

City of Culver City, California
City Council Agenda Item Report

Meeting Date: 11/13/2006		Item Number: <u>A-7</u>	
AGENDA ITEM: Adoption of a Resolution Authorizing the Application for a Whale Tail Competitive Grant Program.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Catherine A. Vargas		Phone Number: (310) 253 6411	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☐	
Public Notification: Master Notification List (11/08/2006)			
Department Approval: Charles D. Herbertson (11/02/2006)		City Manager Approval: Jerry B. Fulwood (11/08/2006)	
City Controller Approval: Marlee Chang (11/07/2006)			

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council adopt a resolution approving the application for the Whale Tail Competitive Grant Program.

BACKGROUND:

The Whale Tail Grants Program distributes funds from sales of the Whale Tail License Plate. The grants supports programs that teach California's children and the general public to value and take action to improve the health of the state's marine and coastal environment. This grants program focuses on reaching communities that are currently poorly served in terms of marine and coastal education.

For this grant cycle a total of \$459,500 will be distributed. Applicants may request any amount up to \$50,000 and 25-50% of the funding will be allocated in small grants under \$10,000. Staff is recommending \$40,000.00 be requested to implement an educational program for the community.

Deadline for Applications must be postmarked by November 15, 2006.
Whale Tail staff will review all proposals and make recommendations to the Coastal Commission, which will vote at its February 2007 meeting.

DISCUSSION:

Staff proposes to establish an *Adopt A Creek* Program for Ballona Creek, an eight-mile long urban creek which drains the Ballona Creek Watershed, a 130 square mile section of urban and suburban Los Angeles County. The watershed

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drains the Los Angeles basin from the Santa Monica Mountains on the north, the Harbor Freeway (110) on the east, and the Baldwin Hills on the south. Ballona Creek passes through Culver City over a total length of 4 miles. The creek empties out into the Pacific Ocean between Marina del Rey and Playa del Rey.

While the creek follows its original and natural course through the City, the riverbed was replaced by a concrete channel in the 1920s and it remains a concrete lined storm drain channel until it reaches the last two miles before the coast. At that point, the creek's concrete bottom ends, though its banks continue to be lined with boulders as it runs its last mile or so to the sea.

During the dry weather the creek flows with urban runoff; the water level and speed increases dramatically during storms. That runoff contains all sorts of pollutants from air, yards, businesses, schools, street trash, animal waste, oil and grease, pesticides and fertilizers, and industrial chemicals. Oftentimes, large items, such as shopping carts, computer monitors, and mattresses which have been dumped in the creek are present. Graffiti is another component that is commonplace in the creek bed along the walls and walkways.

It is these substantial urban impacts to the creek that the City's *Adopt A Creek* program hopes to address. *Adopt A Creek* will enable local residents, businesses and community groups to adopt and commit to keeping the creek, as well as the ocean waters it flows into, clean. It will also be an avenue to allow our community to understand the importance of our creek to the overall coastal environment while creating an educational process for future generations.

In addition to providing an educational program for our city, this program would assist in the ongoing removal of debris collected in the creek. Currently Sanitation operations refuse fees cover the cost of the annual La Ballona Creek Cleanup Event at a cost of approximately \$8,000. Additional clean up efforts which include partnering with volunteer groups would be a worthwhile venture.

Project details

Through the *Adopt A Creek* Program, the City of Culver City, Department of Public Works will provide an opportunity for individuals, neighborhood groups, civic organizations, and businesses to play an active and on-going role in cleaning, greening, and maintaining Ballona Creek.

Adopt A Creek participants would adopt an approved area of the creek and make a commitment to regularly clean and beautify that area of Ballona Creek. Beautifying activities can include:

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- regularly picking up trash
- weed removal (as appropriate and approved by the City)
- studying and reporting on water quality and habitat
- removing graffiti

The City will provide adopters with site assessment, tools, garbage bags, gloves, and other supplies for trash pickup. A sign recognizing the adopting individual(s) or group will be posted. The City will also arrange for a maintenance crew to pick up the collected debris after the cleanup event.

Program Requirements and Group Participation

The requirements for adoption are as follows:

- The interested group identifies the section of Ballona Creek (in Culver City) that they wish to adopt.
- Group completes and submits an *Adopt A Creek* application to the City of Culver City Public Works Department to adopt a portion of Ballona Creek for a one year period.
- The City will approve a permit for the adopting group, which is good for one year period. At the time the permit is issued, the City will install an *Adopt A Creek* sign to recognize the group.
- Contact the City at least 10 days prior to scheduled creek cleanup.
- Hold a minimum of two cleanup days per year for adopted creek area.
- 10 days notice to the City must be given in order to ensure that there no maintenance or other activities scheduled in the section of Ballona Creek on the selected day.

Community Education

In addition to the cleanup activities related to the *Adopt A Creek* program, the City of Culver City will provide an educational presentation to each community, school or business group that signs up for the program. The goal of the educational component of the *Adopt A Creek* program is to help residents understand the importance of Ballona Creek, its historic role in the regional environment, how the creek has been changed over the years from a natural environment to a part of the LA area storm drain system, and the impact the creek has on local coastal receiving waters. The educational outreach goal is to encourage local residents to see the creek as more than a concrete-lined storm drain, but rather as a key environmental component of the LA area, and to be advocates for its upkeep and maintenance. These presentations will be made by

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“Creek Guides”, local residents and schools who have been involved in Ballona Creek cleanup, restoration, and improvement activities for many years.

Grant Budget

The budget request associated with the proposed project is primarily for supplies. Additionally about 32% of the requested funds will be used for staff time associated with the implementation of the *Adopt A Creek* program, initial maintenance staff support for the first year’s clean up events, and providing “Creek Guides” for the initial educational outreach to groups adopting portions of Ballona Creek.

Grant will be used for the following types of expenses:

- Cleanup supplies (plastic bags, gloves, dust masks, etc.)
- Safety supplies (traffic vests, etc.)
- *Adopt A Creek* signs
- Cleanup loaner tools (rakes, shovels, etc.)
- City staff hours (initial program implementation, maintenance staff time at cleanups during the first year)
- Creek Guide educational presentations to new adoptive groups
- Clean up event survey forms

Grant funds will not be available in advance of expenditures. Expenses will be reimbursed once per month upon submission of an invoice by the grantee.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

No matching funds required.

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution authorizing the grant application.

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Adopt the resolution authorizing the application for the Whale Tails Competitive Grants program.