

AGENDA DESCRIPTION:

Consideration and possible action to receive and file a status report on the implementation of the City's Coyote Management Plan

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

- (1) Receive and file a status report on the implementation of the City's Coyote Management Plan

FISCAL IMPACT: None

Amount Budgeted:	N/A
Additional Appropriation:	N/A
Account Number(s):	N/A

ORIGINATED BY: Rudy Monroy, Code Enforcement Officer *RM*

REVIEWED BY: Ara Mihranian, AICP, Director of Community Development *AM*

APPROVED BY: Doug Willmore, City Manager *DW*

ATTACHED SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- A. 2019 Coyote Activity Map and Data (Page A-1)

To view the City's Coyote Management Plan, Keep Me Wild brochure, and Home & Yard Checklist for Wildlife on the City's website, go to:
<http://www.rpvca.gov/1113/Coyote-Management-Plan>

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

Coyotes have been a part of the City since well before its development and incorporation. Within the South Bay, the City has been at the forefront in engaging its residents in educational campaigns about what to do when encountering coyotes and what measures to take to keep coyotes out of neighborhoods. In 2013, the City implemented the first Coyote Management Plan in the South Bay. In September 2018, the City updated the Coyote Management Plan to reflect best practices from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Watch Program and to coincide with the management plans of Palos Verdes Estates and Rolling Hills Estates. The City has also been on the forefront in disseminating public information and brochures on living with urban coyotes, as well as methods to deter coyotes from entering properties and for reporting coyote activities via the City's web-based platform. This report is intended

to provide basic facts about coyotes and to describe the implementation measures of the City's Coyote Management Plan since January 2019.

Coyote Facts

Basic facts about coyotes include:

- Coyotes are native to California and are found throughout the State and County.
- Coyotes can be a valuable species in wildlife areas, as they are natural predators of mice, rats, squirrels, gophers, feral cats and other small animals, thereby helping to control rodent populations.
- Coyotes are naturally curious and will watch you just out of curiosity.
- Coyotes are adaptable and can survive on whatever food is available. They are opportunistic feeders.
- Urban coyotes are not necessarily nocturnal and it is not unusual to see them during daylight hours.
- Coyotes have the ability to adjust their litter sizes based on the abundance of food and population density in their area. Coyotes will also repopulate their litter when reduced.

Coyote Management Plan

The Peninsula cities agree that education is a key component in coyote management. As previously reported, Rancho Palos Verdes was the first city to prepare and implement a Coyote Management Plan, followed by the cities of Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates. The City's 2013 plan was updated last year to be more relevant and consistent with those in the cities of Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates, as well as based on input received from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), which administers the Wildlife Watch Program. The updated plan is available on the City's website at <http://www.rpvca.gov/1113/Coyote-Management-Plan>. The goal of the Coyote Management Plan is to encourage and "support coexistence with urban coyotes using education, behavior modification and development of a tiered response to aggressive coyote behavior." The tiered response requires active participation on the part of the entire community, including residents, homeowners associations, volunteers and city personnel. This plan is based on research and best known practices, and includes a full spectrum of management tools. Basic principles that guide the plan are based on the following:

- Don't leave pet food outside.
- Don't leave small pets or children outside unattended.
- If you compost, use enclosed bins and never compost meat or fish scraps.
- Install motion-sensitive lighting around the house.
- Make sure your fences are 6 feet high with no gaps at ground level – coyotes are good diggers.
- Put bird feeders away at night to avoid attracting rodents and other coyote prey.
- Remove fallen fruit from the ground.

- Remove sources of water.
- Talk to your neighbors to make sure they're following the same procedures.
- Trim ground-level shrubbery to reduce hiding places.

The Management Plan (and Staff in its public outreach) recommends hazing as another deterrent method to move a coyote out of an area or discourage an undesirable behavior or activity because some coyotes have become too comfortable in the close proximity of people. Hazing, also known as “fear conditioning,” is the process that facilitates a change in behavior and is effective when a community responds consistently to negative encounters with coyotes. The more often an individual animal is hazed, the more effective hazing is in changing coyote behavior. To safely coexist, it's important to modify this behavior and attitude in resident-coyote populations. Habituated coyote behavior needs to be reshaped to deter coyotes from coming in contact with humans and pets.

Hazing should be conducted in a manner that allows the coyote to return to its normal habitat (i.e. canyons and open space areas). Hazing the animal in the direction of other houses and busy streets should be avoided. A variety of tools should be used in hazing as coyotes can easily become acclimated to individual items and sounds, as described below:

- Noisemaker: Voice, whistles, air horns, bells, “shaker” cans, pots, pie pans.
- Projectiles: sticks, small rocks, cans, tennis balls, rubber balls.
- Deterrents: hoses, spray bottles with vinegar, pepper spray, bear repellent, walking sticks.

