



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

June 13, 2019
Item 5

TITLE: PARKS DIVISION OWL BOX AND RAPTOR PERCH PRESENTATION

SUMMARY

The Parks Division of the Operations Services Department is responsible for providing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) throughout the City's park system. In an effort to expand IPM practices, the Parks Division has installed 13 owl boxes and two raptor perches at key locations throughout the city. The report provides information regarding the owl box and raptor perch program.

RECOMMENDATION

Review and comment on the Parks Division presentation.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

There is none.

BACKGROUND

Owl box installation began in September 2016 as a partnership between the Parks Division and three local Boy Scout troops. Three individual Eagle Scout projects have provided the City with its current owl box and raptor perch infrastructure. In total there are 13 owl boxes and two raptor perches.

The first project combined owl box construction and installation. Three owl boxes were constructed and installed according to plans provided by the Parks Division. The boxes were installed along the trail that runs parallel to Martin Avenue. In September 2017, ten boxes were constructed for the second Eagle Scout project. Of the ten boxes, four were installed by Parks staff along the Marilyn Murphy Kane trail. In the spring of 2018, Parks staff installed the remaining 6 boxes in the oak woodland at Bernal Community Park. The final project was concluded in November 2018, whereby two raptor perches were installed at the oak woodland at Bernal Community Park and the Marilyn Murphy Kane trail.



Owl box installation at Marilyn
Murphy Kane Trail by Parks
staff



Current resident at the
oak woodland in
Bernal Community
Park



Red-tailed Hawk at the
Marilyn Murphy Kane
Trail

DISCUSSION

Owl boxes and raptor perches play a key role in Integrated Pest Management by providing nesting and perching sites for raptors. Key raptor species in California include: owls, hawks, eagles, condors, falcons, kites, and osprey. Raptors are key predators of pocket gophers, voles, moles, deer mice and house mice. The primary species of raptors benefiting from our boxes and perches include: barn owls, red-shouldered hawks, cooper's hawks, sharp-shinned hawks and eagles.

Currently there are nine of the owl boxes that are inhabited by nesting pairs. The Parks Division has confirmed this count by utilizing a game camera specifically designed for conducting owl box monitoring. Additionally, raptors such as red-tailed hawks have been spotted roosting on the raptor perch at the Marilyn Murphy Kane trail. As the predator population continues to grow, our reliance on traditional rodenticides and mechanical trapping techniques to control rodents will decrease. It is estimated that one barn owl will consume an average of 155 gophers per year.

By increasing opportunities for natural predation to occur, the owl box and raptor perch program helps the city realize three of its five IPM goals. Such goals include: minimizing pesticide use on city facilities, create awareness among City staff regarding alternative pest management techniques, and providing a means of educating all City departments to practice the most appropriate approach for managing pests on City facilities.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION

Any other action as determined by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Submitted by:

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