



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

April 03, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

PREPARER: Brigitte Price, Administrative Specialist

DATE: March 27, 2024

TITLE: **Approve the Arcata Corporation Yard Fence Replacement and Trail Enhancement Plans.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council Approve the Arcata Corporation Yard Fence Replacement and Trail Enhancement Plans.

INTRODUCTION:

The City of Arcata Corporation Yard houses important infrastructure and equipment for operations of the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant, as well as the City's streets and fleets division. The security of the Corporation Yard is critical to City operations and plans have been developed to replace the existing fence with a new, more secure fence around the property. In addition, public access and visitor experience at the Ox Pond Trail at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary will be enhanced.

BACKGROUND:

The Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary provides many benefits to the City including recreation opportunities, wildlife habitat and wastewater treatment. Thus, these multiple uses are collocated throughout the Marsh including along popular trails. The City installed a temporary fence and temporary wooden footbridge along the northern portion of the Arcata Marsh Ox Pond Trail in fall 2023. These temporary changes allowed for construction of a new electrical building as part of the Arcata Wastewater Treatment Facility Phase I project while ensuring pedestrians and cyclists can still access the Ox Pond Trail via a small wooden footbridge from the Humboldt Bay Trail North.

Security for the City's essential facilities and infrastructure is critical to ensure continuity of services for the community. In May 2022 a break in occurred at the Corporation Yard through the aging stretch of fence line that this project seeks to replace. That theft resulted in the loss of several portable generators, tools and an ATV which impacted City operations.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of the project is to enhance public access and visitor experience at the Ox Pond Trail at the Arcata Marsh, while providing for public safety by preventing public access to the Corporation Yard. The trail access and bridge crossing will be more clearly delineated by placement of the proposed fence along the Humboldt Bay Trail North. A small wooden footbridge will connect the Humboldt Bay Trail North to the Ox Pond Trail, enhancing user access with a wider section of trail and reducing user conflicts in the small public parking lot at the Corporation Yard Entrance.

The City installed a section of temporary fence in fall 2023 at the Corporation Yard, rerouting approximately 350' of the northern end of the Ox Pond Trail onto the parallel Humboldt Bay Trail North. A temporary 12' x 5' wooden footbridge was installed to allow trail users access from the Humboldt Bay Trail North onto the Ox Pond Trail. The City intends to make the location of the temporary fence and wooden footbridge permanent. The new Beta fence will also be used to replace the existing chain link fence around the Corporation Yard paralleling the Ox Pond Trail and the site of the previous unauthorized break in entry. The full length of the fence replacement will be 1,220'. The Beta fence is constructed of 8-foot black wire mesh panels that increase the security and visibility, offering better viewing opportunities along the trail for visitors. In addition, the panel-style design of the Beta fence will allow City staff to replace individual panels if they are vandalized rather than replacing entire sections. The Beta fence has been installed by Caltrans along sections of the Highway 101 right-of-way through Arcata and is found in other areas around Humboldt Bay.

As a City project the fence replacement around the Corporation Yard is exempt from design review per Land Use Code Sec. 9.10.040.G.3 but must apply the standards in the Land Use Code, considering any allowed deviations that might be authorized through the Minor Use Permit/Design Review process. In this case, the fence setback and height are allowed deviations that would be authorized through a minor use permit, so the project satisfies this requirement in the Land Use Code.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The City Council has a goal under Resident and Community Health to provide recreational opportunities for all residents. Improvements to the Ox Pond Trail will enable more Arcata community members to have access to the trails in the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. General Plan Policy PF-6 focuses on ensuring the Corporation Yard can be maintained within existing boundaries for which site security is essential.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

The Arcata Corporation Yard Fence Replacement and Trail Enhancement Project involves replacement of an existing structure and new construction of a small structure that will enhance the access and visitor experience at an existing trail for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as increase the security of the Corporation Yard property. Replacement of the corporation yard fence qualifies as Replacement of Existing Structures (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15302 (c)), which allows for the replacement of an existing facility on the same site with the same purpose. Construction of a new footbridge qualifies as New Construction of Small Structures (CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15303 (e)), which allows for construction of a new small structure. No conditions causing exceptions to these exemptions, including unusual circumstances, hazardous waste, or historic resources, are present.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding to implement the Arcata Corporation Yard Fence Replacement and Trail Enhancement Plans is included in the 2023-24 fiscal year budget under Account 662-60-67-57601.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Fence Relocation Site Map (PDF)
- B. Beta Fence Example Photo (PDF)
- C. Beta Fence Plans (PDF)