

**APPROVED**

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

APR 02 2014

NO. 14-061

DATE March 5, 2014

BOARD OF RECREATION  
& PARK COMMISSIONERS

C.D. 4 and 13

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: GRIFFITH PARK CRYSTAL SPRINGS – NEW BASEBALL FIELDS  
(W.O. #E170110B) PROJECT – CERTIFICATION OF THE FINAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND APPROVAL OF THE PROJECT

R. Adams	_____	V. Israel	_____
*R. Barajas	<u><i>Barajas</i></u>	K. Regan	_____
H. Fujita	_____	N. Williams	_____

*as amended  
see attached*

*Robert Israel for*  
General Manager

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ Disapproved \_\_\_\_\_ Withdrawn \_\_\_\_\_

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Board:

1. Review, consider, and certify the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR), on file in the Board Office, prepared by and posted on the Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering website, [http://eng.lacity.org/techdocs/emg/griffith\\_park\\_baseball\\_field.htm](http://eng.lacity.org/techdocs/emg/griffith_park_baseball_field.htm), for the proposed Griffith Park Crystal Springs - New Baseball Fields (W.O. #E170110B) project, finding that all potentially significant environmental effects of the project have been properly disclosed and evaluated in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the State and City CEQA Guidelines, and that the FEIR reflects the Department of Recreation and Parks' (RAP) independent judgment and analysis;
2. Review, consider, and adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the proposed project, published under separate cover, that specifies the mitigation measures to be implemented in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15407(d)), and monitoring requirements for those measures;
3. Adopt the Findings of Fact and the Statement of Overriding Considerations for the proposed project, published under separate cover;
4. Approve the proposed project (also referred to as the preferred project) as described in the FEIR; and,

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5. Request the Bureau of Engineering (BOE) to file a Notice of Determination with the Los Angeles City Clerk and the Los Angeles County Clerk within five (5) working days of the Board certifying the FEIR.

### SUMMARY:

Griffith Park is one of the largest municipal parks in the nation, approximately 4,200 acres in size. The Park was established in 1896 by the donation of private land owned by Colonel Griffith J. Griffith to the city of Los Angeles and is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Recreation and Parks. In 2009, the City designated Griffith Park as Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) No. 942. The four-acre project site is located within the Crystal Springs Picnic Area of Griffith Park, immediately south of the Wilson and Harding Golf Courses. The site is not identified as a contributing feature of the Griffith Park HCM, but its open space and many native and ornamental trees provide important environmental, aesthetic, horticultural and sociological value.

The proposed Griffith Park Crystal Springs - New Baseball Fields (W.O #E170110B) project calls for the construction of two (2) new youth baseball fields within the existing Crystal Springs Picnic Area. Each baseball field would consist of natural grass and dirt playing surface, two (2) dugouts, bleachers, outfield/perimeter fencing and scoreboards. The project also includes landscaping and an irrigation system. The northeast segment of the access loop driveway, which currently allows circulation around the Crystal Springs Picnic Area, would be eliminated and a cul-de-sac would be constructed at each terminus of the impacted loop driveway segment. Construction of the northern cul-de-sac would eliminate five (5) parking spaces. Additionally, approximately seven (7) picnic tables would be relocated.

In accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), BOE prepared an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the project. The Final EIR (FEIR) is comprised of the Draft EIR (DEIR) and its appendices; comments received during the public hearing and the forty-five (45)-day review period and the City's responses to significant environmental issues raised; clarifying information and minor modifications pertinent to the DEIR; the FEIR appendices; a document containing the Findings of Fact and the Statement of Overriding Considerations, Sections 1-3 and Section 4, respectively; and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan.

The FEIR discloses that the project would result in significant environmental impacts related to aesthetics, biological resources, cultural resources (includes historic, archaeological and paleontological resources), and noise. Implementation of feasible mitigation measures would reduce impacts related to cultural resources (project-specific) and noise to a less-than-significant level. However, no feasible mitigation measures were identified that would both address resulting impacts on aesthetics and meet the project objectives; therefore, significant impacts

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related to aesthetics would be adverse and unavoidable. The project would also result in cumulative impacts related to historic, archaeological and paleontological resources.

