



M E M O R A N D U M
PUBLIC WORKS AND FACILITIES
PARKS DIVISION
 County of Placer

TO: Board of Supervisors DATE: August 9, 2016
 FROM: Ken Grehm, Director of Public Works and Facilities
 By: Andy Fisher, Senior Planner
 SUBJECT: Parks / Hidden Falls Regional Park – Interim Parking Solutions Update

ACTION REQUESTED

Receive an update on interim parking solutions at Hidden Falls Regional Park, and provide staff direction on proposed next steps.

BACKGROUND

Since the grand opening of the 1,200-acre Hidden Falls Regional Park (Hidden Falls) in 2013, popularity has continued to grow and parking has become an issue. To help address increased parking demands, your Board approved a parking lot expansion project in March of 2015 which allowed for an overflow parking area for automobiles and an area for additional equestrian trailers.

As the popularity of Hidden Falls continued to grow, visitors began parking along sections of Mt. Vernon Road. Due to concerns from local residents as well as to maintain public safety, your Board approved an urgency Ordinance on April 5, 2016 which established parking restrictions along Mt. Vernon Road for a mile in either direction of Mears Drive. This effort has been very successful in discouraging parking along Mt. Vernon Road and maintaining traffic flows in the area.

Even with the parking lot expansion and Mt. Vernon Road restrictions, due to the current level of interest in recreation at Hidden Falls, the parking lot capacity is insufficient to accommodate the number of park visitors, and rangers turn away hundreds of vehicles on the weekends during the Spring and Fall peak usage times. The Parks Division continues to research different avenues to help alleviate the parking strain at the Mears Drive entrance to the park, and is looking into a variety of solutions. The proposed solutions are grouped from near term actions that have been implemented prior to the next peak usage season to actions that will require longer evaluation and implementation timelines. Staff is requesting Board direction on next steps relating to these potential parking improvement concepts.

Phase 1 – Near Term Solutions – Started or Completed

Item	Status	Date
Parking Lot Expansion	Completed	12/21/2015
No Parking areas designated on Mt. Vernon Road	Completed	4/13/16
Increased Parking Enforcement	Ongoing	Began 4/13/16
Updated Website	Completed	5/26/16
Changeable Message Boards during peak times	As needed	Began 5/27/16
Social Media - Twitter and GovDelivery Text Program	Ongoing	Began 6/20/16

Phase 2 – Mid-Term Potential Solutions – Beginning Fall 2016

Idea	Benefits	Issues
Peak Period Reservation System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could reduce number of people turned away from Mears Drive entrance by requiring reservation of parking spaces during peak periods (Spring/Fall holidays, weekends) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for services with online reservation company • Potential User Fee for reservation company service (estimated at \$5-10 per reservation) • Parking enforcement mechanics
Parking Lot Webcam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential patrons may view parking lot status online, in real-time • Could communicate notice of weather-related park closure • Deterrent for parking lot theft and nuisance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominal estimated costs • One-time \$5,800 • Ongoing service charges, \$150/month • Potential vandalism of equipment
Reverse current entrance circulation pattern to the Park and change to a one-way flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedites parking and turnaround by rangers during overflow conditions • Patrons would not have to cross Park user traffic to leave the Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor cost to add some pavement, install signage, paint directional arrows on the pavement, and move entrance boulder
Shuttle from the Placer County Government Center to the Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could help alleviate crowded parking conditions at Mears 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ridership difficult to predict • Costly (exceeds \$1,500/day for contract-type service, with County recovering less than one-third via ridership) • Seasonal service and unpredictable usage deters private vendors • Logistics, including potential for riders left behind at Park
Pay to Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help alleviate crowded parking conditions at the Mears Drive entrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board's desire to offer a free visitor experience • Challenging to determine rate (perhaps \$10/vehicle, with \$100 for a season pass) • Costly program (collect fees, administer and enforcement) • May be less effective than a reservation-based system • Would likely require a manned kiosk at entrance • Would require additional enforcement
Expand Cell Phone Coverage in Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could allow for more effective loading/unloading/carpooling • Could allow visitor to communicate late-return to parking lot in Shuttle Scenario 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to interest cellular carriers, due to rural nature/limited demand, and resultant low return on investment

Phase 3 – Long-Term Potential Solutions – Beginning 2018

Idea	Benefits	Issues
Limited use of Garden Bar Road entrance (through reservation system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently entitled under the Hidden Falls Use Permit • Would ease congestion at the Mears entrance • Allow limited group activities (i.e. cross-country, scouting, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry and fencing improvements required • Garden Bar Road is narrow with curves • Reservation system could facilitate and limit use, forthcoming capacity study • Potential neighbor impacts • Cost of new parking and access improvements
Additional Parking Locations (County)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New parking locations adjacent to Hidden Falls, or to the North • Reduce vehicle trips on Mears Drive, and alleviate crowded parking conditions • Spread impact of visitors, now concentrated at Mears Drive entrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of new parking lot and access improvements • Potential road impacts • Potential neighbor impacts • Potential increased user impacts to new areas of the Park • Potential additional enforcement
Additional Parking Locations (Private)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbors abutting Hidden Falls may apply for private parking lots • Potential public/private partnerships • Reduce vehicle trips on Mears Drive, and alleviate crowded parking conditions • Spread impact of visitors, now concentrated at Mears Drive entrance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permit process • Potential impacts to nearby roads • Potential impacts to neighbors • Potential increased user impacts to new areas of the Park
Expand Existing Mears Drive Parking Lot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topography limits ability to easily develop more parking • Cost / benefit for few more parking spots • Increased parking at Mears Drive further concentrates use and could affect natural features

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Staff is seeking input on specific aspects of the Hidden Falls Regional Park Parking Solutions planning process to allow for continued refinement of the scope and description of future improvements. As such, this action is exempt under California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15306, "Information Collection".

FISCAL IMPACT

The solutions listed above would each result in fiscal impacts to various degrees. Depending on the direction from the Board, the Parks Division would return to your Board with a funding recommendation as needed.

