

# Agenda Report

TO: City Council

Date: July 20, 1998

FROM: Acting City Manager

SUBJECT: Arroyo Fire Mitigation, Brush Removal Priority Plan

## RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council approve a journal voucher appropriating \$72,000 to Parks and Natural Resources Budget Account #765300 from the Stabilization Fund for the purpose of implementing an Arroyo fire mitigation and brush removal priority plan.

## BACKGROUND:

Wildfire is the most serious potential problem facing the Arroyo Seco Natural Park Area. The natural habitat, open spaces, and existing structures paralleling the east and west perimeters of this area are threatened by the excessive fuel load that current exists. Contributing to this problem is vegetation that has grown rampantly after this past winter's storms. This fuel consists of weeds and grasses that have now gone dormant as well as native vegetation that has not burned in over 40 years and is high in fuel volume. In coordination and communication with the City's Fire Marshall, staff has determined that there are four basic types of problem areas in the Arroyo Seco. These areas are: Roadsides, Slopes, Flat/Meadow Areas, and Trails and Paths. Attachment #A outlines the priority areas as well as current and potential resources that could be available to assist in the mitigation of this potential problem.

The recommended funds will be directed to various components to be used to mitigate the fire prone area of the Arroyo Seco. Each component serves a specific purpose in the Arroyo, and all work will be coordinated with the Fire Marshall. The components that will be incorporated are as follows: **Mechanical Treatment:** This method utilizes various types of equipment that can be used to crush, chop or uproot plants to modify the vegetative cover. These components include bulldozers, brush rakes, flail mowers, heavy-duty discs, and other equipment. However, if the vegetative cover is totally removed, the potential for soil erosion is high. This method is for extensive flat, open areas; **Chemical Application:** This is the application of growth inhibitors(pre-emergence). Defoliators(round up) or killers to reduce the highly flammable herbaceous plants such as annual grasses. There are many areas of the Arroyo that can benefit from this method including roadsides; **Biological Control:** The reduction of shrubby plants to a point where browsing by animals will hold growth back or grazing will maintain herbaceous plants; **Hand Clearing:** The use of manual labor to remove brush with an assortment of tools including the weed whip, axe, grubbing hoe, chain saw, pole pruner, bucket truck and various other equipment. Because of the natural terrain of the Arroyo Seco, this method is the most practical for the resources available.

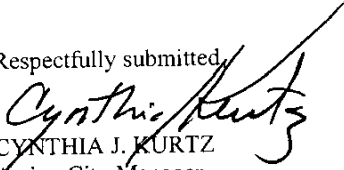
Involvement of volunteer organizations, "stakeholders", regulatory agencies, etc., will play a major role in the ongoing process to mitigate potential fire and provide regular brush and weed abatement. Members from organizations such as the Pasadena Casting Club, Pasadena Roving Archers, Equestrian Corral #2, Sierra Club, Tom Sawyer Club, etc., have all indicated a willingness to participate in an active way to work with the City. Current and future capital improvement projects scheduled for the entire Arroyo will assist in removing brush and weeds as new projects are completed. Agencies, groups such as Browning Ferris Industries, KIDSPACE, Pasadena City College, La Casita Garden Club, Arroyo Seco Foundation, have all indicated to assist.

The funds if allocated will provide the fiscal resources to begin work on the top priority areas which include road set backs, clearance of trails and brush removal on slopes and hillsides. These areas will incorporate the consolidated services of City staff, Volunteers, California Conservation Corps and Stakeholder groups. The Recreation and Parks Commission and Hahamongna Watershed Park Advisory Committee have both supported a plan to mitigate potential fire and have indicated a willingness to serve and assist as needed.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This action will decrease the General Fund Stabilization Reserve by \$72,000 and increase the Lower Arroyo and Brookside Park Maintenance Budget Account #765300 by \$72,000.

Respectfully submitted,

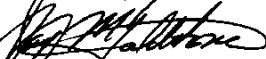
  
CYNTHIA J. KURTZ  
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Prepared and approved by:



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