

**DATE:** February 15, 2023

**TO:** Parks and Recreation Commission

**FROM:** Brady Ruebusch, Shoreline Manager  
Brenda Sylvia, Assistant Community Services Director  
John R. Marchant, Community Services Director

**SUBJECT:** Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan

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**RECOMMENDATION**

Receive a presentation on the Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan, provide feedback, and forward a recommendation to the City Council to adopt the Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan.

**BACKGROUND**

The City Council identified the development of the Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan (SWMP or Plan) as an item on the City Council Goals Work Plan for Fiscal Years 2019-21. As part of the Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget process, funding was approved to hire a consultant to develop the Plan. After conducting a Request for Proposals, H.T. Harvey & Associates was selected as the consultant in June 2021 due to the specific expertise of their staff who have knowledge of species found at Shoreline at Mountain View (Shoreline) and extensive experience of working in the vicinity of Shoreline and the surrounding region.

During the development of the City's Fiscal Year 2021-22 Strategic Roadmap, Council created seven strategic priorities, one of which was "Sustainability and Climate Resilience." Under this priority, Council listed "Consolidate and update existing plans into a comprehensive Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan" as an item on the Strategic Roadmap. Following this direction, the SWMP consolidates existing plans and documents (regional, State, and Federal) that regulate wildlife and habitat at Shoreline into one comprehensive plan that complements the Shoreline Burrowing Owl Preservation Plan. In addition, the SWMP provides recommendations for future habitat enhancement projects and establishes Best Practices for landscape and habitat management within the Plan Area.

**PUBLIC INPUT PROCESS**

As part of the process for developing the SWMP, the consultant created an annotated outline of the Plan that was based on ecological and environmental data that had been historically collected

at Shoreline. The outline provided the sections and subsections of the Plan, along with short descriptions of what information would be conveyed. The document facilitated a robust public input process and helped stakeholders, the public, and Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) better understand the purpose and parameters of the SWMP.

### **PRC Meeting—March 9, 2022**

The annotated outline was presented to PRC on March 9, 2022 and kicked off the public input process for the SWMP. The meeting was held virtually, and key stakeholders were invited to attend and provide initial comments. It was an opportunity for the consultant and staff to further explain the purpose and direction of the Plan, while allowing for initial comments and questions that would help develop the next steps of the public input process. Attachment 2 is the memo and annotated outline from that meeting. The PRC, public, and stakeholders were generally supportive of the direction of the SWMP based on the presentation and annotated outline.

### **Stakeholder Meetings**

Following the March 9, 2022 PRC meeting, the consultant and staff virtually met with members of key stakeholder organizations in June and July 2022, including the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, GreenSpacesMV, and Urban Wildlife Research Project. Since many of the participants in these meetings had also attended the PRC meeting, the discussions focused around specific topics or feedback and enabled the consultant and staff to better learn what additional elements the representatives wanted explored for the Plan as well as an opportunity for the consultant and staff to explain why the outline established specific parameters for the Plan. A number of common themes began to arise, which are summarized later in this memo.

### **Webpage and Survey for the General Public**

As part of the public input process, a webpage was created for the general public to learn more about the SWMP and provide feedback through a survey that was posted in July and August 2022. The webpage included a short video summarizing the SWMP with a link to download the annotated outline. The survey had six questions with the final one asking if the individual would be interested in volunteering at Shoreline and to provide their contact information. The survey received 147 responses, and the five-minute video was viewed 460 times. An analysis of the results was provided by H.T. Harvey to the City to digest the common themes and determine how those correlate to the feedback received from the PRC and stakeholders.

### **Public Input Trends from PRC, Stakeholders, and the Survey**

Through all parts of the public input process, the feedback was positive and the direction of the SWMP was supported. A recurring theme was to add “more” or “expand” the Plan because of

the important topics that it addresses. In all three parts of the input process, included is the most common feedback:

- Expand the boundaries of the Plan Area outside of Shoreline's boundaries by either including specific areas in the North Bayshore Area or the entire North Bayshore Area in the Plan;
- Expand the size and distance of the corridors in the Plan Area especially in regard to the major creeks (Stevens Creek and Permanente Creek) that run through the Plan's Area;
- Include an additional umbrella species that is not a bird species;
- Include nonprotected species that are special to Shoreline such as the black-tailed jackrabbit or gray fox; and
- Expand upon the conflicting uses and activities between humans and wildlife especially regarding infrastructure and maintenance needs, future projects by the City, contractors, or partner organizations, and recreational uses of Shoreline.

