

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****April 7, 2026**

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SUBJECT: PROPOSED NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT POLICY

The purpose of this Informal Report is to provide an overview of a proposed policy to support and guide long-term stewardship and management of City of Fort Worth owned natural areas. The Natural Area Management Policy will be attached to a resolution planned for City Council adoption on April 28.

The City of Fort Worth owns more than 10,000 acres of unique natural areas or natural features across multiple departments. Historically, applications of management and maintenance methodologies have varied, some of which can unintentionally undermine ecosystem integrity and biodiversity and significantly reduce the benefits that ecosystem services can provide.

To address this inconsistency, City staff propose a unified, citywide natural area management policy that outlines common goals and strategies and serves as a framework rooted in best practices and lessons learned, ensuring consistent, resilient, and responsible stewardship of natural lands. The proposed policy aims to improve quality of life for residents by balancing environmental protection with safe and equitable public access. It emphasizes key priorities including ecosystem health, community safety, fiscal responsibility, and coordination across departments.

The policy can apply to all City-owned properties that are prioritized and designated for natural resource management, such as open spaces, wetlands, wooded areas, and other environmentally significant features. It does not apply to other public or private property, though it may serve as a helpful reference for those landowners.

A central component of the policy is the creation of an Integrated Resource Management Plan process. This process will include site assessments, defined service levels, land management plans, capital planning, and ongoing monitoring to ensure consistent, data-driven decision-making.

The policy provides that any land management implementation will be phased and dependent on available funding and staffing. The document is intended as a high-level guiding framework, with site-specific details to be developed through individual site management plans, operational manuals and maintenance standards. Affected City departments have reviewed and commented on the draft policy.

In summary, the policy aims to establish a strategy that protects natural resources, enhances resilience, and delivers long-term environmental, social, and economic benefits to the Fort Worth community.

For questions regarding this information, please contact Allison Docker, Green Space Initiatives Manager, at 817-392-2281 or allison.docker@fortworthtexas.gov.

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