



**Title:** Big Island Nature Park Improvements Update

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**Purpose:**

To provide the Board of Managers an update regarding developments in the Big Island Nature Park Improvements funding, construction, and next steps.

**Background:**

At the February 27, 2020 Board of Managers meeting, staff presented Big Island Nature Park Improvements final design plans for Board review. District staff had evaluated the plan set through design development against requirements set forth in the conservation easement and management plan for Big Island Nature Park. Through this analysis, staff found the plan set to be in conformance, and the Board of Managers concurred with this determination.

On April 14, 2020, Orono City Council approved a construction contract with Blackstone Contractors. Due to funding constraints, Orono staff structured the base construction bid to include only trail improvements and included all other amenities as bid alternates: construction of 1-2 vault toilets, construction of a picnic shelter, and construction of 2-4 picnic tables. Final Council approval consisted of awarding the base bid for trail improvements and the alternate of one vault toilet to be constructed near the public dock.

Additionally, on April 14, 2020, MCWD issued erosion control permit #20-112 to the City of Orono for project construction.

**Current Status:**

The City of Orono (City) recently received \$300,000 in funding from a state bonding bill for the Big Island Nature Park Project. This additional state funding has allowed the City to reconsider park improvements that had been tabled in the spring due to funding gaps. At the November 9, 2020 Orono City Council meeting, Council approved a change order with Blackstone Contractors to fund two bid alternate items: construction of the picnic shelter and two picnic tables. City Council also approved the addition of a second vault toilet.

Trail construction began on Big Island the week of November 2 and is expected to take three weeks weather permitting. The delivery and construction of the vault toilets, picnic shelter, and picnic tables is slated for spring 2021.

**Next Steps:**

City staff continues to coordinate with MCWD staff as the project develops. The Big Island Legacy 501(c)(3) is continuing to fundraise for additional park improvements, however, Big Island Legacy and the Orono Parks Commission have additional recommendations regarding how to use the remainder of the state funding. Improvements suggested include a historical marker/veteran's memorial, additional interpretive signage, the ADA conversion of an additional trail spur, and additional trail barriers to deter motorized vehicles in the winter. As these improvements are not part of the current project under construction, they are required to go through a complete design, approval, and permitting process. City staff expect to coordinate with MCWD on any new proposed improvements in spring 2021.