



TO: PARKS RECREATION & OPEN SPACE COMMISSION
FROM: Margot Cunningham, Natural Areas Coordinator
SUBJECT: **Presentation About Albany's Natural Areas**
AGENDA DATE: **February 8, 2024**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Receive a presentation about Albany's natural areas.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY

Once to twice a year, staff gives a presentation about activities, projects, and accomplishments on Albany Hill and the City's creeks. The purpose of this and other similar presentations is to inform the Commission on the range of activities in a particular area, receive feedback from the Commission and the public, and provide a basis for future Commission discussions of projects or initiatives, such as the Albany Hill Eucalyptus Project referenced below. This presentation covers the period from January 2023 to January 2024.

In the current presentation, staff will discuss the following:

Albany Hill Eucalyptus Project

The City of Albany's Albany Hill Eucalyptus Project (CIP No. 41015) was established on October 18, 2021. On June 20, 2023, the [City Council awarded](#) Contract No. C23-40 to Restoration Design Group (RDG) for development of the Albany Hill Forest Management and Habitat Restoration Plan. This planning process is funded by a Wildfire Resilience Program grant from the State Coastal Conservancy.

RDG is subcontracting with ecologists from Nomad Ecology to assist with plan development. Additionally, the City entered into a contract with Creekside Science to bring on board Stu Weiss, the foremost expert on overwintering monarchs in coastal California. The planning process additionally incorporates knowledge from scientists from UC Berkeley, the US Forest Service, and CalFIRE.

Staff and consultants solicited initial input from City Council at a [Study Session](#) on September 5, 2023, and in November and December of 2023 the team conducted a community workshop and site walk to educate the community and stakeholders about the project and receive their input.

A Community Design Session is scheduled for the March 2024 Parks Recreation & Open Space Commission meeting. Project consultants and staff will present draft plans and solicit feedback from commissioners and the public.

Vegetation Maintenance Contract with Urban Tilth

Urban Tilth, a Richmond-based non-profit, has a Watershed Stewardship Restoration Field Crew that works on Albany Hill, Cerrito Creek, and Codornices Creek performing vegetation management, habitat restoration, trail repair, erosion control, and other projects.

City Council [awarded](#) a 3-year contract to Urban Tilth on [March 1, 2021](#), and on [January 16, 2024](#). Council authorized a 1-yr extension of the contract. The extension is funded by a grant [awarded](#) to the City from the State Coastal Conservancy's Wildfire Resilience Program.

Habitat Restoration Intern Program

This new program, seed-funded by the same Wildfire Resilience Program grant mentioned above, allows students to gain paid experience in habitat restoration and complete projects as their interests and the City's needs align. In 2023, the first year of the program, Albany hosted one summer intern and one fall intern. The [Albany Hill Field Guide](#) was created by the summer intern, Isobel Readdie, in partnership with program staff, and staff expects to continue to update and share this resource with the community for years to come.

Eagle Scout Project

An Eagle Project, [introduced](#) to the Parks Recreation and Open Space Commission on April 14, 2023, was completed in Fall 2023.

Codornices Creek MOU

The cities of Albany and Berkeley and UC Berkeley are part of a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) that provides for the implementation and maintenance of creek restoration and trail projects along lower Codornices Creek between San Pablo Ave and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Each agency has responsibilities identified in the MOU. Albany typically is involved with project execution and vegetation management. Additionally, the agencies (UC Berkeley, City of Berkeley, City of Albany) will host a stakeholders meeting on February 7th to discuss a range of issues associated with this section of Codornices Creek.

Presentation slides will be posted after the meeting.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Agenda for Albany Natural Areas Presentation

AGENDA FOR ALBANY NATURAL AREAS PRESENTATION

PARKS RECREATION & OPEN SPACE COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 8, 2024

Albany Hill

- Update on Eucalyptus Project
- Overview of Vegetation Management on the Hill
- Urban Tilt Work
- Habitat Restoration Intern Program
- Eagle Scout Project

Cerrito Creek

Codornices Creek

- Vegetation Management
- MOU/Budget