discuss opportunities, topics and methodology for public education and outreach

BACKGROUND

The Environmental Commission Work Plan, Goal 1, is to provide community education outreach activities in accordance with the Council approved work plan goals to advance natural resource conservation and environmental quality in Los Altos.

The Commission determines topics and opportunities for approved public forums related to sustainability. An example of public outreach activities were public forums held prior to the award of the waste disposal contract and a study to determine both Municipal and Community Green House Gas emissions for the City. Current outreach efforts include the design and analysis of a survey to the community to facilitate and gain public input for the Los Altos Climate Action Plan and coordination with the Climate Action Plan consultant firm and with the Community Development Department. An additional topic is single-use bags and issues involved with polystyrene products.

DISCUSSION

The Environmental Commission is continuing discussion regarding community education and outreach activities.

To that goal, a Commission subcommittee is exploring topic ideas and approaches on additional ways to engage the public via education and information forums, various outreach mechanisms. The subcommittee will guide this discussion.



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 4

TO: Environmental Commission
FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Environmental Commission Website

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Receive update on website activity and migration to new City website
- B. Review draft article for website – Fostering Bird Habitat

BACKGROUND

The Commission redesigned and reorganized the content on the Environmental Commission website on the City's Commission webpage. Knowing that a major redesign of the City site was planned, the Commission undertook this project as a temporary solution with the expectation that the Environmental website will be blended under the City site once the site is constructed. The introductory statement on the Commission website states the purpose as:

The City of Los Altos Environmental Commission has designed this site to inform and educate the community about local programs and initiatives that support the environment and to provide information about resources available throughout Santa Clara County and the Bay Area.

If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions please feel free to contact environmental@losaltosca.gov. Enjoy!

The Environmental Commission seeks to maintain the website with relevant, high value content, in a manner that is visually pleasing, navigates well, and ties into the City website. The Commission monitors website hits and has seen an increase of viewership during 2012. Website content areas are:

- Recycling
- Hazardous Waste Disposal
- Greening an Event
- Greenhouse Gas Inventory
- Green Building
- Alternatives in Transportation
- Water Conservation

Storm Water Protection
Sustainable Eating
Landscaping with Native Plants
Tree Protection
Local Creeks
About the Commission
City of Los Altos

DISCUSSION

Staff will comment on the progress of the migration of the Environmental Commission web pages to the new City website. The migration activity is currently in the implementation phase. Once completed, a citizen focus group will provide feedback about the website's navigation, content and aesthetics. Following the focus group and the review feedback, implementation of needed changes will take place.

Environmental Commission will also review and give comments on a draft document on Fostering Bird Habitat that can be posted as content to the website.

Staff will report on the number of Environmental Commission website hits from May 12, through June 6, 2013, and a cumulative total of hits for January 1 through June 1, 2013.

Attachments

A. Fostering Bird Habitat

Protecting and Enhancing Bird Habitat in Los Altos

6/4/13 DRAFT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION WEBSITE

Birds are wonderful wildlife companions for many reasons. They are fun to watch, devour insects, pollinate flowers, and provide beautiful songs for those who take a few minutes to enjoy them. They are also a good indicator of the health of the environment.

You can do a number of things to protect birds and enhance their habitat in Los Altos. Some of these include:

- Join the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's Bird Sanctuary program at http://scvas.org/index.php?page=text&id=audubon_at_home
- Install Bird Nesting Boxes. See the section below called ***Bird Nesting Boxes***
- Use native plants and trees
- Consider the tradeoff that tall trees create: large conifers (redwoods, cedars, monterey pines and such) attract raptors to nest, but also crows. It may be better to not to plant conifers.
- Follow the Santa Clara Valley Water District's stream setback guidelines for properly protecting riparian ecosystems. Our streams are the last wild corridors in Los Altos.
- Follow tree trimming guidelines: <http://losangelesaudubon.org/index.php/tree-trimming-guidelines-mainmenu-155>
- Keep cats indoors and away from birds. See the section below called ***The Effect of Cats on Birds***
- Use Bird Safe Windows. See <http://www.sf-planning.org/index.aspx?page=2506>
- Don't use rodenticides (rat killer). They cause secondary poisoning of wildlife and pollute the streams and watersheds. See <http://www.sfapproved.org/rodents>
- Install trash containers in parks and schools that do not allow access to crows and gulls.
- Disallow feeding of wild and feral animals in parks and open space.
- Crows are a problem everywhere - they feed on trash - and on other bird nestlings too. Other than keep food out of reach (cover trash bins in schools etc), and keep food out of the landfills, there are no easy answers.

