



REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Grant Yates, City Manager

Prepared by: Nicole Dailey, Assistant to the City Manager

Date: March 12, 2019

Subject: Clean Up and Abatement Funding Authorization

Recommendation

adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA, AUTHORIZING ENTERING INTO A FUNDING AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD FOR AUTHORIZING AND DESIGNATING A REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE HOLY FIRE SEDIMENT/DEBRIS WASTE CHARACTERIZATION OF SEDIMENT PLUME IN LAKE ELSINORE

Background

The Holy Fire began on August 6, 2018 and reached full containment on September 13, 2018 with a total burned area of 23,025 acres (35.9 square miles). The fire left the City and surrounding areas prone to debris and mud flows during rainfall events for the next few years. Lake Elsinore is within the Holy Fire's burned watershed area, with McVicker, Leach and Dickey Canyons draining to the lake.

Since the Holy Fire, the City has received significant rainfall of varying intensities with more than 12 inches of rain in the City and more than 25 inches above the related canyons in the Holy Fire burn area. While Riverside County has prevented substantial sediment flows into Lake Elsinore by capturing and removing over 145,000 cubic yards of sediment from debris basins, this rainfall still led to significant sediment runoff into the lake carrying with it many chemicals, nutrient loads, toxins and heavy metals. As a result, a large sediment plume has been created on the northern part of Lake Elsinore.

Additionally, from December 20th to January 24th, Lake Elsinore experienced an unusual fish die-off resulting in the loss of nearly 150 tons of fish. The City's consultant, Wood, conducted various sampling events and toxicity testing to determine the cause of the fish die off. Results showed the cause was a Golden Algae bloom occurring in the lake, which has never been documented for Lake Elsinore. It is unclear whether the Holy Fire runoff contributed to this new type of algae bloom.

Discussion

To fully understand the impacts of the Holy Fire runoff to the lake and its long and short-term water quality, City staff in conjunction with the Regional Water Quality Control Board applied to the State Water Resources Control Board for Cleanup and Abatement funding for further analysis. The proposed project, Holy Fire Sediment/Debris Waste Characterization of Sediment Plume in Lake Elsinore, was subsequently approved for program funding.

The purpose of the project is to investigate the extent of, and conduct a waste characterization of, the growing sediment/debris plume that has formed in Lake Elsinore at the mouth of the Leach Canyon Channel along the northern side of Lake Elsinore, from the run off from the Holy Fire burn areas. The collected data will be used to evaluate if the debris/sediment material poses short and/or long-term public health risks to the community and to recreational uses of the lake including fishing. Further, the sediment flow will be studied to determine it has contributed to the recent fish die-off event and if removal of this sediment is required.

City staff hereby recommends the adoption of the proposed resolution giving approval for the City Manager, or designee, as agent to negotiate, execute and submit all documents including, but not limited to applications, agreements, payment requests and so on, which may be necessary for the completion of the project. With this approval, City staff will begin work on the Holy Fire Sediment/Debris Waste Characterization of Sediment Plume in Lake Elsinore project and it will be completed within 60 days of funding approval.

Fiscal Impact

The total project cost is estimated to be approximately \$41,770 covered fully through the funding approved by the Stater Water Resources Control Board.

Exhibits

A – Resolution Authorizing Entering into a Funding Agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board