



Corporate Report

NO: R221

COUNCIL DATE: October 30, 2006

REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council DATE: October 24, 2006

FROM: General Manager, Engineering FILE: 4806-912
General Manager, Parks, Recreation & Culture

SUBJECT: 2006 Nature Matters Program Update

RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department and the Parks, Recreation, & Culture Department recommends that Council:

1. Receive this report for information; and
2. Authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report to Surrey's MLAs, MPs, the Ministry of Environment (MoE), and the Surrey School District.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to apprise Council of:

- The progress of the Nature Matters program since its inception early in 2006; and
- The intended direction of the Nature Matters program for the winter of 2006/2007.

BACKGROUND

In October 2005, Council adopted the *Nature Matters Program*, an enhanced environmental program for the City. The intention of this program is to cover an expanded range of environmental initiatives for the residents and businesses of Surrey through year-round initiatives.

The program is comprised of initiatives in the Engineering and Parks, Recreation & Culture Departments. Overall media and Corporate communication is being provided by

the Marketing and Communications Section of the Parks, Recreation & Culture Department.

DISCUSSION

The Nature Matters program objectives include the undertaking of a broad scope of environmental works and stewardship initiatives in an effective way. Each Department is coordinating specific environmental initiatives so as to avoid overlaps and duplications. The Nature Matters objectives focus on:

- Protecting and enhancing our natural environment;
- Educating and engaging residents about environmental issues in Surrey;
- Increasing youth involvement through stewardship activities;
- Encouraging volunteerism in the community or in one of the many programs that are a part of Nature Matters; and
- Working closely with the School District, teachers, and students to provide environmental education opportunities.

To achieve these objectives, staff has been actively developing new environmental programs or enhancing existing programs. The broad scope of the Nature Matters program has enabled staff to branch into new environmental initiatives and programs. A list of such initiatives is provided below, with more detailed project descriptions found in an attachment to this Corporate Report:

Under the Nature Matters Program the following individual programs or projects have been carried out:

- Salmon Homecoming (2006)
- Environmental Extravaganza (2006)
- Salmon Habitat Restoration Program (SHaRP 2006)
- Surrey's Natural Areas Partnership (SNAP 2006)
- Eco-Rangers
- Arbor Day
- Maple Leaf Day
- Birds on the Bay
- Agricultural Stewardship/Awareness Initiatives
- Releaf Program
- Waste Reduction Week
- Youth programs
- Integration with School Curricula and School Programs
- Sustainable Development Initiatives
- Environmental Website Update
- Friends of the Forest Volunteer Program
- Green Infrastructure & Private Property Initiatives
- Pollution Prevention Initiatives
- Water Conservation
- West Nile Virus Education

Both the Salmon Habitat and Restoration Program (ShaRP) and Surrey Natural Areas Partnership (SNAP) programs have grown in terms of students employed, community awareness, and community engagement after the typical summer season was completed. Students are coming back some weekends to help with community events such as plantings, shoreline cleanups, and community education initiatives.

The inclusion of a marketing plan for the Nature Matters program has been successful in having the Nature Matters message displayed on bus shelters, in local papers and throughout Surrey at events. New public information materials, such as brochures (attached in the Appendix) have also been developed. As time goes by it is expected that the press and the public will relate Nature Matters with the City of Surrey and the City's commitment to preserving and protecting our environment.

SUMMARY

Initiatives under the Nature Matters program have had a very positive impact on the community and on Surrey's natural environments. Some specific examples of these positive results are included in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Highlights of Environmental Results

| | |
|---|--------|
| Number of young people employed through SHaRP & SNAP, etc. | 42 |
| Number of trees and shrubs and other plants installed. | 18,200 |
| Number of environmental community and school events attended or organized. | 586 |
| Number of community members participating in various Nature Matters programs. | 22,100 |
| Acres of creek banks/riparian areas stabilized and degraded sites restored. | 3 |
| Cubic metres of invasive plants, yard waste and refuse removed from parks and creeks. | 520 |

CONCLUSION

Since the inception of the new Nature Matters program, environmental initiatives have been developed and expanded to further the education opportunities and awareness of residents on a broad range of environmental topics. Programs to assist Surrey teachers deliver environmental messages in classrooms, development of closer ties to the agricultural community and their needs, and heightened coordination of joint projects with Community stream keepers groups have been occurring. Staff plan to continue highlighting environmental issues in Surrey that are relevant to the Surrey community promoting the fact that nature does matter, and the City is committed to its protection and preservation.

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VL/CAB/kd2/rdd
Attachment