Bird Nesting Boxes

Before the suburbs, many birds nested in hollow or dead standing trees. However, nobody likes those in their yards anymore so native birds have a hard time finding good places to nest. You can help these birds by purchasing or making bird houses that are appropriate for local birds. Here is some information on providing cavity nesting boxes.

SCVAS has an active cavity nesting box program (<http://www.scvas.org/index.php?page=text&id=cbrp>).

A good reference for building or buying bird boxes is http://www.scvas.org/pdf/cbrp/BuildingNestBoxes_Groups.pdf

The type of birds most likely to inhabit boxes in the back yards of Los Altos homes include the Chickadee, Nuthatch, and Oak Titmouse. Boxes for these are on page 7 of the above guide. The nest boxes should not be placed in close proximity to each other, as the birds are territorial. Also, place the boxes so they are safe from cats. A ¼ acre yard could accommodate 1-2 of these boxes.

New nest boxes should try to be installed by early February, so the birds that are arriving in the area and/or looking for places to breed have time to find the boxes before they choose their preferred site.

If people just want to buy bird boxes instead of building them they can buy them at the Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society's shop at McClellan Ranch (see address below).

Bluebirds need meadows and grasslands - they do surprisingly well in places like cemeteries and ranch areas, but not so well in city parks (unless they're quite large). They don't actually do that well in/near groves of trees and/or lawns, and because they feed on insects on the ground, they generally don't do as well in heavily peopled areas (i.e. places where a lot of people would be walking through, playing games, etc.).

Places mostly characterized by Redwood or Oak Trees are much more likely to attract Chestnut-backed Chickadees, Oak Titmice, and possibly even White-breasted Nuthatches. But not Western Bluebirds.

The Effect of Cats on Birds

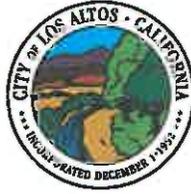
Keeping cats indoor is a worthy campaign (see "KittyCam Reveals High Levels of Wildlife Being Killed by Outdoor Cats": <http://www.abcbirds.org/newsandreports/releases/120806.html>) A new study of house cats allowed to roam outdoors finds that nearly one-third succeeded in capturing and killing animals. The cats, which wore special video cameras around their necks that recorded their outdoor activities, killed an average of 2.1 animals every week they were outside, but brought less than one of every four of their kills home. Of particular interest, bird kills constituted about 13 percent of the total wildlife kills. Based on these results, American Bird Conservancy and The Wildlife Society estimate that house cats kill far more than the previous estimate of a billion birds and other animals each year.

The researcher says: "If we extrapolate the results of this study across the country and include feral cats, we find that cats are likely killing more than 4 billion animals per year, including at least 500 million birds. Cat predation is one of the reasons why one in three American bird species are in decline," said Dr. George Fenwick, President of American Bird Conservancy, the only

organization exclusively conserving birds throughout the Americas.

Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society

The Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society has many programs and resources. For more details visit www.scvas.org or call [\(408\) 252-3740](tel:(408)252-3740). Their shop has many different types of bird nesting boxes, bird feeders, and other bird-related products. The shop is at 2221 McClellan Rd. Cupertino, CA 95014



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 5

TO: Environmental Commission
FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Environmental Commission FY 2013/14 Work Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss progress made and assign activities on FY 2013/14 Work Plan

BACKGROUND

The Environmental Commission's FY 2013/14 Work Plan was approved by Council on May 14, 2013 and addressed sustainability programs in: 1) natural resource conservation and environmental quality in Los Altos; 2) Climate Action Plan (CAP); 3) watershed stewardship; 4) solid waste diversion and source reduction practices; 5) restriction of use of selected environmentally harmful products and 6) Green business practices.

DISCUSSION

Discussion will be on the comments and direction provided by Council to the Environmental Commission FY 2013/14 Work Plan and an update in Work Plan activities during May.

