



Agenda Report

22-356

Agenda Date: 3/22/2022

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Action on the Integrated Goose Management Plan (IGMP) for Central Park

COUNCIL PILLARS

Enhance Community Sports, Recreational and Arts Assets; Deliver and Enhance High Quality Efficient Services and Infrastructure; Promote Sustainability and Environmental Protection

BACKGROUND

The City of Santa Clara Central Park includes the Central Park Lake, surrounded by planted areas and grass meadows that attract waterfowl. Over the past decade, the Canada Geese population has increased significantly, producing large amounts of fecal waste that exceed the daily grounds maintenance program's capacity to keep pathways, fields, meadows, and recreational amenities clean and sanitary for public use. Each Canada Goose produces a pound of feces per day, resulting in over 175 pounds of accumulating waste per day deposited into the lake and surrounds. In addition, the Central Park Canada Goose population has become non-migratory. The daily foraging, preening and nesting behaviors create added negative impacts year-round to the park.

The management activities of the Canada Geese and Mallards are regulated by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and subsequent revisions, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). While the City has used various approved methods to deter geese, including movable predator land decoys (coyote mannequins); floating water decoys (alligator mannequins), geese panic sounds, grass treatments, and physical barriers, additional steps are needed to address the community complaints and concerns, as well as to educate and inform policy and management practices that include the community's understanding and support.

To that end, the City has retained the services of avian biologist, Daniel Edelstein, who has specific Bay Area experience and has developed an Integrated Goose Management Plan (IGMP) (Attachment 1). The IGMP provides research, information and effective strategies to protect wildlife and reduce the increasingly negative and unsustainable impacts of the Canada Goose and Mallard on the Central Park lake water quality, as well as plants, pathways, recreational amenities, ballfields and visitors' park use.

DISCUSSION

The IGMP proposes the four "management actions" below for City consideration and implementation.

- **Management Action 1:** Conduct community outreach and provide information to Santa Clara residents and media to educate the general public about the current issues at Central Park and the necessary geese and mallard management actions that may be taken. Implementation of Management Action 1 will help the public understand the problems, issues, and options available

to the City to address the Canada Goose and Mallard problem. This includes:

- a) Preparation of information about the current population and effects caused by the Canada Geese at Central Park, and outreach to the local Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society (SCVAS) chapter and the Bay Area chapter of the Sierra Club to engage in discussion of the issues. This may include a request for support from their respective Boards of Directors to communicate with their membership and public, and/or request a formal letter of support for the IGMP.
 - b) Enrollment of the groups' support for various effective management actions through “public scoping and public comment meetings” to ensure ongoing community understanding and support for the City’s methodology, plans and actions discussed in the IGMP.
 - c) Work with the City Communications Office to develop and distribute information to the local media, and informational articles and/or videos to help the general public understand the issues and proposed management actions.
- **Management Action 2:** Develop interpretive signs and materials to educate Central Park visitors. This includes:
 - a) Development of text content and graphic elements for installation along Central park pathways. The purpose is to inform visitors about the Canada Geese, Mallards and other wildlife species, the issues caused by their overpopulation and behaviors, the management strategies available to address the problems, and how and why management plans are implemented.
 - b) Develop other materials and programs, such as educational brochures, onsite meetings, nature walk/bird outings, and virtual components (COVID19 protocol compliant as necessary).
- **Management Action 3:** Effectively address the negative effects of the growing population of Canada Geese and Mallards at Central Park. This includes implementation of four permitted management practices in conformance with Federal, State and local laws, regulatory oversight and permits. In priority order, these are:
 - a) Harassment Plan. The development, review and approval of a plan for ongoing, daily, humane harassment and disturbance of Canada Goose and Mallard foraging behavior and presence in Central Park. This may include permit(s) or professional contract(s) for supervised use of dogs.
 - b) Depredation Plan & Permits. Documentation and applications to obtain separate Depredation Order(s) and Permit(s) from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). This includes letter(s) of proof describing the impact of each specie, City authorization, and communication with USFWS.
 - c) Habitat Alteration Plan. Design and installation of effective goose and duck barriers around the perimeter of the Central Park lake, and other effective changes.
 - d) Goose Repellant Plan. This includes a written plan for the effective use of goose repellant

products, along with any pros, cons, and public preferences.

- **Management Action 4:** Adoption of the written IGMP to ensure that careful, precise non-lethal management actions are implemented to manage the onsite Canada Goose and Mallard overpopulations, while protecting other migratory bird species such as the non-resident, non-breeding "winter" season look-alike "Canada goose" subspecies, Small Cackling Goose and Aleutian Cackling Goose. The Plan also contains "success criteria" and milestones that allow City personnel (including technicians/biologists) to monitor conditions, implementation, and success of the management actions.

Parks & Recreation Commission Review, Public Input and Recommendation.

On November 17, 2020, the Parks & Recreation Commission received a presentation by avian biologist, Daniel Edelstein (Attachment 2). The presentation gave the community, Commissioners, and staff the background research, information and a proposed management strategies' framework. The Commission recommended approval of the Integrated Goose Management Plan and its management strategies. The consultant followed up with a census of the goose and mallard populations, impacts and met with staff to develop the strategies into a comprehensive document for the Commission's second review. It should be noted that the City of Santa Clara Central Park IGMP does not recommend use of lasers or methods that have secondary safety issues, in contrast to what an adjacent City used in their efforts to address a bird problem.

On February 15, 2022, the Parks & Recreation Commission reviewed, for a second time, the IGMP (Attachment 1) and the continued negative impact the increased goose and mallard populations are having on Central Park, the lake, and its patrons. The Commission recommended that Council approve the IGMP and begin immediate implementation of its management strategies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project is categorically exempt from CEQA under the "Class 7" (14 CCR 15307) exemption per the CEQA Guidelines because it is an action taken by the City to assure the maintenance, restoration, or enhancement of a natural resource where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment. On the federal level, the action complies with federal regulator code under a valid U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) permit secured by avian biologist Daniel Edelstein and updated annually by the avian biologist. This USFWS code regulation is 50 CFR 21.52, pertaining to the allowance of non-lethal overpopulation management actions (including addling of Canada Goose eggs) for this year-round bird species present at the Central Park Lake.

FISCAL IMPACT

Park grounds maintenance activities for Central Park are included in the Parks & Recreation Department's annual Operating Budget. The slight increase in cost for implementation of an IGMP is anticipated to be offset by the reduction in maintenance and cleaning expenditures associated with the lake and pathways within the Department's Operating Budget; therefore, there will be no additional General Fund impacts.

COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the City Manager's Office, City Attorney's Office and Finance Department.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City's website and in the City Clerk's Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk's Office at (408) 615-2220, e-mail clerk@santaclaraca.gov.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend that Council approve the Santa Clara Central Park Integrated Goose Management Plan and its implementation.

Reviewed by: James Teixeira, Director of Parks & Recreation

Approved by: Cynthia Bojorquez, Assistant City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Santa Clara Central Park Integrated Goose Management Plan
2. Presentation to the Parks & Recreation Commission 11-17-2020