

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: January 22, 2008
Reviewed by: *BP*

SUBJECT: Removal of Monterey Pines from Gill Tract

REPORTED BY: Penelope Leach, Recreation and Community Services Director

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Pursuant to the discussion and recommendations of the Parks & Recreation Commission, authorize the Mayor to sign correspondence to the University of California, Berkeley, to urge the University to provide the City with advance communication and opportunity for involvement before moving forward with the second phase of Monterey Pine tree removal.

BACKGROUND

Staff from the College of Natural Resources' Center on Forestry as well as the U.C. Berkeley arborist and landscape architect, conducted a thorough review and evaluation of each of the Gill Tract trees. They found that most of the Monterey Pines on the property are infected with pitch canker, which causes individual branches to die and leads to a general decline in the health of the tree, and often death.

Trees with pitch canker need to be removed as the dead material may break and fall from the tree or the tree itself may fall. Several trees infested with pitch canker on the Gill Tract have fallen. When the trees were evaluated it was also determined that the Monterey Pines not currently affected will also need to be removed as they will become more susceptible to wind, are less stable in the soil, and more likely to fall. The removal of the trees will be implemented in two phases. In phase one, the trees that pose an immediate danger will be removed by the end of this month. Phase two will remove the remaining trees at a later time.

The area where the trees have been removed will be hydroseeded with grasses and wildflowers, essentially returning the site to its condition before the pine plantation was planted for research in the 1960s.

A more detailed fact sheet is being prepared by the U.C. Berkeley staff and will be distributed to City of Albany as well as posted on Albany's website.

DISCUSSION

Although City staff has been requesting information from the University for several months regarding the future plans for the Gill Tract trees, no plans were communicated

until the week of January 7, 2008. According to University staff, the recent storms were the driving force behind taking action to remove the trees.

University staff attended the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting, January 10, 2008, as an emergency agenda item to discuss the plans and reasons for the tree removal. According to University staff, phase one will remove approximately 180 trees (see attached diagram). Phase two is unfunded at this time; however, the University hopes to have the phase two trees removed by the end of 2008. In total, the University plans to remove 317 trees.

The Commission communicated to the University staff who attended the Commission meeting that they were disappointed with the lack of response over that past several months and felt the University could have done a better job in preparing the Albany community given that the Gill Tract trees are an Albany landmark. The Commission also expressed disappointment to learn that no trees are being replanted. The plan at this time is to hydroseed with grasses and wildflowers, which is expected to prevent the overgrowth of weeds. University staff stated that the intent is to have the area remain open space.

The Commission asked the University to involve the community in what ever manner the community could be involved before moving forward with phase two. The University staff agreed that they would open lines of communication and possibly meet with the community before the second phase begins.

Attachments

1. E-mail communication from Glenda Rubin, UC Berkeley, January 10, 2008
2. Tree removal plan diagram