

**CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION:**

03-587

AGENDA:

DECEMBER 8, 2003

SUBJECT:

APPLICATION FOR
RECREATION
ENHANCEMENT
AND PROTECTION
(REAP) GRANTS
FOR EDUCATION OF
TALL GRASS
PRAIRIE AND
SAVANNA LANDS

TYPE:

RESOLUTION
ORDINANCE
RECEIVE/FILE

SUBMITTED BY:

DONALD M. TRIPP
PARK AND
RECREATION
DIRECTOR

ITEM _____

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

SYNOPSIS —

Approve two Recreation Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant applications to the Conservation Education Board of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in the amounts of \$38,400 (Urban Prairie) and \$24,240 (Savanna Guide) to provide funding for education of residents of Des Moines in regard to tall grass prairie and savanna land conservation. This program will create a better understanding of the value of transitioning portions of parkland to a more natural state.

FISCAL IMPACT —

Total project cost for the Urban Prairie application is \$199,287. A 40.3 percent cost share is proposed from the City of Des Moines including a \$255 cash outlay and \$80,064 in-kind staff and office space value for a total commitment to the project of \$80,319. \$38,400 would be funded through the REAP grant. A coalition comprised of the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and Private Lands Department, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Polk County Conservation Board have participated in development of this project concept and have committed a total of \$73,568 in-kind service, equipment and materials. A \$7,000 request for Swartzell Grant matching funds will be submitted to the Fund's Public Project Grant Committee upon approval of the REAP grant application.

Total project cost for the Savanna Guide is \$36,990, with a 14.2 percent cost share proposed from the City of Des Moines including \$500 for office supplies and materials for signage at MacRae Park and \$4,750 in-kind staff and work space value for a total City commitment to the project of \$5,250. A volunteer will provide \$7,500 in-kind service with the REAP grant funding the remaining \$24,240.

RECOMMENDATION —

Approval.

BACKGROUND —

The REAP Act established the Conservation Education Program (CEP) Board as one of its key provisions. Annually, the CEP Board is responsible for allocating \$350,000 in grants for conservation

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education. The City is applying for these funds for the first time. These applications seek to provide maximum benefit from these monies while enhancing the community gardening and horticulture programs of the Parks and Recreation Department of the City of Des Moines.

These projects seek to educate the general public about the ecological importance and historical significance of the prairie and savanna remnants in the area through the establishment of prairie plantings in urban areas including City parks, schools and other properties within the City of Des Moines. It involves not only planting new and expanding existing prairie segments, but also training City horticulture staff in maintenance and care.

The Urban Prairie Project seeks also to provide a unique educational opportunity and experience for diverse and currently under-served populations including citizens with low incomes, minorities, the homeless and at-risk youth. It will create an ongoing partnership between the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, the Polk County Conservation Board, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Des Moines Public School system, Drake University, and the City of Des Moines.

The Savanna Guide Project involves the writing and printing of 5,000 copies of a 48-page full-color guide to savanna ecosystems. The two-part booklet will include a four-page pullout section, which will highlight the savanna remnants in Des Moines' MacRae Park. The project also includes savanna signage at MacRae Park.

Grant applications as outlined by REAP have been submitted to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources by its November 1 deadline along with a cover letter indicating the request for these funds will be withdrawn if the applications are not approved by the Des Moines City Council.

Education regarding the value and beauty of prairie and savanna lands and planting of additional public and private lands to urban prairie have a secondary cost-saving benefit to the City Parks and Recreation Department of removing additional acreage from routine mowing and maintenance expense, with understanding and endorsement by the general public.

This action is to approve the submittals. If grants are awarded, staff will return to Council with authorization of grant contracts.

