

AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT

Tuesday, November 8, 2011

C. BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD

6. BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

d. Operations (09/15/11) (Severin)

Present

Board: Directors Carol Severin (Chair), Ayn Wieskamp, Doug Siden

Staff: John Escobar, Jeff Wilson, Davio Santos, Shelly Lewis, Eri Suzuki, Noah Dort, Mimi Waluch, Nancy Kaiser, Hillary Van Austen, Lane Powell, Denise Valentine, Michael Spady (Intern)

Guest: Robert Spencer (Local 2428)

I. Analysis of Group Camp Use – 2009-2010

Reservations Support Technician Eri Suzuki attended the meeting to present the recently released Reservations Department report, “Analysis of Group Camping.” Research and analysis for this report was conducted primarily by the District’s summer Interpretive & Recreation Services Intern, Elijah ben Izzy, who was unable to attend the meeting, having recently returned to Brown University for the fall semester.

The report focuses mainly on the two District parks with the highest levels of group camp use: Anthony Chabot and Del Valle, with two-thirds of all District campers utilizing these two parks. Anthony Chabot has 7 group sites: one developed and six primitive, with campsites ranging from 35 to 300-person capacity. The campsites serve 16,000-18-000 visitors annually, generating between \$26,000 and \$29,000 in revenue. Anthony Chabot campsites have varying capacities, with the mid-level being the developed campsite, Puma Pointe.

Del Valle has a total of seven group sites: two developed and five primitive sites, ranging from a 50-150-person capacity. Developed campsites are those within family campgrounds, and primitive campsites are located outside the developed area, accessible via hiking or boating, with fewer amenities and no showers. Del Valle attracts 14,000-16,000 campers annually, generating revenue of between \$23,000 and \$25,000. The two most popular group sites, Punta Vaca and Wild Turkey, are developed, and one (Wild Turkey) is ADA-accessible. In response to Director

Ayn Wieskamp's inquiry about the location of other ADA-accessible sites, AGM John Escobar indicated that the relatively new Point Pinole group campsite is ADA-accessible, and all campsites built or improved within the last few years are ADA-accessible.

At Del Valle, Punta Vaca and Wild Turkey are two developed sites that experience large usage spikes during the summer. Other factors determining campsite use include weather, economy, and group type, such as Boy Scouts. Unlike Anthony Chabot campgrounds, Del Valle offers the benefit of body contact water recreation.

The analysis provides a break-down of campsite use by city, with Berkeley and Oakland residents being lead users of District campsites. The report also analyses the typical size of groups reserving campsites. Most groups consist of less than 35 campers; consequently, there is some concern when these smaller groups reserve large group sites. For example, a group of 18 campers might reserve a 150-person campsite up to 194 days in advance of their reservation date, thereby preventing larger groups from reserving an appropriately sized campsite.

Staff proposes charging fees by site capacity to provide incentive for groups to choose a campsite that more closely represents their group size. Small groups that choose to use a larger site would be able to do so but would be required to pay the higher fee. This would allow staff to allocate groups to appropriately sized campsites, and at the same time raise sufficient revenue to maintain the larger group sites. An additional advantage to charging fees based on site size rather than group size, would be to discourage groups from requesting refunds when their group size has been reduced after having made a reservation.

The report indicates that the District experiences an average of 4,000-5,000 abandoned telephone calls per year according to Cisco database information. This includes people who hear the recorded message that campsites are full, but choose to stay on line to hear live person confirmation. High call wait times are typically experienced by the bride-to-be calling in early January to reserve the Brazil Room or out-of-District groups calling to reserve picnic sites. High call times during the summer peak include reservations for the Fourth of July, Memorial Day, and other major holidays, with Call Center agents spending approximately 45-55 minutes of each hour on the phone.

Director Wieskamp asked whether it might be possible for the District's reservations system to inform a caller how long their wait time might be. Staff noted that currently the District's system states how many people are ahead of a caller; however, there is no way to anticipate the length of each call. The District does offer callers an option to make (and cancel) reservations online.

2. Easy Loops Trails Brochure Development Update

Park Operations Chief Jeff Wilson and Trails Unit Manager Davio Santos reported that a staff group representing three District Divisions, along with District summer Intern Michael Spady, worked this summer on content and formatting a trail brochure that will highlight shorter walks for fun and fitness found within the Park District.

