



TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Peter Imhof, Planning and Environmental Review Director

CONTACT: Anne Wells, Advance Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Ellwood Mesa / Sperling Preserve Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan Adoption

RECOMMENDATION:

- A. Adopt Resolution No. 19-__ entitled "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Goleta Adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan; Case No. 13-085" (Attachment 1); and
- B. Adopt Resolution No. 19-__ entitled "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Goleta Adopting the Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan" (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND:

Each fall, monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) in the western United States migrate to the coast of California from various locations throughout western North America. The butterflies arrive at the coast in mid-September and as winter approaches, they form permanent roosts, often called overwintering or wintering colonies. The butterflies remain until about mid-February, when they generally disperse inland.

The eucalyptus groves at the City's Ellwood Mesa / Sperling Preserve Open Space (Ellwood Mesa Open Space) were planted by horticulturist Ellwood Cooper in the late 1800s and are called the Ellwood Complex. These groves support overwintering monarchs on a regular basis. Five monarch butterfly overwintering sites occur in the Ellwood Mesa Open Space: Ellwood North, Ellwood West, Ellwood Main, Sandpiper, and Ocean Meadows aggregation sites (Figure 3 in Exhibit 1 of Attachment 1). The Ellwood Main site historically harbored many overwintering butterflies, consisting of hundreds of thousands of individuals in some years.

Ellwood Mesa Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan

The Ellwood Main butterfly aggregation site is a highly treasured community asset, which played an important role in the City's purchase of the Ellwood Mesa Open Space. The Open Space Element of the Goleta General Plan / Coastal Land Use Plan (General Plan) reflects how much the Goleta community values the resource and includes policies devoted to the protection of monarch butterfly habitat areas (Attachment 4). The Ellwood-Devereux Coast Open Space and Habitat Management Plan, adopted by the City in 2004, similarly calls for the protection of butterfly habitat and recommends that the City prepare a Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan (MBHMP) (Attachment 5).

In response to this policy direction, the City initiated the MBHMP process in 2011. Since initiation, the City has conducted annual field surveys and completed extensive public outreach, with the release of an administrative review draft MBHMP in July 2018. City Council and public input was received and a revised draft MBHMP was released in January 2019.

Draft MBHMP Public Outreach

After the release of the administrative draft MBHMP in July 2018, staff hosted a stakeholder meeting to review the plan and receive input. Stakeholder feedback was used to inform a public workshop hosted at City Hall on August 16, 2018 and a presentation before the Public Tree Advisory Commission on August 22, 2018.

Comments and suggestions generally related to modifying the administrative draft MBHMP to include more citations and an executive summary, expanding fire protection actions with more detail and specificity, expanding the signage program and related sign information / contact detail, and clarifying other details and adding specificity wherever possible. Some comments were received in support for native plant habitat restoration as opposed to eucalyptus restoration while many others emphasized the need for eucalyptus plantings to support the butterflies. Comments and suggestions were consolidated by staff to inform the revised draft MBHMP. The California Coastal Conservancy will be considering the adopted MBHMP (and Final MND) at a meeting in May 2019 to release a State budget allocation of \$3.9 million to the City for MBHMP implementation. The funds will expire on June 30 if the agreement is not in place.

2018 Implementation Plan (Emergency Permit Tree Replacement)

The MBHMP is an overarching, long-term conservation strategy, setting forth the broad objectives, desired outcomes, and management policies for the Ellwood Mesa monarch butterfly habitat. Periodic Implementation Plans (IPs) are required as part of the MBHMP (Policy 1-4) to identify and describe short-term actions needed to further the goals and objectives of the MBHMP. As required under the MBHMP, IPs require City Council authorization before activity commences.

On September 22, 2017, the City submitted a request to the California Coastal Commission (CCC) for an emergency permit to remove 29 dead and dying trees posing a risk to Ellwood Mesa trail users and to close specific trails with trail closure signs. In

response to the City's request, the CCC issued an emergency permit (No. G-4-17-0048), dated September 26, 2017, subject to special conditions including required tree replacement plans, a trail re-opening strategy, and habitat management strategies.

