

## **FAQs Re: Future of Del Rio Woods Recreation District**

### **What is the Purpose of the Advisory Survey regarding Del Rio Woods?**

All five Del Rio Woods Recreation District (“District”) Board Members have resigned from the Board and have requested that responsibility for the District be transferred to Sonoma County Regional Parks (“SCRP”). The survey is designed to collect feedback from property owners and registered voters on the options that have been identified relative to how the District could be managed in the future. The results of the survey will be used to develop recommendations to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors (“BOS”) as to whether they should appoint a new Board of Directors for the Del Rio Woods District, or initiate a process to transfer responsibility to SCRCP.

### **Why did all the Board of Directors resign?**

The District was formed to enable the installation of a seasonal dam on the Russian River to create a swimming facility for District residents. After multiple attempts and extensive research, the Board decided reluctantly that regulations had changed such that it was essentially impossible to get the necessary approvals to install the seasonal dam. Given that reality, the Board turned its attention to removing the old dam spillway from the river, as it presented an ongoing liability risk for the District. With the help of a grant from California State Parks the spillway was removed, thereby returning the river to its natural condition. Considering that the initial reason for creating the District was to install the seasonal dam, and the lack of available volunteers to serve on the Board, the Directors decided it was best to dissolve the District. Because the State Parks grant of \$165,463 for removal of the spillway required the Park to remain open to the public, the Board approached the County about dissolving the District and transferring operation of the Beach and Park to SCRCP.

Note: closing public access to the beach/river would require reimbursement of the State Parks grant.

### **What is the status of the District at this time?**

As a result of the resignation of the Board, the District was left with no one who had the authority to operate the District and its Park and Beach facilities. With the summer season fast approaching, on April 28, 2015 the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors took action to appoint itself as the Interim Board of Directors for the District. It then appointed SCRCP Director Caryl Hart as Interim Manager of the District. This action has provided the necessary authority and resources to manage Del Rio Beach and Park for the upcoming summer season.

### **What is the purpose of the “interim” status for the District Board of Directors and Manager?**

The advantage of creating an interim Board of Directors and Interim Manager for the District is that it provides for operation of the Park and Beach while it works with District voters, property owners, and other interested parties on the options for operating those facilities in the future. Should community feedback validate the past District Board of Directors’ wish to dissolve the

## **FAQs Re: Future of Del Rio Woods Recreation District**

District, the interim status allows the six to nine months necessary for LAFCO to process the application for dissolution.

### **Has it been decided that the District will be dissolved?**

No. That is one option, but no decision has been made to start the dissolution process.

### **What options have been identified for operating the park and beach areas?**

1. Recruit and appoint new Board Members from within the District to continue the operation of Del Rio Woods Recreation and Park District.
2. Dissolve the District and move the funding and responsibilities for operating the Park to SCRCP.
3. Dissolve the District, sell the property, dispose of the assets and repay the State Parks Grant.

### **What are the property tax implications if the District is dissolved?**

Currently the District receives about \$60,000 annually from property tax revenues which, with parking lot entry fee revenues, is used to provide seasonal services to operate Del Rio Beach. If operational duties are transferred to SCRCP, it would be SCRCP's intention to request that those funds continue to be allocated to a separate fund to be used for the operation of Del Rio Woods Park. If the District is dissolved and the assets disposed of, the \$60,000 would roll into the County General Fund. Property tax payers would see no change in the amount of their taxes under either scenario.

### **What is the District's current financial position?**

Revenue from the annual property tax assessment yields about \$60,000 a year for the operation of the District. Additional operating revenue is available from the parking fees. Current fund balance is \$200,000. Currently the property is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Park staff estimate that the cost of the required access improvements to bring the Park into compliance is \$115,000.

### **Can the Beach/Park property be sold?**

Although we have not obtained a property title report, it appears that the property could be sold. However, a condition of a past \$165,000 California State Parks Grant requires that if the property is sold within the first 20 years of the grant, the District would have to reimburse the State for an amount equal to the grant or sale of the property, whichever is greater. It is unclear at this time as to what level of public access reduction would be allowed (short of selling the property) before triggering the State grant reimbursement language.