Attachments:

1. Los Altos Environmental Commission – Work Plan FY 2013/14 – May 2013 progress updates

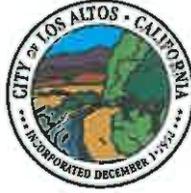
**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
FY2013/14 Work Plan**

Goal	Projects	Assignments	Target Date	Status
<p>1. Provide approved community education and outreach activities to advance natural resource conservation and environmental quality in Los Altos.</p>	<p>Maintain updated 'Los Altos Environment' website. (Commission coordinator: John)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> John will advise J during the EC web site transition. Also to identify outdated information and information gaps. Zahra to revise document recommending healthy and sustainable chemicals/products used inside and outside the home. Joe to write web page on fostering local birds 	<p>Depends on city timetable. Est. 5/30/13</p> <p>Est 6/10</p>	
	<p>Provide public information forums to the community (quarterly or triannually) (Owners: Gary, Chris)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Zahra, Gary to develop proposal for initial event. Possible topics include outreach in preparation for single use bag ban or related to CAP. 	<p>5/13</p>	
	<p>Develop dashboard of community trends on key environmental measures (Owner: Don)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify parameters and sources of information. 	<p>TBD.</p>	
<p>2. Climate Action Plan for City of Los Altos.</p>	<p>Work with Senior Planner to develop Climate Action Plan for City Los Altos</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assist in developing, reviewing, and facilitating public input to a Los Altos Climate Action Plan. Identify 3-4 "biggest hitters" for GHG 		<p>In progress</p>

	(Owners: Don, Joe, Gary)	reduction and begin researching community reduction methods.		
3. Improve watershed stewardship for the City of Los Altos	Signage on bridges over local streams. (Owners: Joe, Chris)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joe and Chris to take photos of bridges over streams and recommend where creek signage should be placed. 2. EC to review plans for creek signage on new Fremont Ave. bridge over Permanente Creek when design is drafted. 		5/13: Recommendation made.
	Stream water quality (Owner: Joe)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. J will check with Larry re status of new SCVURPPP study data on water quality of local streams. 2. Don to incorporate stream quality data into Dashboard 3. EC to review Storm Drain Master Plan when released. Will encourage plan to include labeling of storm drain inlets with signage that specifies the recipient stream. <i>(Example of possible verbage: NO DUMPING! - Only Rain Down the Drain - Flows to Adobe Creek).</i> 		Larry does not get report. Researching alternative methods of getting data.
4. Monitor and advance solid waste diversion	Monitor MTWS diversion rate and look for ways to help	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff to provide suggestions for next steps. (at March EC meeting, MTWS said the three things that would make the 		

<p>and source reduction practices in Los Altos.</p>	<p>meet and exceed contracted 78% diversion rate in 2013. (Owner: Lei)</p>	<p>difference 1) Exclusive MTWS debris boxes, 2) Multi-family units composting & recycling, and 3) every household should try to divert a pound more / day.)</p>	
<p>5. Evaluate and recommend effective programs restricting use of selected environmentally-harmful products.</p>	<p>Single use' plastic bag ban</p>	<p>1. Ban slated for 7/4/13. EC to investigate assisting on outreach</p>	
	<p>Expanded polystyrene (EPS) ban (Owner: Chris)</p>	<p>1. J to report status of staff bringing a ban recommendation to Council.</p>	
<p>6. Encourage green business practices in Los Altos</p>	<p>Look at ways to encourage greener purchasing and operational practices by Los Altos businesses. (Owners: Gary, Joe, and Lei)</p>	<p>Investigate applicability of Green Business Initiative program to Los Altos businesses.</p>	

Question: Are the Environmental Commission's activities improving sustainability in our community?



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 6

TO: Environmental Commission
FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Los Altos Climate Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION:

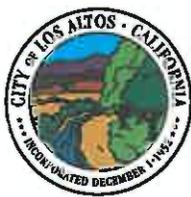
Informational update on Climate Action Plan

BACKGROUND

Over the past nine months, staff, consultant group PMC and the Environmental Commission have been working together to prepare data and discuss strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in compliance with State Assembly Bill (AB) 32. On April 23, 2013, staff and Consultant PMC presented the Climate action Plan report. Environmental Commissioner Don Bray also addressed Council. The April 23, 2013 CAP staff report authored by Senior Planner Zachary Dahl that was presented to Council was reviewed at the May 13, 2013 Environmental Commission meeting.

DISCUSSION

Staff is currently working on the staff-level administrative draft of the CAP. The goal is to release the CAP for public review in July and to present the Draft CAP to the Environmental Commission in July or August and complete final recommendation edits in September before presentation to Council in October. Time-lines are tentative and subject to change.



