



CITY OF CORONADO

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

October 15, 2024

{{section.number}}{{item.number}}

RESOLUTION TO EXTEND A LOCAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION DUE TO THE DISCOVERY OF CAULERPA PROLIFERA IN THE CORONADO CAYS

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt the Resolution to extend a local emergency declaration due to the discovery of *Caulerpa prolifera*.

BACKGROUND:

On September 21, 2023, an approximately 24 square meter patch of *Caulerpa prolifera* was discovered growing underneath and adjacent to boat docks along the eastern edge of Antigua Village within the Unified Port of San Diego's (Port) jurisdictional waters of the Coronado Cays during pre-construction underwater surveys associated with the Antigua Village Dock Replacement project. Surveys conducted subsequent to the initial discovery have revealed approximately 0.25-acres of additional *Caulerpa prolifera* infestations on the north side of Antigua Village and within City of Coronado jurisdictional waters.

Caulerpa prolifera can expand aggressively if left untreated and displace native habitats including the 1,900 acres of eelgrass habitat in South San Diego Bay. Any impacts to eelgrass could threaten numerous other species including 70 different fish species and 60-80 federally listed green sea turtles that rely on eelgrass as foraging and resting habitat.

The threat to sensitive marine habitats and species posed by *Caulerpa prolifera* prompted the City of Coronado and the Port to declare local emergencies in November 2023. The emergency declarations also satisfied conditions necessary to access state and federal grant funding to complete additional underwater surveys and initiate eradication efforts. Pursuant to state law, the City's local emergency declaration will expire on November 2, 2024 unless extended by the City Council.

ANALYSIS:

City staff has continued to work with partner agencies and stakeholders as part of the Southern California Caulerpa Action Team (SCCAT) to identify funding opportunities and to develop an eradication plan. Since the November 2023 City Council emergency declaration, a total of \$850,000 in grant funding has been secured, including a \$500,000 allocation from the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) Cleanup and Abatement Account and \$350,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Invasive Species Grant Program. While these grant awards are significant and will allow additional surveys and initiation of eradication efforts, it is anticipated that the total project cost will exceed \$1.2 million and could escalate if additional areas of infestation are identified.

Extending the local emergency declaration would allow the City and partner agencies to continue to pursue other sources of grant funding while also recognizing that the *Caulerpa* infestation in City waters remains a threat until it is successfully treated and eradicated.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

ALTERNATIVE:

The City Council may choose not to extend the emergency declaration.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT:

Categorically Exempt per California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines; Class 7, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of Natural Resources.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

No notice required.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution No. 2024-62

Submitted By: Community Development Department / Richard Grunow