

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR KATHRYN BARGER

FEBRUARY 3, 2026

SUPPORTING URGENCY TO REBUILD LA COUNTY PARKS FOLLOWING THE JANUARY 2025 WINDSTORM AND CRITICAL FIRE EVENTS

On January 28, 2025, the County of Los Angeles (County) Board of Supervisors approved a Board Motion by Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Lindsey P. Horvath to delegate authority to County departments to rapidly address the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events.

The County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation (LA County Parks) sustained over \$250 million in fire damage from the Eaton Fire and Hughes Fire. These catastrophic events caused widespread damage and destruction across the County and further action is necessary to mitigate the loss and damage to public services as a result of the emergency. The fires left behind burned landscapes, destabilized slopes, and destroyed or damaged structures and amenities essential to park safety, public health and community well-being.

Parks are vital public assets that support physical and mental health, provide safe gathering spaces, and serve as critical ecological buffers that protect neighborhoods in the Wildland Urban Interface. Rapid restoration is therefore essential to community stability and resilience.

Assisted by the authority of the January 28, 2025 Board Motion, LA County Parks has worked urgently to fund, restore, and reopen those parks which suffered only minimal damage, including Loma Alta Park and Altadena Triangle Park. However, several parks remain closed due to extensive damage, including Charles White Park, Charles S. Farnsworth Park, Altadena Golf Course, and Eaton Canyon Nature Center and Natural Area, as well as local trails. The Hughes Fire also caused extensive damage at Castaic Lake State Recreation Area – impacting the main boat launch ramp, road infrastructure, and kiosks – resulting in prolonged closures that have restricted public access to lake recreation and reduced revenue.

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MOTION

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To support Altadena's recovery from the Eaton Fire, it is critical to restore the natural spaces that unite and sustain community. Revitalizing parks and trails and replanting trees will help rebuild a resilient urban canopy—one that cools our neighborhoods, nurtures biodiversity, and creates welcoming places for people to gather, heal, and thrive.

Reconstruction of Charles White Park requires a whole park restoration with landscaping, sports courts, public art, community building, playgrounds and water play areas, exercise zones, and picnic areas. Reconstruction of Eaton Canyon will require ecological restoration, trails, outdoor spaces, landscaping, a new nature center, tree propagation, greenhouses, and irrigation. Reconstruction of Farnsworth Park will include a reflection garden, walking paths, trees and landscaping, restroom replacement, outdoor spaces, utilities and picnic areas. Restoration of the Altadena Crest Trail will include trail restoration and repair. Finally, the restoration of Castaic Lake would include campground renovation, paving, kiosks, tree planting, and picnic areas.

The LA County Parks Foundation (Foundation), a non-profit foundation dedicated to supporting the mission of LA County Parks, has played an instrumental role in the rapid recovery of Loma Alta Park, which was reopened in less than three months. The reopening of Loma Alta Park restored critical community access to recreational spaces, strengthened local resilience following the disaster, and provided a safe, revitalized environment for families and residents to reconnect and heal. The Foundation has demonstrated the capacity to accelerate implementation and meet strict deadlines. Loma Alta Park serves as an example of how LA County Parks can partner with the Foundation to expedite the restoration of parks and meet grantor requirements to invest quickly and reopen parks to the community. The Foundation's ability to secure donations and funding and timely deliver recovery and reconstruction projects will fast track reopening the damaged parks and amenities.

The Foundation and LA County Parks have collaborated to secure an unprecedented \$60 Million in philanthropic and government funding to support the restoration of fire damaged parks. Of the \$60 million, \$26.7 million comes from the State of California and \$9.9 million is from recently committed funds from public agencies such as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy. The Foundation and LA County Parks continue to collaborate with public and private partners to seek additional funding to support park recovery and reconstruction.