Based on the conceptual site layouts, it is estimated that the proposed project would require the removal of forty-five (45) trees (and may temporarily impact four [4] additional trees) of the 67 trees recorded on the site. Among the trees to be removed are protected and heritage trees; such as Black Walnuts, Coast Live Oaks, and California Sycamores, that are unique trees because of their size and maturity and visual and ecological qualities. Although the project would comply with City ordinances and policies with respect to protected and heritage trees, it is possible that this impact may not be mitigated to a less than significant level. Therefore, the removal and relocation of trees could cause unavoidable significant impacts relative to biological resources. The replacement trees, along with any trees that would be relocated, would be planted at appropriate locations within Griffith Park under the approval and direction of the Department of Recreation and Parks' Forestry Division.

The Draft EIR was circulated to all interested parties and responsible agencies for a forty-five (45) day review and comment period from October 31, 2013 through December 17, 2013. In addition, BOE also held a public hearing on the EIR on November 20, 2013. During this public review and comment period, approximately 180 comment letters from individuals and 330 form letters were received expressing both support of, or opposition to, the project. Significant environmental issues raised included tree removal, alternatives, transportation and traffic impacts, and changes in recreational use. All comments that were received, and City responses to significant environmental issues raised, were incorporated into the FEIR along with the transcript of the public hearing. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan (MMRP) has been prepared that specifies all of the feasible mitigation measures identified in the FEIR, which will either reduce or eliminate the potentially significant environmental impacts of the project in accordance with Section 15097 of the State CEQA Guidelines. However, as described above, the project would result in unavoidable, significant adverse impacts to aesthetic and biological resources, and cumulative impacts to cultural resources, and as such, requires that the Board adopt the Findings of Fact (Findings) and the Statement of Overriding Considerations prior to taking action to approve the project. The Findings is a written statement made by the decision-making body of the lead agency that explains how it dealt with each significant impact and alternative in the EIR. The Statement of Overriding Considerations explains in detail why the social, economic, legal, technical or other beneficial aspects of the project outweigh the unavoidable, adverse environmental impacts, and why the lead agency is willing to accept such impacts.

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Funding for this project will be from the Proposition K and Quimby Act programs. Upon certification of this Final EIR by the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners, BOE and RAP staff will proceed with the design of the project and completion of the construction documents. The completed construction documents will then be presented to the Board for approval and call for bids.

~~The offices of Council District 4 and Council District 13 are in support of the proposed project at the proposed location within the Griffith Park Crystal Springs (North) Picnic Area.~~

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

There is no immediate fiscal impact to RAP's General Fund. The assessments of the future operations and maintenance costs have yet to be determined and will be addressed in future budget requests.

This Report was prepared by Sean H. Phan, Project Manager, BOE Recreation and Cultural Facilities Program. Reviewed by Maria Martin, Environmental Supervisor II, Environmental Management Group; Neil Drucker, Program Manager, BOE Recreational and Cultural Facilities Program; Ted Allen, Acting Deputy City Engineer, Bureau of Engineering; and Cathie Santo Domingo, Superintendent, Planning, Construction and Maintenance Branch, Department of Recreation and Parks.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS  
APRIL 2, 2014

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GRIFFITH PARK CRYSTAL SPRINGS – NEW BASEBALL  
FIELDS (W.O. #E170110B) PROJECT – CERTIFICATION OF  
THE FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT AND  
APPROVAL OF THE PROJECT

(Original Date – 3/5/14)

Cathie Santo Domingo amended the report to replace the second paragraph on page 4 of the report with the following language:

“The offices of Council District 4 and Council District 13 support active recreation and baseball (adult and youth) fields in the Crystal Springs area of Griffith Park. Neither office supports the North Atwater Park alternative.”

The above item was presented to the Board by Department staff, and the Board further discussed the item in detail. Public comment was invited on the item. Thirty-seven requests for public comment were received and such comments were made to the Commission.

In response to comments made by Commissioner Sanford, Cathie Santo Domingo recommended the report be further amended to add a recommendation to direct staff to provide a report back addressing the mitigation of the trees and addressing the specific usage of the facility.

It was moved by Vice President Zuñiga, seconded by Commissioner Patsouras, that General Manager’s Report 14-061 be approved as amended, and that the Resolutions recommended in the report be thereby approved. There being no objections, the Motion was unanimously approved.