

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Parks Department



DATE: March 24, 2014

COMMISSION MEETING DATE: April 3, 2014

TO: Parks and Recreation Commission
FROM: Ramona Arechiga, Natural Resource Manager
SUBJECT: County Parks Scientific Permit Process

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and approve recommendation to amend the County Parks Scientific Permit process.

BACKGROUND:

Scientific permits provide a tool to protect and expand current information concerning the important natural resources contained within the San Mateo County park system. These permits provide an opportunity to proactively manage access, expand data collection, and gather information concerning a variety of natural resources within County Parks. Due to the limited staff and budget of the Parks Department, strategic collaboration with researchers is imperative to gain necessary information concerning the various resources found in the County Park system and utilize this to inform natural resource management planning and activities.

Review of the current permit process is important for two reasons. One, to make sure we are utilizing the permits as a tool to leverage additional research to benefit the Department's need for data concerning the status of its natural resources. Additionally, the language and fee charges are somewhat confusing and inconsistently applied, which may lead to lost opportunities for collaboration and research. For example, collaboration with Vandenberg Air Force Base for invasive species removal was missed in 2014 due to the additional fee and paperwork currently required by the current permit process.

The current fee schedule for a Scientific Collection Permit includes a permit fee of \$75, a Park Planning Research Fee per hour of \$75 after the first hour for staff time to process.

DISCUSSION:

Bring Scientific Permit process into line with the California State Parks Permit process.

1. Rename the Permit "Scientific Research and Collection Permit" with four tiers

- a. Tier 1: free
 - i. Cost is free, provided that observational measurements of plants or wildlife are taken but with no collection of plants, animals, soil, or other resources
 - ii. Provide any documentation with the permit application concerning state or federal permits which may result from inadvertent “take” or as required by law
 - iii. Requires relevant data, data layers, or other unpublished information be provided to the County if the Parks Natural Resource Manager (NRM) deems it useful to the Natural Resources program or Park constituents
 - iv. Requires providing thesis, dissertation, or scientific publications to County Parks at no cost and with acknowledgement of the County Parks Department’s cooperation in facilitating research
- b. Tier 2: for additional labor required to process the permit
 - i. Cost is \$75 when more than two hours but less than four hours of permitting activities related to research are required from Parks staff. These activities include:
 - 1. CEQA process verification
 - 2. MOU development for collaborative relationships with other institutions
 - 3. Additional outreach to the public to explain research activities and objectives
 - 4. Exceptions to the fee can be made for “in-kind” exchanges of labor or other demonstrations of cost sharing among agency partners
 - a. Case-by-case basis at the discretion of the NRM and automatic review by the Parks Director.
 - 5. Additional charge of up to \$150 for Parks staff time over four hours
- c. Tier 3: for collections and any other “take” activity
 - i. Cost is \$75
 - ii. Invasive species removal is not subject to the Scientific Collection Permit. Invasive species will be handled separately.
 - iii. Provide any documentation with the permit application concerning state or federal permits which may result from any “take” activities or as required by law, specifically California Department of Fish and Wildlife permits.

- iv. Requires relevant data, data layers, or other unpublished information be provided to the County if the NRM deems it useful to the Natural Resources program or Park constituents
 - v. Requires providing thesis, dissertation, or scientific publications to County at no cost and acknowledgement of County Parks Department's cooperation in facilitating research.
 - vi. Potential to waive fee if providing a secondary collection for Parks and the collection is conducted by a professional to industry standards.
- d. Tier 4: for paleontological investigations/ collections
- i. Follow California Department of Parks and Recreation specific guidelines for this category.

If the Parks Commission approves the recommendation to change the Scientific Permit process, staff will develop a fee proposal modifying the current Scientific Permit fees. The Commission would see those draft fee amendments for recommendation to the Board of Supervisors to adopt in June this year.