



## Santa Cruz Bird Club

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March 15, 2017

### **Re: Draft Parks Master Plan**

Dear Santa Cruz City Council, Commissioners, Director of Parks Mauro Garcia and Project Coordinator Noah Downing:

Thank you for your efforts in revising the Park Master Plan. The Santa Cruz Bird Club (SCBC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on some crucial environmental factors pertaining to the document.

The SCBC has been active in supporting the study, record keeping, data collecting and conservation efforts of local birds in the Santa Cruz Community for over sixty years. We request that the city include the club as a stakeholder in the process of updating the Santa Cruz Park Master Plan (PMP).

We recommend adding the following three components to the draft master plan document:

- 1). **An environmental chapter with the environmental goals and recommendations for wildlife, habitat and natural resources which are already outlined in the current City 2030 General Master Plan.**
- 2). **Add additional language to the Park Master Plan, which would *require that a biological study be conducted and time frames introduced if active recreation is introduced to open space. Require follow up studies by appropriate agencies, to ensure that any approved, active recreation is not having harmful environmental and human safety impacts.***
- 3). **Hire additional rangers to enforce mountain bike speeding behavior and problems from off trail activities which cause harm to the natural environment.**

The SCBC has the following comments regarding the draft master plan document:

#### **4.1 Draft Goals, Policies, &Actions:**

**Item #3. "Convert grass to synthetic turf and ensure sports fields have adequate drainage ...."**

**SCBC:** Recent evidence has shown that the use of artificial turf has some negative environmental implications that were not previously known. This goal may be in conflict with the General Plan and may need more careful consideration and study before being considered under “goals, policies and action.”

--Artificial turf shrinks useable habitat and food sources for living creatures including birds, bats, rodents and insects and reptiles.

- Natural turf serves as a feeding ground for flycatching birds such as Western Blue Birds, Swallows, Black Phoebes, Say's Phoebes, ground feeding birds, Dark-eyed Juncos, Spotted Towhee, California Towhee, Robins, sparrows, Killdeer, Owls and various Hawks.

- Artificial turf may have less water savings than predicted due to need for regular and intensive water treatments for cleaning artificial surface.

-Artificial turf has a limited life expectancy and will create extensive dump waste requirements approximately every 10 years.

-Artificial turfs need to be cleaned with harsh chemical agents for the prevention of MRSA and bacterial concerns. This may be harmful to surrounding wildlife and humans.

#### **Item 4.1: Goal V. Safety**

***“Increase visibility into parks by removing low vegetation and taller mounds.”***

**SCBC:** The low lying vegetation supports a diverse population of birds from feeding to nesting. The continual removal and sometimes unsupervised removal can have devastating impacts.

We urge the city to incorporate a system of checks and balances with local resources such as the bird club, Native Plant Society, Biologist and geologists to assess impacts to wildlife and soil prior to removal or cutting.

#### **4.2 Draft Asset Inventory & Specific Facility Recommendations**

##### **DeLaveaga Park-Delaveaga Disc Golf course**

##### **Under Recommendations:**

**SCBC:** Disc golf courses are known to be detrimental to both old and young trees, and shrubs and causes extensive soil erosion. A tree replacement and protection program for this sport should be considered. A formal partnership and funding program with the disc golf community should be added to PMP.

Poison oak is an essential food and habitat for many native bird species.

The elimination of this essential plant at De Laveaga Park may lead to limited wildlife diversity and elimination of some bird species in this region.

Consider a non-chemical poison oak abatement program and a minimal removal program. Maintain an active plant inventory showing where poison oak has been removed and provide evidence of healthy segments of poison oak habitat.

#### **4.2:Draft asset inventory**

**SCBC:** Bethany Curve is an important stopping point for migrating birds. We encourage expanding native habitat in this park.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Lisa Sheridan  
President, Santa Cruz Bird Club