



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM: 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: July 7, 2004

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XXV: Consideration of resolution authorizing conditional granting of an access easement over Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority property along the northern boundary of Deerlake Highlands for the benefit of property owners located in the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 6 Township 2 North, Range 16 West, San Bernardino Meridian in Devil Canyon, unincorporated Chatsworth.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing conditional granting of an access easement over Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority property along the northern boundary of Deerlake Highlands for the benefit of property owners located in the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 6 Township 2 North, Range 16 West, San Bernardino Meridian in Deerlake Highlands Addition portion of Devil Canyon.

Background: The west half of the northwest quarter of Section 6 Township 2 North, Range 16 West, San Bernardino Meridian in Devil Canyon contains a marbled mix of Los Angeles County-owned property and private properties. Those properties will from herein be referred to as the "subject properties." The attached maps show which of those properties are owned by the County. All of the subject properties recently burned and are integral to the core habitat of the Santa Susana Mountains.

To staff's knowledge, none of the subject parcels have legal access. A couple of the properties can be reached by dirt roads that cross MRCA property on the southern, northern and eastern boundaries of the subject properties. The MRCA's 10-foot-wide strip of land along the entire northern boundary of the Deerlake Ranch project (Deerlake Highlands) runs along the southern boundary of the block of subject properties.

A few owners of the subject property owners have testified before the Board of Supervisors to request access easements through the Deerlake Ranch project and across the MRCA's ten-foot-wide strip. If such an easement is granted, there should be commensurate public benefit and adequate ecological and viewshed protection.

The physical consequences of granting an access easement to benefit the subject property owners must be studied. The applicants of the Deerlake Ranch project have offered to fully fund the acquisition of all the remaining Los Angeles County properties among the subject properties if the MRCA grants an access easement just across its ten-foot-wide strip to benefit the remaining private property owners among the subject properties. The majority of the subject parcels are too steep to build on.

The proposed action would conditionally authorize granting an access easement over Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority property along the northern boundary of Deerlake Highlands (10-foot-wide-strip) for the benefit of property owners located in the west half of the northwest quarter of Section 6 Township 2 North, Range 16 West or the subject properties. The condition of such a transfer is that as lead agency, the MRCA certifies a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) document that shows that the public and ecological benefit of the MRCA obtaining fee title to the approximately 45 acres of County-owned land among the subject properties, on balance outweighs the potential adverse impacts of granting a 36-foot-wide easement for access and utilities (as shown on the attached figures) across the 10-foot-wide strip to benefit the subject properties in the Deerlake Addition area.