Unit Managers were asked to work with supervisors to come up with a definition for “Easy Loop.” Staff began with distances that were a half mile and three miles. Factors considered in determining Easy Loops included the amount of adequate parking, whether the loops were easy to walk, did they have gradients, could they be walked by those with disabilities? Staff also considered whether these Easy Loops could attract a new user base and promote interest for elements such as time and physical prowess

Staff worked with Google Maps with Street Views and filmed the Iron Horse Trail canal and Lafayette/Moraga Trail. Google Maps with Street Views uses a bicycle with a high definition 8-foot camera that shoots 360 degree views of trails traveled by the cyclist that can be uploaded to a computer and rotated to view all angles of the trail.

General notes are taken on the entire route. For example, if the trail is well signed except for one turn, the location of a giant oak would be noted and the user would be directed to turn left at the oak tree; the instruction would then be noted on the website. A GPS unit was used for grading data and graph creation that provides a clear image of what the route looks like in terms of elevation, distance and grade.

Director Wieskamp suggested adding the term, “beginning hikers” to the brochure to encourage new users who might feel intimidated by the loops.

3. Annual Review of Fee Schedule - 2012

Operations AGM John Escobar announced that Noah Dort, who has assumed the position of Acting Revenue Analyst for the past six months, was recently appointed to the Operations Division’s new Administrative Analyst II position.

A letter was distributed via email to the current District Concessionaires asking them to submit their fee change requests for 2012. This year we anticipate Concessionaires will generate revenue of \$1,158,200 and Public Use fees will amount to approximately \$5,444,000. With proposed fee changes, staff anticipates that Concessionaires revenue should increase by \$16,300, and Public Use fees will increase by \$66,700.

Concessionaire Fees

- Mud Puppy’s Tub n Scrub – An increase to the dog towel fee from \$1.00 to \$3.00 was proposed by the Concessionaire. This increase would generate an additional \$500.00 annually.
- Redwood Valley Railway – In June, an increase was approved in the cost of the single ticket rate from \$2.00 to \$3.00 and the 5-ticket family rate went from \$8.00 to \$12.00.
- Camp Arroyo – An increase was proposed from 1% to 2%, which is comparable to last year’s increase and should yield an additional \$11,304.00.

Public Use Fee Recommendations

- Special events permits – Kennedy Grove and Quarry Lakes are the only two sites that have electricity. It is recommended that the District establish a standard fee for electrical use.

- Group camping – primitive/developed site fee – A change in the price structure of camp sites will align the campsite to the number of people in the group site and enable the District to optimize maintenance costs. Pricing will be based on the capacity of the site rather than a per-person fee.
- Family sites will be grouped together as “pods” and booked separately to lower the noise level.
- Family campground parking fee – Each campsite has a number of parking spaces based on size of the site. An additional parking pass will increase from \$6.00 to \$8.00 for the overnight fee. Group campsite security deposit – Cleaning deposits will be set at the rate of the single night for that particular site, based on the capacity of that site.
- Ardenwood Historic Farm – Increase entrance fee by \$1.00 with a \$50,000 increase annually.
- Out of District camping fees – There should be one fee for group camp.
- Merry-Go-Round – It was proposed that the ticket price for the Merry-Go-Round, the District’s biggest asset, should match the Redwood Railway. The operator of the Merry-Go-Round was contacted, but did not respond to our rate schedule request change this year. Comparisons on cost and ride duration were made to 17-20 carousel locations in the area. Guidance from the committee is needed for a proposed increase from \$1.00 to \$3.00 per ride and from \$7.00 to \$16.00 for the 7-ride rate. The current operator’s contract expires in the spring of 2014, at which time staff will be issuing an RFP for the concession.

4. Public Comments

Director Doug Siden questioned why the number 7 was selected for the Merry-Go-Round ride packet. Staff will explore whether a different combination package will work.

5. Staff Comments

Revenue & Administration Manager Mimi Waluch, and Chief, Maintenance & Skilled Trades Anne Scheer, expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to work with AGM Escobar who is retiring from the District in early October. The Committee commended AGM Escobar on his successful eight-year tenure as AGM, Operations Division, and wished him well in retirement.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:06 p.m. The next Board Operations Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 20, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise Valentine
Secretary
Interpretive & Recreation Services

