

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: August 19, 2013

Subject: Parks Unit proposed research: Underutilization of the Regional Parks System among Communities of Color

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference:

Staff Prepared/Presented: Raintry Salk, PhD, Senior Parks Researcher, (651)602-1669

Division/Department: Community Development, Parks and Natural Resources Unit

Proposed Action

No action—Information only.

Background

Surveys of regional park system visitors conducted by the Council in 2008 indicated that usage of our regional parks and trails was not representative of the overall demographic makeup of the region, specifically as it relates to communities of color. To address this inequity and inform the development of the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, a qualitative research project is proposed. The project will seek to identify potential mechanisms to address equity, specifically as it pertains to the existing underutilization of the Regional Parks System among distinct subpopulations within the region.

Although a large body of literature exists as it pertains to park usage among distinct ethnic and racial groups, no study has been conducted within the region. The purpose of the study is to explore non-utilization of regional parks and trails among distinct subpopulations within the region. Specifically, the study will seek to explore: a) reasons why individuals do not utilize the Regional Parks System, b) perceived barriers that prevent use of the system, c) preferred outdoor recreational activities and desired amenities, and d) recommendations and suggestions to enhance visitation. A qualitative approach will be utilized.

Rationale

This information will provide background into prior literature, study design and projected timeline.

Funding

This project is part of the 2013 Regional Parks and Natural Resources budget. Up to \$50,000 was originally budgeted for this research project to hire an outside consultant. Done internally, the proposed project is projected to cost approximately \$6,000.

Known Support / Opposition

The study will address the recommendation from the Metropolitan Council Regional Parks and Trails Survey 2008, "...To better understand the lower utilization rates of parks and trails by minority populations, research should be conducted on minority non-users to identify and address potential barriers to use." The work will also complement and assist the work of Park Implementing Agencies. There is no known opposition to the project.