**Would SCRP operate the Park and Beach in the same manner as the District has in the past?**

**Del Rio Woods Recreation District Services**

Del Rio Woods Park District has provided lifeguards and an onsite parking attendant during the summer season (Memorial Day through Labor Day), as well as facility maintenance, trash removal, and vegetation management as needed throughout the year. A parking fee of \$5 was collected during the summer months. The parking lot has remained open year round since the dam structure was removed during the summer of 2014.

**SCRP Proposed Services**

Del Rio Woods Russian River Access will be open daily from dusk to dawn for public access, including walking access to the Russian River, swimming, hand launching of canoes and boats, picnicking and wildlife viewing. Temporary closures may be required if hazardous conditions occur onsite or during river flood events. An automated pay station has been installed to collect the \$7 day use parking fee consistent with other River Access Parks operated by the County. Anyone with a Sonoma County Regional Parks membership (annual pass) would be allowed to park free of charge. SCRP recognizes that there are unique challenges created by narrow roads, lack of parking, and crowds on the beach. SCRP would commit to liaising closely with the local community and to responding to their concerns regarding traffic and parking, and unruly or illegal activities on the beach.

This River Access will be included in the summer Russian River Patrol Program, with SCRP Rangers and Lifeguards providing bilingual water safety information 2-4 days per week, and lifejacket loaners for visitors utilizing the park. Park staff will respond as needed to routine and emergency issues onsite, and regular facility maintenance and vegetation management will occur throughout the year. The parking lot gates will typically be closed at night during the summer months and may remain open during the remainder of the year. Vandalism will be repaired and graffiti will be removed in a timely manner. Information and regulatory signage will be updated and installed per SCRP's standards. A portable restroom will be located in the parking area during the summer months and sanitized regularly. Trash receptacles will be placed onsite at various locations and litter will be removed in a timely manner. Volunteer stewardship projects will occur 2-4 times per year for invasive vegetation removal and other projects that will benefit the river ecosystem and park visitors' enjoyment of the facility.

**What if the community wanted to continue to have lifeguard services as in the past?**

Given the cost and requirements for SCRP to provide lifeguard services, there is insufficient funding available to cover these costs. If the provision of lifeguard services has been driven by liability exposure, SCRP believes that a non-guarded beach may be a better option, solely from the liability point of view.

**If someone was willing to consider an appointment to the District Board of Directors, what are duties and responsibilities should they expect to assume?**

## **FAQs Re: Future of Del Rio Woods Recreation District**

The Board is responsible for ensuring that District services are provided in such a way as to ensure safe operation with the funds available, while conforming to all requirements under County, State and Federal laws. This requires developing, approving and managing annual budgets; securing and managing staff resources; filing required reports; developing and approving District policies; coordinating with law enforcement agencies and responding to citizen complaints; and securing appropriate insurance coverage.

As articulated by former Del Rio Woods Recreation District Board President of 40 years, a Board member should consider the following duties:

- Attend regular meetings
- Deal with complaints, legitimate and not, from homeowners
- Hire lifeguards and take care of payroll
- Develop, pass and act on preliminary and final budgets
- Undertake the annual reporting of finances to the State Controller
- Address concerns about possible liability
- Be responsible for beach cleanup, keeping alcohol off the beach, keeping boom boxes turned down, etc.
- Responsibility for addressing unruly beach conduct
- Responsibility for garbage and portable toilets

### **Is the District Board of Directors elected?**

The five Board members for the Del Rio Woods Recreation District are appointed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors to a four year term. They are eligible for reappointment with no term limits. Should the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors appoint new members to the District Board, it is anticipated that their terms would be staggered to avoid having them expire at the same time.

### **How would someone apply for an appointment to the District Board of Directors?**

Under Public Resources Code § 5784 an individual must be a voter in the District in order to serve on the District Board. He or she may contact any member of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors or the Clerk of the Board to request an application form.

### **Does the County have a preferred option?**

At this point there is no identified preferred option for which County staff would advocate. The community has enjoyed access to the Russian River from Del Rio Woods Beach since 1941. It is SCRP's hope that the Park and Beach will continue to be available for the public's use for years to come, and staff would advocate against suggestions to reduce public access. The question of who will operate the Park and Beach in the future remains open. Park staff recognize that operation by other than the County may be seen as the better option.