A common concern with hazing involves potential danger to the hazer. A coyote's basic nature is very skittish and the nature of the species is what makes this technique successful. A normal, healthy coyote will not escalate a situation with an aggressive person. Hazing is NOT successful with every species of wild animal because different types of animals have different traits.

The Management Plan describes the following City-level tiered response to specific coyote actions or behaviors.

- Level 1 (coyotes are either heard or seen) - The City's response to the sighting is to provide informational material to educate the resident on typical coyote behavior.
- Level 2 (coyote encounters a person or pet) – The City's response to the encounter is to conduct yard audits to identify ways to deter coyote entry and to improve pet management.
- Level 3 (coyote enters yard or pet is injured or killed) – The City's response to the incident is to gather information and report it to the appropriate agencies, conduct a yard audit, develop a hazing team for the neighborhood, and implement the Wildlife Watch program.

- Level 4 (coyote shows teeth, back fur is raised, lunges towards a person, bites or injures a person) – The City’s response to the characteristics of an aggressive coyote is to initiate a trapping assessment and to coordinate with the Los Angeles County Department of Agricultural Commissioner/Weights and Measures (Agricultural Commissioner). Biting is reported to the CDFW.

Coyote-Related Community Services

The Agricultural Commissioner has contracts with the cities of Rancho Palos Verdes, Rolling Hills and Rolling Hills Estates for coyote-related community services. The City of Palos Verdes Estates contracts with a private company, Animal Pest Management. The City of Rolling Hills also contracts with Animal Pest Management for added services not provided by the county’s contract. It is important to note that the CDFW does not handle coyote complaints made by residents or jurisdictions, nor does the L.A. County Department of Animal Care and Control (Animal Control). CDFW refers calls back to the City or the Agricultural Commissioner, and Animal Control will only respond if the coyote appears sick or is dead.

In Rancho Palos Verdes, when residents have concerns about coyotes, they are asked to call the Code Enforcement Division. Code Enforcement Staff will assess the situation and determine if the problem is one that can be handled by the use of preventative measures, or if the situation needs to be escalated to the Agricultural Commissioner for further review. Many times, informing residents about what they can do to secure their yard to deter coyotes is all that is needed. However, in some instances, Staff may determine that a visit from the Agricultural Commissioner is warranted. In those cases, City Staff and an Agricultural Commissioner officer will conduct a yard audit to assess what can be done to deter coyote activity.

It should be noted that hours and services that the county has provided to the Peninsula for animal-related matters have drastically increased since 2017. There is now a full-time dedicated deputy from the Agricultural Commissioner who canvasses the Peninsula on Mondays through Thursdays, and occasionally on Fridays, between approximately 6 a.m. and 3 p.m. These increased hours have enabled City Staff to engage the County in scheduling the yard audits described in greater detail below.

Yard Audits

Since the beginning of the year, the City’s Code Enforcement Officers, and in some instances, in collaboration with the Agricultural Commissioner, have conducted yard audits in the following neighborhoods:

- Beechgate/Longhill
- Blackhorse/Silver Arrow
- Portuguese Bend

Yard audits involve working closely with numerous residents in a neighborhood by coordinating informative and educational outreach to identify potential coyote attractants, such as fallen fruit, overgrown brush, inadequate fencing and coyote scat. As part of the yard audit, residents are provided with a copy of the City's Coyote Management Plan, a Keep Me Wild brochure, and a Home & Yard Checklist for Wildlife. In some cases, through yard audits, the Agricultural Commissioner has identified signs of aggressive coyote behavior and have set up traps.

Coyote Trapping

The Agricultural Commissioner provides trapping services only when the City determines that an "aggressive" coyote exists. As it is well known that trapping and euthanizing coyotes is not as effective as other methods of hazing contact as discussed in the Management Plan, the City shall be the one to determine, based on field observations and assessing incidents, if a case needs to be brought to the County's attention or simply additional education is needed. If the County is contacted by the City because the City feels that a coyote may be "aggressive" and cause concern for public safety, the County will still conduct its own assessment to determine if trapping should occur. To date, traps have been set up in the Miraleste and Blackhorse/Silver Arrow neighborhoods, but no coyote has been trapped nor euthanized.

If residents are concerned with coyotes in their area, the City recommends following the guidelines in the Management Plan and other handout material in decreasing attractants and increasing pet safety in order to help shape coyote behavior to avoid human contact. A resident may contact the City's Code Enforcement Division with any questions or to report an aggressive coyote. As previously noted, the City's Code Enforcement Division is trained to conduct property assessments to assist property owners in minimizing coyote attractants.

