



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Victoria J. Li, P.E., Director
Watershed Protection Department

DATE: July 29, 2013

SUBJECT: Daylighting the Eliza Stream, Endangered Species Habitat Restoration

The largest known population of the endangered Barton Springs Salamander (*Eurycea sosorum*), resides in Eliza Spring, a spring fed concrete amphitheater adjacent to Barton Springs Pool. Since the late 1920s, the former “spring run” that flowed into Barton Creek in its natural state has been confined to a 24” concrete and corrugated metal pipe that discharges into the bypass under the north deck of Barton Springs Pool.

The City has a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) and holds an associated Endangered Species Act Section 10(a)1B permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The HCP and permit allow the City to maintain Barton Springs Pool for public recreation. The existing USFWS permit will expire in October 2013 and we expect to receive a new 20-year permit in September. To allow for “lawful take” (harm or harassment) of endangered salamanders due to the recreation use and maintenance of Barton Springs Pool, the HCP includes conservation measures that the City has committed to implement that will minimize and mitigate those activities that may result in a “take”. Habitat restoration, specifically the “daylighting” of the Eliza Spring discharge and the restoration of endangered species habitat, is identified as a conservation measure that the City has committed to implement.

Re-creation of the “spring run” from Eliza Springs is a first step in restoration of habitat for the existing salamander population at Eliza Springs and is the only conservation measure in the new HCP that will create additional protected habitat for the Barton Spring salamander. This project will re-create a free flowing “spring run” and will also improve habitat within Eliza Spring by providing better control of water flow. Importantly, the project will improve the potential for long-term recovery of the Barton Springs Salamander.

It has been determined that the construction of the Eliza Springs daylighting project will require a full site plan and a site-specific amendment to the SOS ordinance. Even though the work will not involve construction of buildings, roadways, or any impervious cover,

and is habitat restoration work, the amendment is still required because the construction work itself will be within the Barton Springs Zone. It has been the City's practice for projects done within Barton Springs Pool grounds to obtain a SOS amendment (e.g., Barton Springs Pool Bypass Repair Project and the Barton Springs Pool Grounds Improvements), and this project is no exception.

Watershed Protection will out-source the engineering design of the spring run, or stream, with the actual construction likely to be performed with in-house personnel. Funding is available in the department's approved Capital Improvement Program. At present we are negotiating a task order with one of our rotation list contractors (HDR Engineering) and we expect that work to commence by the first of September. We anticipate completing design and permitting, including Council consideration of a SOS amendment by the summer of 2014 with construction occurring after the 2014 swim season. We do not anticipate a need to close Barton Springs Pool during the construction, but areas of the grounds and the north sidewalk will need to be closed to the public.

Importantly, there has been and will continue to be multiple opportunities for public input throughout the project design and permitting phase. The joint sub-committee of the Environmental Board and the Parks Board has been briefed. Going forward, Watershed Protection will hold monthly public meetings to provide updates to the public and receive public input during the design process. These meetings will be in addition to Board/Commission action on the required SOS amendment, prior to its being brought to Council for consideration. Finally, up-to-date information about the project will be maintained on the City's website and provided in periodic email updates to stakeholders.

If you have any questions about this important project, please feel free to contact me at (512) 974-9195 or contact our project manager, Liza Colucci, at (512) 974-2669.

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
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