



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Parks
Department No.: 052
For Agenda Of: June 23, 2009
Placement: Administrative
Estimated Tme:
Continued Item:
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Daniel C. Hernandez, Director of Parks, 805-568-2461 *FCTH*
Director(s)
Contact Info: Erik Axelson, South County Deputy Director, 805-681-5651

SUBJECT: Front Country Trails Challenge Cost Share Agreement

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: Select_Concurrence

Other Concurrence: None

As to form: Select_Concurrence

Recommended Actions: That Board of Supervisors authorize the Director of Parks to enter into a Challenge Cost Share Agreement with the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service Los Padres National Forest (Forest Service) and the City of Santa Barbara (City) further implementing the Front Country Trails management recommendations.

Summary Text: The Board of Supervisors accepted the Front Country Trails management recommendations at its meeting on May 20, 2008. The first and key recommendation was to implement an inter-agency agreement to facilitate the joint maintenance and management of this trail system in the Santa Ynez foothills located within the First and Second Supervisorial districts. This inter-agency agreement, using the existing template of the Forest Service's "Challenge Cost Share Agreement," has been crafted by staff from the three agencies and is the subject of this proposed Board action.

Background: Located within the front range of the Santa Ynez Mountains, the Santa Barbara Front Country Trails (FCT) include these specific trails: 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, however, 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 to broaden management responsibility for the FCT, the County, City, 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 Board of Supervisors, City Council, and the Los Padres Forest Supervisor in May 2008. At that time, the Board of Supervisors and City Council 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

The Challenge Cost Share Agreement (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 funds between agencies. A CCA is in place for up to five 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. Jointly 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 jointly to fund projects that benefit the FCT system. To better define these costs and institutionalize the partnership, County, City, 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 a key component to the successful implementation of the recommendations.

Implementing the CCA will continue a process in which the three public agencies cooperate in managing the FCT system. It will also enhance customer service for the thousands of residents and visitors who use these 30 miles of trails every year by improving maintenance, expanding signage and other information, and encouraging cooperative volunteer efforts from user groups. In addition to providing valuable recreation opportunities to county residents and visitors, 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.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts: 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 a part-time, contracted 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 County's \$10,000 share is included in the County Parks proposed Fiscal Year 2010 budget.

Budgeted: Yes

Fiscal Analysis:

<u>Funding Sources</u>	<u>Current FY Cost:</u>	<u>Annualized On-going Cost:</u>	<u>Total One-Time Project Cost</u>
General Fund		\$ 10,000.00	
State			
Federal			
Fees			
Other:			
Total	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -

Narrative: The FCT Coordinator role would be filled on a part-time basis under a one-year contract during FY 2010. It is expected that this person would focus on a several key benchmarks, including developing seasonal work plans, preparing grant applications, encouraging volunteer projects with all FCT stakeholder groups, and expanding outreach and communication to trail users, residents, and visitors. Since county-managed trail easements are often the link between City and Forest Service properties, the Santa Barbara County Park Commission has strongly recommended that the FCT Coordinator position be physically housed within County Parks; our South County park operations unit has set aside work space for this purpose.

Staffing Impacts:

Legal Positions:

FTEs:

Attachments: Challenge Cost Share Agreement
 FCT Task Force recommendations (adopted by the Board on May 20, 2008)

Authored by: Erik Axelson, South County Deputy Director