



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Sara L. Hensley, CPRP, Director, Austin Parks and Recreation
Victoria Li, Director, Watershed Protection Department
Greg Meszaros, Director, Austin Water Utility

S. L. Hensley
G. M.

DATE: June 3, 2010

SUBJECT: Invasive Plant Management Plan Resolution (CIUR #304)

On April 8, 2010 Council approved a resolution that addresses the expansion and negative economic, social and ecological impacts of invasive plant species on City of Austin public lands. An "invasive species" is defined as a species that is nonnative (or alien) to the ecosystem under consideration and whose introduction causes or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm or harm to human health. Invasive and/or undesirable aquatic, riparian and terrestrial species influence the productivity, value, and management of a broad range of land and water resources in the City of Austin. Therefore, the City Council directed the City Manager to develop an Invasive Species Management Plan for the control and/or eradication of undesirable aquatic and terrestrial plant species.

A cross-departmental team was organized to determine the proposed management plan scope and completion time frame, identify budgetary requirements and to estimate staff time needed for plan development. Six departments participated in framing the scope and preliminary recommendations for this plan. This memorandum highlights the staff proposal for development of a city wide Invasive Species Management Plan.

Current invasive plant removal projects being undertaken within city departments have been tallied. The four departments, Watershed Protection (WPD), Austin Water Utility (AWU), Parks and Recreation Department (PARD), and Austin Energy (AE), are actively involved in 21 projects across the city. Currently, WPD and AE are primarily focused on the removal of aquatic species, while PARD and AWU primary focus is mainly on controlling invasive woody species. The city's cost to date for invasive plant management is estimated to be approximately \$3,436,605. A breakdown of those costs is attached for your review.

Next Steps:

1. The scope of the Invasive Species Management Plan will be a city wide plan with an overarching approach to invasive plant management on public lands. Individual departments would be charged with developing site specific invasive management plans

as needed. The plan would possibly include 10 year goals, a proposed 3 year work plan, estimated costs for plan implementation, and potential funding sources. Significant public input would also be integral to the plan development. Below are the proposed plan components.

- a) Plan Purpose & Introduction
 - b) Existing City Programs
 - c) Goals
 - d) Invasive Vegetation Inventory & Mapping
 - e) Prevention
 - f) Early Detection and Rapid Response
 - g) Control and Management Priorities (BMPs)
 - h) Restoration
 - i) Research
 - j) Organizational Collaboration
 - k) Costs & Funding Sources
 - l) Education and Public Awareness
 - m) Volunteer Programs
 - n) References & Appendices
2. Continue to convene the Interdepartmental Stakeholder Group to achieve short term objectives that can currently be met with existing staff and resources. Identified objectives include creating a city invasive plant list, standardizing purchasing and contractual service agreements, developing protocol for invasive removal, removing invasives on all city construction and Capital Improvement Projects, prohibiting the installation of invasive plants on city property, instituting a city-wide early detection and rapid response protocol, inventorying and mapping invasives on city lands, developing an education and outreach campaign and other coordinated activities as determined. It is estimated that the group would need to meet one to two times per month for the first year and each department would contribute approximately 250-500 hours of staff time to this initiative. The final outcome of the group's meetings would be to foster cross departmental coordination and meet tangible goals as opposed to developing a fully comprehensive city invasive species management plan.
3. Staff will hire a consultant, who is a known subject matter expert in the field of invasive plant management and native plant restoration practices that can develop the plan in cooperation with the interdepartmental stakeholder group and public stakeholders. An outside consultant offers legitimate credibility with the public and would effectively

provide a fair and global perspective towards the plan that is not biased towards one department's interests over another. They would also have the ability to be more focused and efficient in crafting the plan than a city wide working group.

In addition, hiring a consultant would be more cost effective and less time consuming over the long term. Staff already has limited time available for this initiative and without dedicated staff working on the plan full time it could take three years of staff time totaling approximately 500 to 1,000 hours per department to develop a final product. The state of our public lands can not wait any longer for a more coordinated action plan as they are already severely infested with exotic, invasive plants and the longer the city takes to create a comprehensive management plan the more money and resources will be spent to eradicate existing and new populations. A consultant would quickly expedite the plan development process and it would ultimately cost the city less money than creating the plan internally.

It is estimated that it would take approximately one year or more for a consultant to create a plan and the cost of the plan would be between \$68,000 and \$100,000. At least 100 to 200 hours per department would be required to coordinate with the consultant during the development process. Additionally, a dedicated staff person would need to spearhead the coordination on at least a part time basis. Once the consultant provides the plan, implementation would be the next step. It is anticipated that the plan will recommend a yearly expenditure to implement invasive plant control for a minimum number of years.

4. The Watershed Protection Department has funds from a vegetative control budget that can be used to hire a consultant and has offered to seek ways to encumber this money during the FY2010 fiscal year. The goal is to issue an RFP for a consultant by July 6th with bid submittals due on July 30th. The bid responses will be reviewed by an interdepartmental panel for a contract award by August 15, 2010.

If there are any questions, please feel free to contact any one of us.

Cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manager
Sue Edwards, Assistant City Manager
Rudy Garza, Assistant City Manager