

TREE COMMITTEE AGENDA REPORT

SUBJECT: LAGUNA LAKE DOG PARK REVITALIZATION PROJECT

FILE NUMBER: TREE-0344-2024
PROJECT ADDRESS: 504 Madonna Rd.
APPLICANT: City of San Luis Obispo

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RECOMMENDATION

Review the Laguna Lake Dog Park Revitalization Planting Plan and provide recommendations for species selections based on the information provided in the plans and characteristics specific to the site.



Figure 1: Proposed location of the Laguna Lake Dog Park

1.0 COMMITTEE PURVIEW

The Tree Committee's role is to review the planting plan and the site at Laguna Lake Park and provide recommendations for species selections based on the information provided in the plans and characteristics specific to the site.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

City of San Luis Obispo Public Works Department (Applicant) has been approved to remove two trees as part of the Laguna Lake Dog Park Revitalization Project and replant a minimum of 6 trees. The applicant has developed a draft landscape plan that shows the planting of 38 new trees (see Attachment A, pages 25 and 26).

2.1 Existing Conditions

The Laguna Lake Open Space is one of the harsher microclimates in the city limits. While generally cooler, it is also windier and drier. The soil transitions from a rocky outcrop to Cropley clay in the flatter sections. The estimated frost-free period is 300 days, which is about 15 days less than more protected areas closer to the city's center.

The Cropley soil series consists of very deep, moderate to well-draining soils that formed in alluvium from mixed rock sources. Cropley soils are on alluvial fans, floodplains and in small basins.

Throughout the open space, eucalyptus and pine species appear to be performing well. Eucalyptus are strong performers in dryer and harsher conditions. Oak tree species are performing moderately well, and Camphor and cypress tree species are either stunted or showing signs of stress. One *Grevillea robusta* (Silk Oak) tree, located south of the dog park towards the lake, is performing fairly well.

2.2 Planting Plan

The project will be required to plant six (6) trees as a minimum compensatory replanting for the removal of two (2) trees as a part of the project. As currently proposed, the applicant has drafted a planting plan that includes a variety of trees, shrubs, groundcovers, and other plants. The proposed 38 trees that are included in this planting plan are predominantly native to California. As a part of the "shrub" planting schedule, nine (9) 15-gallon toyons are to be planted. 18 manzanitas are functioning as ground cover in addition to spreading rush and wild rye. Extent or existence of irrigation is still to be determined.

Species for review.

The tree planting plan includes 5 different species: (8) *Alnus Rhombifolia* (White Alder), (5) *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress), (2) *Platanus racemosa* (California sycamore), (10) *Quercus agrifolia* (Coast live oak) and (13) *Chitalpa tashkentensis*. Species of highest focus are the alder, cypress and chitalpa. **Staff is seeking Tree Committee direction on whether these are the right tree species for this location and based on the existing planting plan palette.**

- The alder is a riparian tree and has high water needs. While the water table is likely high due to the presence of Laguna Lake, it is uncertain that the tree will benefit from it due to the dog park's distance from the lake.
- Monterey cypress is relatively drought tolerant but only in cooler coastal conditions where they can benefit from the marine layer. In dryer inland areas, cypress perform better with more water. Existing cypress at Laguna Lake are not robust.

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- Chitalpa is supposed to be a tough drought tolerant tree, but it is also relatively small. There are concerns about its performance in the cooler and harsher environment at Laguna Lake. There is fair specimen that is currently flowering located in the Mission Plaza seating area in between the San Luis Creek bridge and Chorro Street. This location is wind-insulated, warmer and likely has more access to water than the site at Laguna Lake Park.

Species substitutions to consider.

- Eucalyptus at Laguna Lake are performing well. New species to consider: *Angophora costata* (Sydney Red Gum), *Corymbia ficifolia* (Red Flowering Gum), *Eucalyptus cinerea* (Argyle Apple), *Eucalyptus spathulata* (Swamp Mallet), *Eucalyptus erythrocorys* (Red-Cap Gum), *Eucalyptus torquata* (Coral Gum)
- Due to the predominantly California native planting pallet, consider substituting or adding different oak species (*oblongifolia*, *engelmannii*, *hypoleucoides*, *rugosa*, *tomentella*)
- Other California natives for consideration: *Lyonothamnus floribundus* (Catalina Ironwood)
- *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Paperbark/ Cajeput) is a low-water, drought tolerant tree from Australia and underutilized in the City.
- Other species recommendations welcome. [SelectTree](#) is a useful resource when comparing species.

3.0 ACTIONS

- 3.1 Provide direction to staff supporting the existing planting plan.
- 3.2 Provide direction to staff on other tree species that should be considered as a part of the planting plan.

4.0 ATTACHMENTS

A - Laguna Lake Dog Park Site Plan