




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

THROUGH: Stephanie Hayden Howard, LMSW, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Kimberly A. McNeeley, M.Ed., CPRP, Director
Austin Parks and Recreation Department 

DATE: February 21, 2024

SUBJECT: **Parks and Recreation Department Land Management Plan Update FY24 Q1**

This memo serves as an update on the Austin Parks and Recreation Department’s (PAR) implementation of the Recommended Land Management Strategies and Climate Vulnerability Analysis, also referred to as the PAR land management plan. This Plan, approved by Council in September 2023, guides PAR’s efforts to actively restore natural areas, mitigate wildfire risk, and provide vital ecosystem services to the Austin area.

The PAR Land Management Program (Program) is the Department work group primarily responsible for, among other tasks, implementing the PAR land management plan. During the first quarter of fiscal year 2024, the Program focused on implementing restoration and fuel mitigation treatments, establishing new contracts for vegetation management, hiring new full-time employees created through the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, and applying for grant funding.

Land Management Program

The Program is comprised of four positions and a total general fund budget of \$852,814.

Personnel		\$499,923
Environmental Conservation Program Manager	Manages PAR Land Management Program	Existing
Environmental Program Coordinator	Community outreach and manages programs including Wildlife Austin	Existing
Environmental Program Coordinator	Leads ecological restoration and fuel mitigation operations	Allocated FY2024/position posted
Environmental Scientist	Leads environmental monitoring and research, GIS analysis, and implements land management activities	Allocated FY2024/position posted

Contracts/Commodities	Expenses such as contracted restoration work, equipment, tools, safety equipment, fencing, signage, professional development, fuel, utilities, toll charges, vehicle repairs and maintenance, office supplies, and computer equipment.	\$387,891
Expense Refund		\$35,000
TOTAL		852,814

Staff from PARD’s Forestry and Park Ranger Programs were temporarily assigned to assist with planning and oversight of contracted fuel mitigation projects while new full-time staff are recruited, hired, and onboarded.

First Quarter Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Accomplishments

621 acres of prescribed burns have been planned and permitted for completion this year. In November 2023, the Program hosted wildland fire training for Austin Civilian Conservation Corps members and additional staff from PARD, [The Nature Conservancy](#), [Austin Water](#), and the [UT Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#). These and other organizations assist with prescribed burns on parkland through cooperative agreements.

The Program also completed 44 acres of other ecological restoration treatments. Up to 300 acres are planned this year.

The Austin Fire Department also makes funding available to PARD’s fuel mitigation projects on parkland. 736 linear feet of shaded fuel break maintenance and 4,191 linear feet of shaded fuel break creation are in progress. Approximately 14,000 linear feet of each are planned for this fiscal year.

PARD and Austin Water submitted a joint application for \$2.5M in funding from the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Response to our application is expected between April and July 2024. Any award of grant funding would require formal acceptance by City Council.

A Natural Areas Vegetation Management master agreement is pending solicitation with the Financial Services Department. This master agreement will enable more effective spending and implementation of restoration and fuel mitigation activities on parkland in the coming years.

The work completed so far is just the start of activities recommended in the land management plan. You can find additional updates provided previously related to this topic at: www.austintexas.gov/lmp. PARD intends to continue the phased implementation of ecological restoration and fuel mitigation on approximately 10,300 acres of parkland. PARD will provide another update in May 2024.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6717.

cc: Jesús Garza, Interim City Manager
Jodi Jay, M.B.A., CPRP, Assistant Director
Liana Kallivoka, PhD, PE, LEED Fellow, Assistant Director
Lucas Massie, M.Ed., CPRP, Assistant Director
Suzanne Piper, DBA, Chief Administrative Officer