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 7

TO: Environmental Commission

FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison

SUBJECT: Disposal and Management of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) and Reusable Bags

RECOMMENDATION:

A. Receive staff report on status of public outreach for reusable bag ordinance and EPS

BACKGROUND

The issue of restrictions on single use bags and polystyrene foam food containers was presented to the City Council at the January 10, 2012 Council meeting as a strategy to help mitigate effects of litter in storm water. City Council authorized staff to submit the City of Los Altos' Baseline Trash Load and Short-Term Trash Load Reduction Plan to the San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board. This Plan lists trash control measures that the City of Los Altos will need to implement in order to reduce the City's trash loads 40% by July 2014 as required by the Municipal Regional Storm water Discharge NPDES Permit (MRP). Two such control measures include prohibiting dispensing single use plastic bags at the checkout stands of retail establishments and prohibiting the use of polystyrene foam food containers at food service facilities.

On April 10, 2012, Council directed staff to participate in San Mateo County's collaborative regional effort to complete an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that includes a proposed ordinance for reusable bags.

During City Council meeting in January, February and March 2013, Council took action on staff recommendations to prepare ordinances for the ban on plastic bags and approve proposals for public outreach and information to the community.

The Environmental Commission has been engaged in following the activities of the San Mateo Environmental Impact Report public hearings and reports in which the City of Los Altos was a participating member and in outreach activities to the community to promote the use of re-usage bags and restrain the use of single use bags.

DISCUSSION

During April and May, 2013, staff has completed the following public outreach and informational activities in the community.

1. Preparation of the retail tool kits, including flyers and design, purchase and distribution of "Shop Los Altos" re-usable bags
2. Door to door visits to the commercial community in late April
3. Staffing a table at the Farmers' Market on Thursdays from 4-8 pm
4. Held two merchant outreach forums
5. Preparation of an insert flyer for distribution to residents in the Mission Trails Waste System newsletter.

City of Los Altos staff is reviewing the initial draft EIR report from the City of San Jose to ban expanded polystyrene (EPS) and will be preparing next steps toward a ban of EPS in the City of Los Altos.

Provisions for the restrictions on EPS will be forthcoming from staff.



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 8

TO: Environmental Commission

FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison

SUBJECT: Increased Watershed Awareness and Stewardship in Los Altos

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive update on watershed signage on roads crossing creeks

BACKGROUND

The Commission partners with Acterra, GreenTown Los Altos and the community to raise awareness and provide education about local creeks, clean-up efforts and water run-off in order to preserve local creek habitat and water quality. The Commission has expressed interest in creek identification signage that will inform the public of the name of the creeks at bridge crossing to promote information and pride in our local creeks and natural habitat.

DISCUSSION

The Planning and Transportation Commission will be reviewing the Fremont bridge design and as part of the project, it is planned that Permanente Creek is to be identified on the Fremont bridge signage.

For other bridges that cross creeks, staff suggests the Environmental Commission could participate and take forward a project to identify major creeks at bridge crossing. The following steps are recommended:

1. Identification of appropriate locations for creek signage. The City has four major creeks at multiple crossings. Environmental Commission input would be helpful to identify locations that would be appropriate for creek signage.
2. Staff report with presentation to and direction from Council to proceed with creek identification and signage
3. Procure consulting services to develop examples for creek signage
4. Staff develops budget and costs for presentation to Council for approval and funding

The Commission subcommittee presented a report and series of photographs to identify locations for consideration of creek signage. Staff reviewed the report and will schedule a meeting with the subcommittee to discuss next steps. Staff will provide assistance to advise and coordinate creek signage placement and installation, type of signs and budget for signs. The subcommittee researched information on costs and purchase of signage and will present this information for discussion with the Commission and staff.



DATE: June 10, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 9

TO: Environmental Commission

FROM: J. Logan, Staff Liaison

SUBJECT: Monthly Staff Report

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive information and announcements from City staff

BACKGROUND

Staff monthly updates will be discussed as listed below.

DISCUSSION

1. Process for joint commission meeting
2. No teleconferencing for meeting attendance
3. Electric Vehicle Charging Ordinance change
4. Mission Trails Public Education Plan and Community Events Guide
5. Council Reports and Council Meeting Attendance
June 11, 2013; Vice Chair Hedden; June 25, 2013; Commissioner Ardehali