



Santa Clara Valley Water District

File No.: 19-0871

Agenda Date: 9/30/2019

Item No.: 4.2.

COMMITTEE AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Homeless Encampment Ad Hoc Committee

SUBJECT:

Analysis of Concept, Cost, and Potential Funding for Proposed Environmental Cleanup Day Event.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive information and provide staff with direction for Board Recommendation to host an Environmental Cleanup Day event to engage government agencies, environmental advocates, homeless advocates, volunteers, and local homeless populations in a collaborative effort to perform environmental cleanup activities along Coyote Creek in San Jose.

SUMMARY:

Environmental Cleanup Day Proposal

At the August 5, 2019 Homeless Encampment Ad Hoc Committee meeting, the Committee requested Valley Water staff to investigate the potential for hosting a special Environmental Cleanup Day event (Event). The Event would be a collaboration of organizations and volunteers working together to clean three sites along Coyote Creek in advance of winter rains, creating a positive environmental impact in Santa Clara County. Participants would include representatives of other government agencies, environmental advocacy groups, homeless advocacy groups, and citizen volunteers including homeless residents themselves.

Encouraging active participation of local homeless residents is a key characteristic of the Event. The increasing rate of homelessness in Santa Clara County has occasionally created tension between Valley Water, whose mission is to provide and maintain clean, safe creeks for the benefit of the community, and homeless county residents who camp along the creeks and may not have access to usual mechanisms for waste management.

The Event would serve as a pilot program intended to demonstrate a way for Valley Water to work directly with homeless residents and achieve cleaner creeks together. It also is a prime opportunity for other agencies and social services organizations to not only lend a hand with the cleanup, but to conduct outreach activities and offer services to any volunteers in need of it.

Proposed Event Details

1. Event Scheduling

The proposed date for the Event is Saturday, December 7, 2019. From a planning perspective, staff would need at least two months of lead time to prepare and implement a cleanup event of

the proposed scale. For a similar past event, the 2017 cleanup organized in response to Coyote Creek flooding, staff needed approximately two months of planning for only two sites and with mostly Valley Water participants.

Therefore, while a contemplated Event date of December 7 might be feasible, it allows staff very little time for contingencies in planning and implementation. The biggest drawback of an abbreviated timeline is the risk of a low participation rate. Because the commitment of partner organizations and volunteers is essential, staff will require as much time as possible to secure an appropriate level of participation.

Turning to seasonal challenges, average daily rainfall in Santa Clara County for the month of December is between three and three and one-half inches. Any significant rain within two weeks of a planned cleanup event would necessitate cancelation due to the increased possibility of safety hazards such as slip-and-falls, fallen tree limbs, and the danger of high stream flows.

Any rain within a few weeks of the Event also presents a higher chance for muddy conditions and the potential spread of pathogens, which can be transported via wet soil. The plant pathogen *Phytophthora* represents a particular problem in Santa Clara County. This and similar water molds are responsible for sudden oak death and historic potato famines and can be spread to healthy plants through the tracking of mud. As an environmental stewardship agency, Valley Water is committed to limiting the transportation of plant pathogens and has implemented Best Management Practices to achieve that goal.

Finally, winter scheduling would place the Event in relative proximity to California Coastal Cleanup Day, which was recently and successfully held on Saturday, September 21. During Coastal Cleanup Day, Valley Water along with other organizations and nearly two thousand volunteers removed trash and debris from multiple sites along creeks throughout the county. Scheduling another multi-site cleanup two to three months later could induce “volunteer fatigue” and inhibit the broad participation that is essential for the Event’s success.

a) Alternate Scheduling (if necessary)

Due to the above scheduling challenges a reasonable backup plan, if necessary, would be to move the Event to the spring of 2020-possibly as part of National River Cleanup Day on Saturday, May 16 or Earth Day on Wednesday, April 22. By associating the Event with either of these larger efforts, Valley Water could still position the designated cleanup sites as a separate pilot program intended to demonstrate a way for the district to partner directly with homeless residents and achieve cleaner creeks together.

National River Cleanup Day is organized every year, so the Event could slot in and align with the already existing schedule. This would allow coordinators to leverage a pre-existing infrastructure and tap into the large pool of volunteers and organizations that are already primed to participate. This timing would reduce the concern of volunteer fatigue as most habitual volunteers will have regrouped from the Coastal Cleanup effort, revitalized and ready to serve once again.

Earth Day, another annual event, will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2020 and is celebrated around the world. Because of this, there would be a strong potential for community and media awareness of a creek cleanup event on that day. Staff could expect a greater-than-usual number

of willing volunteers and partner organizations.