In addition, through the PRC and stakeholder meetings, the consultant and staff received substantial feedback to consider:

- Determine metrics, timelines, and priorities for the enhancement projects; and
- Explore ways to educate the public (signage or programs) and engage existing organizations to help with education efforts.

## **ANALYSIS**

The SWMP focuses on the distinctive aspects that make Shoreline a special place, in the context of the entire City or even the South Bay, for the diversity of species, vegetation, and habitats that are currently found at this unique location in Mountain View. The Plan achieves this by reviewing and consolidating the various regulations and codes for wildlife and habitats at Shoreline. It also provides recommendations for best practices for maintenance operations and proposes future projects for habitat and landscape preservation, restoration, or enhancement. The following sections provide a summary of the SWMP and what has changed since the annotated outline due to the public input process.

## **Boundaries**

The SWMP examines the species and habitats found within Shoreline as well as two locations outside of Shoreline but within the North Bayshore Area. The Plan focuses on these areas

because of their unique aspects that differ from the rest of the City with regard to species and habitats found there. By focusing on Shoreline, the City has the responsibility and control over the maintenance practices and types of projects in order to maximize the effectiveness of the SWMP. The Plan acknowledges adjacent restoration and development activities as well as regional implications of biodiversity within Shoreline, but it concentrates the regulations and maintenance and enhancements to within Shoreline and the two nearby areas.

After going through the public input process, the Plan's boundaries were expanded to include the Charleston Retention Basin and the egret rookery off Shorebird Way. Both of these locations are within the Habitat Overlay Zones (H.O.Z.) in the City's North Bayshore Precise Plan due to the type and quantity of wildlife that each area supports. Because these two areas are located in the North Bayshore Area where Shoreline staff can observe and monitor as needed, and the areas provide unique benefits to wildlife, staff agreed with the input to include the Charleston Retention Basin and egret rookery in the Plan's boundaries.

### **Scope**

The Plan consolidates the existing regulations and codes that govern the management practices of the protected species of plants and animals found within the Plan Area boundaries (Plan's boundaries). While it does not cover every legal precedent and code, the regulatory framework provided in Section 2 of the Plan focuses on the most pertinent Federal, State, and regional regulations and references as well as additional regulations and legal decisions that may also govern individual or smaller numbers of species. Through the public input process, no additional wildlife regulations were requested to be addressed in the SWMP.

Sections 3 through 7 of the Plan focus on the habitats and species that make Shoreline special. While these sections address management and enhancement recommendations, they concentrate on describing the habitats and species and how they interrelate. Specifically, Section 3 provides a description and location of the various habitats in the Plan's boundaries along with management and enhancement recommendations. Through the public input process, the consultant and staff added "Developed" habitats to Section 3. This category of habitat refers to buildings and other nonnatural elements where birds may nest or wildlife may den. Because buildings and containers have been used extensively by wildlife, it was recommended that these elements be called out as a type of habitat. In addition, "developed" habitat is further addressed in Section 5: Locations of Nesting Birds and Sensitive Nesting Areas, which was a section initially included in the Annotated Outline.

Sections 4 and 6 of the SWMP focus on special-status species found in the Plan Area. Section 4 provides a table of these species and what category of special-status they are found under. This can then be used with the regulatory framework in Section 2 to determine the appropriate regulations around the species and their habitat. During the public input process, it was recommended that the table be expanded to include nonspecial-status species that are still

“important” to Shoreline such as the jackrabbit. The consultant and staff reviewed this request and opted not to add these types of species to the table as it is meant to be used in tandem with the regulatory framework section. However, nonspecial-status species have been added throughout the SWMP under the various habitats and corridors where they reside and how they will benefit from maintenance and enhancement recommendations.

