



City of Morgan Hill

Legislation Text

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CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: SEPTEMBER 7, 2016

PREPARED BY: Tanya Carothers, Environmental Programs Coordinator
APPROVED BY: City Manager

GRANT APPLICATION FOR LITTLE LLAGAS CREEK TRAIL PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Adopt resolution authorizing the submission of a grant application to the State of California Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) Program and the execution of grant documents if the grant application is successful.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES, GOALS & STRATEGIES:

Ongoing Priorities

Protecting the environment
Maintaining fiscal responsibility
Supporting youth

2016 Focus Areas

Developing Our Community
Enhancing Our Services

REPORT NARRATIVE:

Currently, the West Little Llagas Creek Trail is a Class 1 pedestrian/bicycle pathway that extends from near the Downtown Morgan Hill area at Spring Avenue south to Watsonville Road. At Watsonville Road the pedestrian/bicycle pathway ends and the creek alignment turns sharply toward the east. Phase 1 of the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) Upper Llagas Creek Flood Protection Project (SCVWD Flood Protection Project) will eliminate the creek's existing turn to the east, and will realign the creek in a new channel to flow under Watsonville Road and continue to the south, past Lake Silveira to Monterey Road.

Morgan Hill's Lake Silveira is an existing passive walking area located south of Middle Avenue on a 52-acre parcel. Lake Silveira will be restored as a wetland area during Phase 1 of the SCVWD Flood Protection Project. Restorative components planned for Lake Silveira currently include eradication of nonnative plant species, planting of native plants and/or trees, a turtle basking log, the creation of islands and wetlands where native birds can breed and nest without predator interference, and open water areas. Additionally, West Little Llagas Creek is a locally designated Interpretive Wildlife

Corridor, and the new creek channel south of Watsonville Road will include features to preserve and enhance creek habitat for fish and wildlife. Phase 1 of the SCVWD Flood Protection Project will begin in Spring 2017 and is expected to take two years, with plant establishment to follow.

Currently, the SCVWD Flood Protection Project does not include recreational or interpretive features that would allow the Morgan Hill community to enjoy or learn about the newly restored waterway areas. The City of Morgan Hill Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes the West Little Llagas Creek Trail Project which includes extension of the trail to Lake Silveira by following the maintenance access roads which are required under Phase 1 of the SCVWD Flood Protection Project. The CIP describes West Little Llagas Creek Trail as a meandering asphalt pathway with trees, benches, and interpretive landmarks and signage, where appropriate. Street crossings would not be covered by the HCF grant.

The State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS), is currently accepting Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF) grant applications for trail projects that bring urban residents into park and wildlife areas. Extension of the West Little Llagas Creek Trail would allow continuous uninterrupted pedestrian/bicycle access from the urbanized Downtown Morgan Hill area, to the Lake Silveira wetland area. The purpose of this staff report is to request the Council's authorization to submit a grant application of up to \$325,000 to the HCF before its October 1st deadline.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Inform

The Parks, Facilities, and Recreational Facilities Master Plan and the Trails Master Plan which support bicycle/pedestrian access along West Little Llagas Creek are public documents and were prepared with input from the Morgan Hill community. The City will inform the community about project details, as needed.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

The Council could choose to not authorize the submission of the application and to forego the opportunity for the grant or to direct staff to apply for a different grant amount.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSION ACTIONS:

The Council approved inclusion of West Little Llagas Creek Trail as a project in the recently approved CIP. The Council has previously authorized submission for a West Little Llagas Creek Trail grant through the Transportation Fund for Clean Air (TFCA), which awarded the City \$135,000. Extension of West Little Llagas Creek Trail south to Lake Silveira is a project that has been supported by City Council through approval of the following City of Morgan Hill formally adopted Master Plans:

- Parks, Facilities, and Recreational Facilities Master Plan which calls for the installation of bike and pedestrian trails along all creeks and channels; and
- Trails Master Plan which calls for a paved trail along West Little Llagas Creek.

FISCAL AND RESOURCE IMPACT:

Staff estimates that installation of the West Little Llagas Creek Trail from Watsonville Road to Lake Silveira will cost approximately \$650,000. Of this amount, \$325,000 is projected to be covered by the HCF grant. The City's matching funds will be provided by park impact funds included in the adopted Capital Improvement Program.

CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act):
Categorical Exemption

The submission of a grant application is an administrative action and does not constitute a project under CEQA. However, to be awarded an HCF grant all CEQA components required for a project must be complete, or nearing completion, at the time the grant application is submitted. The installation of the West Little Llagas Creek Trail will be categorically exempt from CEQA under Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land, which covers minor public or private alterations to the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees for forestry or agricultural purposes, including the creation of bicycle lanes on existing rights-of-way.

LINKS/ATTACHMENTS:
Resolution