2. Site Locations

Valley Water's Watersheds Field Operations staff have assessed potential Coyote Creek cleanup sites based on expected need, ease of access, and nearby parking availability. Staff identified three sites that best fit those criteria, encompassing just over a mile of Coyote Creek. The three recommended sites along the creek are 1) Coyote Creek at Corie Court, 2) E. William Street to Interstate 280, and 3) Interstate 280 to Remillard Court. (see Attachment 1 for maps).

3. Participation

Valley Water would act as the host of the Event, with paid district staff or consultants taking on the role of site management. Each site would require one (1) Senior Maintenance Worker and two (2) Maintenance Worker II's to oversee trash removal, along with at least two (2) other staff or consultants to coordinate administrative tasks such as event registration and distribution of supplies.

Trash and debris removal activities would be performed by teams of volunteers made up of participants from Valley Water, other local government agencies, social services organizations, environmental and homeless advocacy groups, and any community members who want to help. Staff would access the district's volunteer network and work with community leaders to ensure a strong turnout. Local elected officials would be encouraged to engage as well and to get the word out to their constituents. A major purpose of the Event is to provide an opportunity for everyone in the community to stand together and show their commitment to clean, safe waterways. To this end, the participation of local homeless residents would be highly encouraged.

If directed to proceed with planning the Event, Valley Water External Affairs staff will reach out to local service providers to engage their unhoused clients who would want to participate in the cleanup. Service providers and other advocacy groups could be tasked with establishing and leading teams of volunteer homeless residents-organizing outreach, determining who is interested in participating, and disseminating logistical information about the Event. Refuse bags could be distributed to homeless residents in the week leading up to the event for advance collection of personal garbage. On the day of the Event, these residents and other volunteers would then carry full bags to collection spots for disposal in Valley Water compactor trucks. The local homeless community would benefit from the anticipated positive attention focused on their contributions to the cleanup. This could favorably influence public perception and lead to future collaborative opportunities.

External Affairs staff would also seek the involvement of County and City social services agencies, providing them an opportunity to not only to help with the cleanup, but to set up information booths at the sites and conduct outreach activities for any homeless individuals in need.

4. Safety Considerations

If the Board recommends Valley Water staff to proceed with planning the Event, it will be critically important to work with the San Jose Police Department (SJPD) to ensure a safe environment for all participants. Depending on the overall participation numbers, each site would require the

presence of between four and six (4 and 6) police officers to act in a security role. In addition, Valley Water will rely on SJPd to conduct site checks before the day of the Event to identify and address any known dangerous situations or potential public safety issues.

Projected Costs and Funding

Considering the points discussed above, the following represents estimated costs for each cleanup site:

- Valley Water labor-overtime pay for four to five (4 to 5) staff (\$8,000 per site)
- Secondary employment of four to six (4 to 6) SJPd officers for site security (\$4,000 per site)
- Fee for consultants, plus one to two (1 to 2) external site coordinators to organize and oversee groups of volunteers (\$3,000 per site)
- Rental of one (1) additional dumpster for recyclables (\$500)
- Rental of two (2) portable restrooms (\$750 each)
- Rental of one (1) wash station (\$300)
- Estimated total cost for one site: \$17,300

With the addition of the cost to operate two (2) Valley Water compactor trucks for the day (\$750 each), and supplies such as refuse bags, safety gloves, trash pickers, and first aid kits (\$6,000) the total estimated cost of the Event for all three sites is \$59,400.

However, this estimated cost does not include the preemptive site checks by SJPd, which may amount to an additional several thousand dollars. If instructed to proceed further by the Board, staff will explore funding these sweeps under the existing agreement signed by Valley Water and SJPd which pays for police patrols to target criminal activities along local waterways, including Coyote Creek.

Valley Water funding for the Event could come from Watershed Stream Stewardship (Fund 12) reserves. However, it must be noted that at this Ad Hoc Committee meeting staff are also recommending that \$575,000 of Fund 12 reserves be allocated in Fiscal Year 2020 to supplement the Safe, Clean Water and Natural Flood Protection Program's B4 Good Neighbor Program: Encampment Cleanup project. It would be possible to use Fund 12 reserves to fund both the Encampment Cleanup Project and the proposed Event in FY20, but the committee should be aware that this may limit future-year Encampment Cleanup Project funding available for FYs 21-28.

If instructed to proceed by the Board, staff will explore and solicit donations from potential Event partners, which could further reduce the estimated costs.

Request for Further Direction from the Committee

In consideration of the proposed Environmental Cleanup Day event, staff is requesting the Homeless Encampment Ad Hoc Committee's direction on any recommendations to be presented to the Board,

as well as direction as to areas in which more research or analysis may be needed.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Recommended Cleanup Site Locations

UNCLASSIFIED MANAGER:

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