Section 6 provides five umbrella species that represent the various types of habitat found at Shoreline. This section highlights and explains how species benefit from the various habitats described in Section 3. It ties the benefits of habitat enhancement and management more directly to wildlife and details how the same recommendations can benefit these species. Throughout the public input process, a recurring theme was the desire to add a fifth umbrella species that was not an avian (bird) species. Therefore, a fifth species, the monarch butterfly, was added to the draft SWMP, which is an invertebrate representing the grasslands habitat. This habitat was originally not represented in Section 6 because it is extensively covered in the Burrowing Owl Preservation Plan. However, the consultant and staff agreed with the feedback that a fifth species representing grasslands habitat is still important to address in the SWMP while referencing the Burrowing Owl Preservation Plan. Given recent concerns about western monarch butterfly populations and that conservation efforts for this species are already under way at Shoreline, the monarch was a good candidate for addition as a nonavian umbrella species. Section 7 discusses the management of invasive and nuisance species as well as pathogens that may adversely affect the species and habitats at Shoreline.

Section 8 of the SWMP summarizes the management, enhancement, and restoration opportunities and focuses on the timelines, prioritization, and greater details of those opportunities. Through the public input process, it was recommended that timelines and measurable results be included with the enhancement and restoration projects. Due to extensive permitting, coordination, and resources needed for some of these opportunities, the SWMP provides a prioritization of projects rather than specific timelines. In addition, as habitat enhancements and restoration projects are pursued, their success will be measured through current and additional monitoring.

Section 9 of the SWMP addresses wildlife connectivity and the important corridors within the Plan’s boundaries. Because the majority of wildlife corridors within the Plan’s boundaries are comprised of one of the types of habitat already addressed in the Plan, Section 9 details corridor locations in conjunction with the maps of types of habitat and landscaping and restoration projects to determine which habitat management and enhancement will benefit certain corridors. One recurring theme that arose during the public input process but was not included in the SWMP was the desire to include Stevens Creek and Permanente Creek in the North Bayshore Area or further. The consultant and staff reviewed inclusion of these important corridors but limited their inclusion to Stevens Creek Tidal Marsh and Permanente Creek within Shoreline. There are two reasons for this scope: first, these waterways require extensive permitting and coordination with multiple stakeholders for any maintenance work or projects

because they are ultimately the responsibility of another organization, and the City did not want to dictate the activities for these waterways; secondly, the habitat and wildlife within the creeks would greatly increase the scope of the SWMP to a level believed to be ineffective for the desired goals of the SWMP.

Sections 10 through 12 focus on the management practices of staff, contractors, and other organizations that work and conduct projects within the Plan Area. These sections acknowledge the infrastructure maintenance and improvement projects that are required within the Plan's boundaries and details the processes to follow to carry out the necessary maintenance and projects while minimizing impacts on wildlife and habitat. Sections 11 and 12 reflect information and practices that are already adopted through the Burrowing Owl Preservation Plan.

### **Reporting and Adaptive Management**

The SWMP summarizes and identifies the annual reporting requirements that are already being conducted as required by regulatory agencies. The SWMP will not create new reporting requirements but, rather, clarifies the framework with which current reporting can measure the effectiveness of habitat management and monitoring at Shoreline. Through this annual reporting, the City will be able to determine if additional or modified practices or projects are needed in the Plan Area. In addition, as regulations are updated, new management practices are implemented, and grant opportunities and projects with community partners arise, it is anticipated that the SWMP will be updated. Therefore, the sections and layout of the Plan are designed to be adaptive.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

As part of the Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget process, the Community Services Department was awarded \$60,000 to create the SWMP. The Plan has remained in budget, and staff does not anticipate requiring more funding to complete the Plan.

Based on the landscape, restoration, and management opportunities that are identified in the SWMP, staff does not anticipate a need for an additional budget at this time. If a future project requires extra money, staff will request that one-time funding through the five-year Capital Improvement Program to be paid by the Shoreline Fund. In addition, the City is exploring grant opportunities and partnerships with organizations that may provide volunteer resources in order to achieve some of the proposed projects.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Since the time of posting the draft SWMP to the public, staff has received additional input. Staff and the consultant team will provide a summary of the input received to date and how the draft SWMP may be updated to incorporate the feedback received during the presentation to the PRC.

The SWMP is scheduled to go before the City Council at the March 14, 2023 meeting as a New Business item to be adopted.

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Provide feedback to the consultant and staff and request the Plan be brought back to the PRC for further review prior to a recommendation to the City Council.
  
2. Provide other direction to staff.

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- Attachments:
1. Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan
  2. March 9, 2022—Parks and Recreation Commission Memo