In order to leverage the philanthropic and grant funds, the proposed restoration projects must be expedited and implemented to meet strict grant deadlines. The Foundation has offered to act as both a fundraiser and offered to directly undertake the repair and restoration work. Therefore, a donation and partnership agreement between LA County Parks and the Foundation would enable efficient and timely deployment of resources for continued recovery. The Director has existing authority to accept donated goods and improvements, but a formal donation and partnership agreement between the County and the Foundation would streamline the coordination from the Foundation to deliver restored park amenities.

Under the proposed donation and partnership agreement, The Foundation would be responsible to fulfill the project scope of work as the sole contracting and fiscal agent, hiring consultants and contractors to perform the design and construction work. LA County Parks would establish, review and approve the scope of work consistent with County standards, and determine schedule requirements, monitor progress, and accept the work upon completion.

During the initial fire-recovery work, various conservation corps also played a critical role to provide site services such as brush and debris clearance, tree trimming and removal, and trail repairs through existing as-needed service agreements with LA County Parks. For more than a decade, LA County Parks has used these as-needed service agreements to implement landscape, trail, and other site work at parks while supporting equitable opportunities for young people through training, work, education and support. The continued need for fire-recovery work and post-fire local youth workforce development has highlighted an opportunity to expand upon these existing relationships. LA County Parks has identified a specific, targeted opportunity to add Outward Bound Adventures (OBA), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in the Altadena/Pasadena community with a long history of partnering with the U.S. Forest Service and State Parks, as an available as-needed master contractor. Contracting with OBA to deliver Altadena Park recovery projects would create opportunities for local youth impacted by the Eaton Fire to gain job skills and training to support career pathways while actively participating in local recovery work.

As the County transitions from emergency response to long-term recovery, it is imperative to maintain urgency so that LA County Parks can continue to respond to and recover from the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Find that the actions authorized herein are not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because they are excluded from the definition of a project set forth in Public Resources Code section 21065 and are organizational and administrative activities of government that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes in the environment and involve the creation of government funding mechanisms, which do not involve any commitment to a specific project that may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4) and(5). Further find that the actions herein are within the scope of the Board's findings with respect to CEQA in the January 28, 2025 Board Motion which addressed response to the January 2025 Windstorm and Critical Fire Events; Approval of the directives herein is not intended to approve any specific project as defined under CEQA. Prior to approval of any activity that would be considered a project under CEQA, Parks will ensure that findings of exemption, as appropriate, are made by the Director and a Notice of Exemption will be filed in connection with project approvals. Further, Parks will ensure that any proposed future project related to the actions herein which the Director has not determined to be exempt will be submitted for consideration for approval and appropriate findings under CEQA by the Board prior to implementation.

2. Authorize the Director of LA County Parks, or her designee, to execute a Donation and Partnership agreement, approved as to form by County Counsel, with the LA County Parks Foundation to accept from the Foundation donated improvements and coordinate the scope and design of projects to re-open parks damaged by fires to meet funding deadlines.
3. Authorize the Director of LA County Parks, or her designee, to execute and amend agreements, approved as to form by County Counsel, necessary for the LA County Parks Foundation's efforts to apply for, secure, and administer grants to support the re-opening and recovery of fire-damaged County parks.
4. Authorize the Director of LA County Parks, or her designee, to execute a Master As-Needed contract with Outward Bound Adventures, upon approval as to form by County Counsel, to perform periodic and intermittent recovery and restoration related work at parks and trails in the Altadena and Pasadena fire zones, including non-construction and remodeling services such as: landscaping, maintenance projects, horticultural services, water conservation projects, energy conservation projects, trail work, habitat restoration, and other services which are not subject to the Public Contract Code, subject to prior determination, if appropriate, by the Director that the work is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, for a period of five years in an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000 per year. Find that these services are needed on a part-time or intermittent basis.
5. Direct the Director of Parks and Recreation, or her designee, to provide annual reports to the Board on the progress of recovery efforts, until the motion-referenced projects have been completed and delivered to the County.

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