



Board Report

File #: 15-0754, **Version:** 1

- a. Receive an update on the Fort Ord Recreational Habitat Area Trail Master Plan and Open Space Management Strategy

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Fort Ord Committee:

- a. Receive an update on the Fort Ord Recreational Habitat Area Trail Master Plan and Open Space Management Strategy

SUMMARY:

The draft Fort Ord Recreational Habitat Area Trail Master Plan and Open Space Management Strategy (Trail Master Plan) has been presented to the Board's Fort Ord Committee (FOC) a number of times since fall 2014. Since the Trail Master Plan was last presented to the FOC on April 23, 2015, staff has made minor corrections to the draft Trail Master Plan presented (April 21, 2015 version), and will be adding minor clarifying language to the plan prior to bringing it forward to the Board of Supervisors for preliminary acceptance, subject to final revisions following environmental review and other consultation.

DISCUSSION:

The Trail Master Plan must be found consistent with the Fort Ord Multispecies Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), which is still being drafted. FORA is the lead agency to prepare the environmental impact report (EIR) that evaluates impacts of the draft HCP, which includes evaluating the species "take" impacts associated with the trails and management strategy identified in the Trail Master Plan. Once the EIR is certified (projected in 2016), staff will make any revisions as are needed to the Trail Master Plan based on the environmental review.

The Trail Master Plan must also be consistent with the Base Reuse Plan and, once the Trail Master Plan is adopted by the County, the County must submit it to FORA for certification of consistency with the Base Reuse Plan. FORA has convened a staff level Trails Working Group that has met twice to discuss developing a Fort Ord regional trails blueprint (a summary map showing existing and planned trail alignments on former Fort Ord lands). County staff participated in these meetings. FORA has initiated individual jurisdiction meetings to facilitate this process and integrate the draft Trail Master Plan into the Fort Ord trails blueprint. Once a Fort Ord trails blueprint has been completed, FORA will present the blueprint to the FORA Board of Directors.

Following certification of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the HCP and adoption of the HCP, as well as development of the Fort Ord trails blueprint and possible subsequent environmental review, staff will return to the Fort Ord Committee with the final Trail Master Plan for review and recommendation to the full Board of Supervisors.

At the April 23, 2015 FOC meeting, the draft Trail Master Plan was presented. At that time, staff was directed to provide the Committee a background of the land use policies regarding trails in the Oak Oval Reserve (COE Parcel E19a.2). Specifically, the Committee was interested in understanding the "land swap" that resulted in locating the proposed Monterey Horse Park closer to the City of Seaside and providing for a cross-country

course in the Oak Oval. In 2002, to help resolve conflicting land uses and conveyance requests among various agencies, FORA and the County jointly prepared the “Assessment, East Garrison-Parker Flats Land Use Modifications, Fort Ord, California.” In 2003, the County agreed to the revisions set forth in the Assessment through an MOU between FORA, Monterey Peninsula College, and the US Bureau of Land Management, which has come to be known as the “Land Swap Agreement.” The MOU modified the Habitat Management Plan (HMP) to include the modifications described by the Assessment. The Assessment provides that “the oak woodland reserve in the Horse Park area (or possibly the adjacent oak woodlands and grasslands to the east) would include an allowance for a section of the proposed cross-country course. The course section would require two lanes, each approximately 75 feet wide.”

Various actions, including the Land Swap Agreement, since the 1997 Base Reuse Plan was adopted have increased acreages of open space within the unincorporated area by almost 1,000 acres, which results in a comparable decrease of the acreage planned for development. Some of these lands are restricted by conservation/management plans, and some are not. The Land Swap Agreement resulted in an overall increase in habitat reserve areas at Parker Flats, which is comprised of oak woodland and maritime chaparral habitats.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

Agencies participating in the development of the proposed trail master plan and open space management strategy include the Resource Management Agency, the County Parks Department, County Economic Development Department, the US Bureau of Land Management, the Fort Ord Reuse Authority, Monterey Peninsula Regional Parks District, Transportation Agency of Monterey County, California State University Monterey Bay, and the Cities of Seaside and Marina. In addition, staff has held community meetings to include multiple local interest groups and stakeholders.

FINANCING:

The Trail Master Plan includes a five-year transitional program budget that estimates between approximately \$126,000 and \$188,000 per year for the County to provide administrative and support services, a minimal level of maintenance, and trail signage-only for capital improvements during this time. This estimated budget includes funding for the County to conduct ongoing management activities include administrative management, minimal law enforcement, clean up and safety activities. RMA submitted a FY 2015-16 budget augmentation request for \$95,000 to continue RMA-only activities at this minimal level of management and for signage installation, however this budget augmentation was not funded in the FY 2015-16 Adopted Budget and at this time there is no funding to continue this work.

The Trail Master Plan also provides recommendations regarding trail drainage control, realignment or closure as well as guidelines and cost estimates for other capital improvements such as trailhead parking, bathrooms, tables, interpretive signage and fencing. County staff is working with partners to identify alternative sources (e.g. grants, volunteer work) to fund trails work and other capital improvement projects. Implementation of these projects may formally begin once the final Trail Master Plan is adopted following environmental review and other consultation, pending availability of funds.

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