A 2018 IP was released with the administrative draft MBHMP in July 2018 to address the CCC emergency permit special conditions. The CCC is currently reviewing the 2018 IP and collaborating with City staff and consultant team on addressing habitat restoration approaches. As part of this collaborative effort, CCC staff are considering the issuance of a programmatic Coastal Development Permit (CDP) for the MBHMP and a separate CDP for a possible pilot program to test implementation approaches. These permitting efforts and future IPs will follow City Council adoption of the MBHMP and will be the subject of future staff reports for Council's consideration.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of the MBHMP is to maintain and improve habitat conditions to ensure long-term viability of the monarch butterfly population, consistent with General Plan policy direction. The coverage area for the MBHMP (Coverage Area) encompasses approximately 75 acres of eucalyptus habitat supporting monarch butterfly seasonal aggregation areas in the 137-acre Ellwood Mesa Open Space. The MBHMP outlines a programmatic approach and methods for the City to manage and improve the Ellwood Mesa eucalyptus woodland for the benefit of the monarch butterfly, other wildlife, and the public's use and enjoyment.

The MBHMP details 22 programs intended to organize and integrate the diverse aspects of habitat management into an overall plan that can be implemented in a clear and concise manner. Each program identifies individual goals, policies, and actions to establish a well-organized and efficient process leading to a management strategy for the sustainability of monarch habitat at Ellwood Mesa. The programs are followed by implementation priorities, schedules, needs, and contacts for those responsible for the implementation.

The 22 programs are organized into four categories: Administrative Programs; Natural Resources Management Programs; Outreach Programs; and Monitoring, Research, and Adaptive Management Programs and are summarized below:

- The nine Administrative Programs are designed to assist the City with and inform the many MBHMP stakeholders of the details regarding implementation of the MBHMP.
- The seven Natural Resources Management Programs articulate the goals, policies, and actions necessary to maintain and improve the many important natural resources, including biological diversity and ecosystem functions associated with the Ellwood Mesa eucalyptus groves and the monarch butterfly aggregation sites they support.
- The three Outreach Programs are designed to provide information for visitors, educators, and students to help develop a broad appreciation for natural resources and local natural heritage, with a focus on monarch butterflies.

- The three Monitoring, Research, and Adaptive Management Programs provide a mechanism for assessing environmental conditions and conducting original studies to help understand the ecology of monarch butterflies, particularly at Ellwood Mesa. Information obtained from these programs and other sources can be used to adapt the MBHMP in response to additional information or changing conditions.

The MBHMP sets a long-term management vision for the Ellwood Mesa Open Space butterfly groves, using annual monitoring to track habitat health. Monitoring results are intended to provide the City and the community-at-large with the facts necessary to implement proactive, rather than reactive management practices.

For example, the MBHMP Monitoring Program goals, policies, and actions would require annual data collection on biological variables such as butterfly numbers by site, pests, tree health, understory health, and presence of invasive plants within the Ellwood Mesa Open Space eucalyptus canopy. If monitoring indicates an escalation of adverse conditions, for example, the corresponding MBHMP policies provides direction and action to remedy the impact.

The MBHMP itself does not offer the remedy for every possible management scenario, but instead requires additional studies or plans for action (Implementation Plans or IPs) to correct a negative condition. The IP addresses the unique circumstance present in the habitat at a point in time, as guided by the policies in the MBHMP.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The City reviewed environmental impacts of the MBHMP pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000 et seq., “CEQA”), the regulations promulgated thereunder (14 Cal. Code of Regulations §§ 15000 et seq., the “CEQA Guidelines”), and the City’s Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual. A Draft Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) (State Clearinghouse #2019011059) was prepared and made available for public review from January 25, 2019 through February 25, 2019.

During this period nine comment letters were received, including eight letters from the public and one letter from the California Coastal Commission. The comments addressed topics including the importance of monarch habitat restoration, the need for eucalyptus trees to be planted and maintained, the need for fire safety and vegetation management, the need to abate risks to adjacent property from hazard trees, and the importance of including natives in habitat restoration, among others. Responses to all comments are included in Appendix C to the Final IS-MND. In addition, because some comments related to the MBHMP itself, rather than the environmental analysis in the IS-MND, the comment matrix in Appendix B to the IS-MND was updated to include responses to these comments.