According to state laws, coyotes are considered "non-game wildlife," therefore any residents can initiate, at their own expense, action to protect themselves and their property from coyote attacks, including trapping. No private individual is authorized to discharge a firearm within the City of Rancho Palos Verdes. Section 9.08.010 of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code states:

Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, it shall be unlawful within the boundaries of the city for any person to fire, discharge, shoot or operate or to assist or participate in firing, discharging, shooting or operating any gun, revolver, pistol, firearm, spring gun, air gun, sling, slingshot or device designed or intended to discharge or capable of discharging any dangerous missile or any cartridge, shell, ammunition or device containing any explosive substance designed or intended to be used in or fired from any gun, revolver, pistol or firearm.

Although residents have the ability to initiate, at their own expense, the trapping and removal of coyotes, a private trapper must be certified/licensed by the State of California.

Public Outreach

In addition to conducting yard audits, the City's Code Enforcement Officers have been both proactive and reactive in canvassing City neighborhoods to raise awareness about deterrent measures to keep coyotes out of neighborhoods and adjoining canyon areas. They spend an average of 15 hours a week meeting with residents in response to calls and posts on the City's website application to raise awareness. This includes conducting yard audits and providing residents with copies of the City's Coyote Management Plan and related informational brochures (i.e. a Keep Me Wild brochure, and a Home & Yard Checklist for Wildlife). Since January of this year, the City held a meeting with the Peninsula Rim Homeowners Association, and is planning a neighborhood meeting with the Mediterranean Homeowners Association later this summer.

The neighborhood meetings have led to conducting individual yard audits. More often than not, residents are not aware of the information and programs that the City has available to them, which is a sign that more outreach is needed and will occur over the next several months.

Participation in the Wildlife Watch Program

Wildlife Watch is a CDFW-administered program that is similar to a Neighborhood Watch program in that it enlists the participation of citizens to bring neighbors together and helps train them to recognize and distinguish wildlife sightings, wildlife threats to public safety, and natural versus unnatural wildlife behavior with an emphasis on coyotes. It also helps with the implementation of basic wildlife conflict prevention techniques, such as hazing. This program requires the participation of an entire neighborhood to keep coyotes out of neighborhoods. Since January, Staff has coordinated with two block captains in the following neighborhoods:

- Beechgate/Longhill Community
- Blackhorse/Silver Arrow Community

In collaboration with the block captains, Staff has been able to establish a single point-of-contact to address coyote-related issues and to serve as the conduit between Staff and the neighborhood. Overall, the Wildlife Watch program continues to be an extremely beneficial tool for residents to deter coyote activity.

Coyote Sighting Application and Dashboard

Last year, the City's Information Technology Staff launched a web-based coyote sighting application that the public can use on mobile and desktop devices (<http://cityofrpv.maps.arcgis.com/apps/GeoForm/index.html?appid=819077a4e67f4e5dbc0c79a3d4004760>). The application benefits all the Peninsula cities, and although its development was led by the City's Staff, it was a collaborative effort with the cities of

Rolling Hills Estates and Palos Verdes Estates, whose residents and Staff utilize this application as well.

The application provides information on coyote population and sighting trends. Residents report a coyote sighting and describe the coyote's behavior or incident on this application. The reported information is documented and forwarded to City Staff. Additionally, a map of the Peninsula is available on the website that identifies the location of the reported coyote and its activity.

In January 2019, the data gathered during 2018 was extracted and provided to each city. This is intended to depict coyote activity over the latter half of 2018 and to "refresh" the map for the 2019 reporting period. Attached to tonight's report is the first quarter of 2019 data and corresponding map for Rancho Palos Verdes (Attachment A). The information provided represents only about four months of reporting activity.

To improve the public's ability to review the data collected via the coyote sighting application, the City's Information Technology Staff have also created a dashboard to view real-time coyote sighting information. The data on the dashboard is displayed using charts, widgets, maps and other visual elements. The dashboard can be viewed on the City's website at <https://www.rpvca.gov/CoyoteSightingDashboard>.

CONCLUSION:

With the City's semi-rural topography, coyote sightings are not uncommon throughout Rancho Palos Verdes. Informing residents about typical coyote behavior and what can be done to deter coyotes from entering yards and neighborhoods is an important step in coyote management. Residents are encouraged to report coyote sightings and incidents using the City's tracking applications and to report aggressive coyote behavior to the City's Code Enforcement Division for further investigation.

ALTERNATIVES:

In addition to the Staff recommendation, the following alternative action is available for the City Council's consideration:

1. Direct Staff to develop additional measures to address the City's coyote issues for the City Council's future consideration

Coyote Sightings in Rancho Palos Verdes January 1, 2019 - May 20, 2019

Coyote Activity

- Coyote seen moving or resting in the area (39)
- Coyote following or approaching a person (1)
- Coyote entered a yard without pets (12)
- Coyote entered a yard with pets (7)
- Coyote entered a yard and injured a pet (2)
- Coyote entered a yard and killed a pet (1)
- Coyote showing aggressive behavior (i.e. showing teeth, lunging, nipping without contact) (1)
- Other (7)

🗺️ Rancho Palos Verdes

Total Sightings Reported: 70

