

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

NO. 03-337

DATE October 15, 2003

C.D. ALL

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: ADOPTION OF URBAN FOREST PROGRAM

L. Barth _____
J. Combs _____
A. Corrales _____
H. Fujita _____

J. Kolb _____
*B. Lukehart BSL
R. Reyes _____


General Manager

Approved _____

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board:

1. Adopt the Department of Recreation and Parks Tree Preservation Policy on file in the Board office, which regulates the protection of trees in four categories: Trees protected by L.A. City Ordinances, Heritage Trees, Special Value Trees, and all other Common Trees; and,
2. Approve the Urban Forest Program on file in the Board office, with it's three components: *Trees Care Manual, Tree Operation Manual, Tree Care and Maintenance Training* as a guide to promote healthy trees through daily operations, planning and decision-making, and to ultimately guarantee the sustainability of our urban forest.

SUMMARY:

The Department has developed the Urban Forest Program to raise the level of understanding of our natural ecosystems within the Los Angeles Basin and to elevate the regard and appreciation for our urban forest.

The purpose of the Urban Forest Program is to develop a single resource that will provide direction to Department staff and promote the sustainability of a healthy urban forest.

The Tree Care Manual, Tree Operations Manual, and a 2-½ hour PowerPoint presentation on Tree Care and Maintenance are part of the Program. These sections provide information regarding existing codes, technical regulations, standards, and specifications necessary to implement the Tree Preservation Policy and contain guidelines for the required and recommended care, removal, and replacement of regulated trees.

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The Tree Preservation Policy regulates protection of trees in four categories: Trees Protected by L.A. City Ordinances, Heritage Trees, Special Value Trees, and all other Common Trees. The purpose of the Policy is to establish a regulatory tool to provide orderly protection of specified trees, protect their values, and avoid significant negative impacts to the ecosystems.

In the category of Trees Protected by L.A. City Ordinances, all coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), or any other tree of the oak genus indigenous to California measuring eight inches or more in diameter, four and half feet above the ground level at the base of the tree are protected. The Board of Public Works must issue a permit before any alterations to protected trees are made that could cause them to be damaged, relocated, or removed.

Heritage Trees are individual trees of any size or species that are specifically designated as heritage because of their historical, commemorative, or horticultural significance. The list of designated Heritage Trees remains open for new designations and provides useful information to DRP staff regarding the importance of their actions while planning activities near heritage trees.

Special Value Trees were separately categorized for protection because of decreasing numbers and their fragility in an urban setting. Particularly noteworthy here is a fact that....

- California native trees provide habitat for state or federally protected animal species.
- California native trees that are located in the Pacific Flyway are important to thousands of migratory birds each spring and fall during migration season.
- Native trees provide a foundation for a healthy ecosystem

Common Park Trees category describes mature exotic trees that have great value beyond the shade they provide to park users. They are a scenic resource to surrounding neighborhoods and their removal or disfigurement by extreme pruning for construction clearance or other reasons diminishes the value of the urban forest and often provokes public protest. Some trees have not been designated under a protected group of trees but still provide aesthetic, sentimental, economical, and environmental value.

The large number of trees in our parks has a significant cooling effect on the urban environment in Los Angeles, where tree canopy represents only 25% of the land. Every tree in our City parks is recognized as a valuable asset and must be protected.

Prepared by Teresa Prosewicz, Principal Forester