

FY 2023-2024 BUDGET QUESTION
Response to Request for Information

DEPARTMENT(S): Watershed Protection Department

CBQ NO.: 131

REQUESTED BY: Vela

DATE REQUESTED: 07/25/2023

DATE POSTED: 08/03/2023

REQUEST: Is there any funding set aside in Watershed for our creek cleanup for Mearns Meadow and others? (p. 329)

RESPONSE:

The Watershed Protection Department (WPD) maintains a budget for vegetation maintenance and creek cleanups Citywide. Our portfolio of resources includes internal and external partners: inhouse crews, outside vegetation management contractors and providers, and public-private partnerships.

WPD's total budget for maintaining our open waterways, open lands, and stormwater control features is approximately \$14M for FY24. This budget will fund crews dedicated for land management and vegetation maintenance, ponds maintenance, and open waterways maintenance; contracts for vegetation maintenance and creek cleanups; and partnerships with external agencies such as American Youthworks, The Other Ones Foundation, Trail Conservancy, and Keep Austin Beautiful. The FY24 budget specifically includes an increase of \$1M to \$3.6M for contractual work relating to vegetation maintenance and creek cleanups as well as a new six-person dedicated crew for responding to service requests.

WPD actively manages vegetation on over 90 miles of open waterways to reduce flooding and erosion and protect water quality. We manage creekside vegetation at 260 locations along more than 45 creeks and tributaries. Vegetation maintenance varies depending on the creek or channel. Most creeks managed by WPD are mowed three to six times a year to a height of 6-12 inches. Before mowing takes place, the creek is cleared of trash and debris. At some creeks, mowing does not occur. Instead, woody plants and ragweed are manually cleared from the stream channel three to five times yearly. WPD does not set aside resources for specific areas within the City.

The Mearns Meadow area in the Little Walnut Creek watershed is part of WPD's annual and ongoing Citywide Vegetation Control Program (VCP), so contractors visit there three to six times a year to perform maintenance. WPD also sends teams to inspect and create work orders responding to various queries, including 311 calls and other resident requests. We will also perform pre- and post-storm inspections after significant high-intensity storm events in known hotspots such as Mearns Meadows.

Between January 1 and August 1, 2023, WPD has been to Mearns Meadows and surrounding areas 20 times. While the typical annual preventive maintenance from our VCP three to six times per year, we have addressed this area 12 times in 2023.