The Final MND finds that the MBHMP would not have a significant adverse effect on the environment with the implementation of the mitigation measures to address impacts to aesthetics, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, and noise. Standard mitigation measures were applied to

address potential effects of the MBHMP, including dust suppression during covered activities; species surveys and biological monitoring; archaeological, paleontological, and Native American monitoring during ground disturbance; erosion control and chemical application control measures to protect water quality; and noise management requirements. Additionally, Mitigation Measures require monitoring of replacement trees planted in the Coverage Area for at least five years to ensure successful establishment.

With the inclusion of the proposed mitigation measures in the Final MND, impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level. The Final MND is included as Exhibit 1 of Attachment 1.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

On March 1, 2019, notice for this hearing was published in the Independent and mailed to property owners within 1,000 feet and interested persons. The agenda was posted at Goleta City Hall and on the City's website at least 72 hours prior to the City Council meeting.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION:

The Ellwood Mesa is the heart of Goleta for many people in the community and symbolizes the commitment the City has made to protect and restore critical coastal open space. The monarch butterfly holds a special place in the hearts of many Goleta residents, and is part of the City's identity, as it appears on our logo and was the inspiration for the name of our community newsletter, *The Monarch Press*.

The presence of dead and dying trees on Ellwood Mesa threatens the future of our overwintering monarch butterflies. New management strategies in the form of the MBHMP are needed to guide recovery efforts. The MBHMP outlines a programmatic approach and methods for the City to manage and improve the Ellwood Mesa eucalyptus forest for the benefit of the monarch butterfly, other wildlife, and the public's use and enjoyment.

Adoption of the MBHMP will enable the City to fulfill a major commitment to the natural resources of Ellwood Mesa and its residents, and to all those committed to the conservation of monarch butterflies. From an implementation perspective, the City is in the fortunate position of having fiscal support from the State of California. With the help of the State's \$3.9 million budget allocation to the City for butterfly habitat restoration on Ellwood Mesa, implementation of the MBHMP can be realized sooner rather than later.

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the Final IS-MND, as outlined in City Council Resolution No. 19-___, entitled, "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Goleta Approving the City of Goleta Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan Mitigated Negative Declaration; Case No. 13-085" (Attachment 1), and approve the MBHMP, as outlined in City Council Resolution No. 19-___, entitled "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Goleta Approving the City of Goleta Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan" (Attachment 2).

FISCAL IMPACTS:

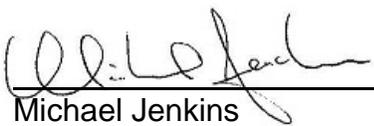
The approved FY 2018 and 2019 Budget includes \$135,000 of General Fund monies in the Advance Planning Professional Services account (101-5-4300-505) for the preparation of a MBHMP and associated environmental document. The estimated cost for 5 years of implementation of the MBHMP is \$3,898,450 and 23,082 staff hours. Funding for implementation of the MBHMP will be drawn from a variety of sources, which may include grants, donations, mitigation fees, and the City's General Fund.

On June 29, 2018, the Governor approved the California state budget for the 2018–2019 Fiscal Year. The budget includes a provision allocating \$3,900,000 to the City for management and restoration of the monarch butterfly habitat on Ellwood Mesa. The state funds will be used only for actions to restore, enhance, manage, and monitor butterfly habitats on Ellwood Mesa. In the near term, this funding will be instrumental in getting the MBHMP's programs operational and in addressing some of the imminent habitat issues that presently face the grove.

ALTERNATIVES:

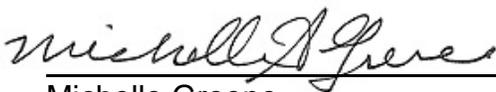
The Council could elect to adopt the MBHMP with revisions or decide not to adopt it. Declining to adopt the MBHMP would jeopardize the State's \$3.9 million budget allocation to the City. In order for the City to receive the funding allocation, the City must adopt a MBHMP and execute a funding agreement by June 30, 2019.

Legal Review By:



Michael Jenkins
City Attorney

Approved By:



Michelle Greene
City Manager

Attachments

- 1 Resolution No. 19-__ entitled "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Goleta Adopting the Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Mitigation Monitoring Program for the Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan; Case No. 13-085"
- 2 Resolution No. 19-__ entitled "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Goleta Adopting the Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan"
- 3 Guiding Policies from the Goleta General Plan / Coastal Land Use Plan
- 4 Guiding Policies from the Ellwood-Devereux Coast Open Space and Habitat Management Plan