

**CITY OF ALBANY  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: April 14, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Use of LLD funds for Albany Hill fire prevention maintenance and invasive plant removal.

**REPORTED BY:** Penelope Leach, Recreation and Community Services Director

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**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Parks and Recreation Commission recommend to Council the use of Measure R Open Space funds:

- (1) for fiscal year 2009/2010, a one time expenditure of up to \$30,000 (\$20,000 more than is currently budgeted) for fire prevention maintenance, the removal of English Ivy, French Broom, and other invasives;
- (2) for an ongoing annual allocation of \$10,000 for fire prevention maintenance and the removal of invasives.

**BACKGROUND**

In FY2008/2009, the City budgeted \$10,000 from Measure R Lighting and Landscaping funds to hire Shelter Belt to assist with fire prevention maintenance and invasive plant removal. The City has contracted with Shelter Belt many times over the past several years. Shelter Belt is one of the leading agencies in wildfire prevention and land management as well as native plant landscaping and restoration.

French Broom and English Ivey are increasing on Albany Hill every year. French Broom is considered a noxious weed that forms dense fields that can crowd out other species. The stands of French broom grow to be thick and can render meadows and pastures useless for wild and domestic animals. Other harmful effects include its tendency to catch fire, and the toxicity of its leaves and seeds, which contain alkaloids poisonous to many large domestic animals. As for English Ivy, if not managed properly it can become extremely dense to the point where it can destroy habitat for native wildlife and creates large sections of solid ivy where no other plants can develop.

**DISCUSSION**

Neither the Broom nor the Ivy is easily eradicated. For instance, the seed bank for the French Broom can take years to wipe out. By increasing the funds for FY2009/2010 by \$20,000, and by allocating an annual amount of \$10,000, staff can work with Shelter Belt to prioritize a list of what needs to be done to prevent the invasives from spreading as well as control fire hazards.

Another important part of the work that needs to be done on Albany Hill is the prevention of more Eucalyptus trees. The Eucalyptus is also non-native and invasive. Although determining how to address the large number of Eucalyptus trees currently inhabiting Albany Hill is not a topic for this particular discussion, Shelter Belt can prevent the growth of new trees and remove smaller samplings quite easily. The Eucalyptus trees are an extreme fire hazard and preventing more trees from growing is a critical step in the long-term management of Albany Hill.

Staff will be returning to the Commission in the near future with a proposal for how the City might move forward on a long-term management plan for Albany Hill. In 1991, the City adopted the Albany Hill/Creekside Master Plan. The plan is now 18 years old and consideration should be given to updating the plan. In addition to the invasives and the fire hazards, the City needs to address the questions, “What would we like the Hill to look like in 20 years,” and, “How do we go about putting that vision into action.”

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

\$10,000 annually from Measure R Open Space funds for ongoing fire prevention maintenance and removal of invasives.

An Increase of \$20,000 for FY2009/2010 from Measure R Open Space funds for fire prevention maintenance and removal of invasives.