



## MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center and Gardens  
570 West Avenue Twenty-six, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, California 90065  
Phone (323) 221-9944 Fax (323) 221-9934

### MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:   
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: April 6, 2005

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XI: Consideration of resolution authorizing entering into an agreement with the owners of 2100 Stratford Circle, in the Bel Air Crest tract, to allow the engineered placement of local fill material into over excavated portions of the East Sepulveda Fire Road, Sepulveda Pass Open Space, and authorizing acceptance of funds, Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing entering into an agreement with the owners of 2100 Stratford Circle, in the Bel Air Crest tract, to allow the engineered placement of local fill material into over excavated portions of the East Sepulveda Fire Road, Sepulveda Pass Open Space, and authorizing acceptance of funds, Los Angeles.

Background: The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) took title to the approximately 270-acre Bel Air Crest open space dedication in the Sepulveda Pass in 1987. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has managed the property since that time. The dedication was is three separate blocks of land. The subject project concerns the largest, southernmost parcel which straddles the ridgeline between Sepulveda and Hoag canyons.

The Sepulveda Pass Fire Road courses along the ridgeline between these two canyons. The fire road connects the southern end of the Bel Air Crest Tract to Casiano Drive. Public access to this parkland is available from the Getty View Trailhead on Sepulveda Boulevard or via Casiano Drive. Major portions of the ridgeline were graded either during the construction of the San Diego (405) Freeway (most probable) or the Bel Air Crest tract in the late-1980s. The fire road also has wide sections with high cut slopes. In general these excavated shale areas are exceptionally hard and stable. For example, revegetation of scraped ridgelines is still in early stages of succession.

The southernmost residence in the Bel Air Crest tract, 2100 Stratford Circle, has all the necessary City approvals to remove a knoll adjacent to Conservancy parkland.

The resulting cut material, at least 50,000 cubic yards, must be exported. Rather than export the fill through the neighborhood and deposit it a landfill or another fill site, the owners of the subject property contacted staff about selectively placing it along environmentally appropriate, over-excavated sections of the East Sepulveda Fire Road. Both over a year ago, and this winter, staff explored the site with the owner's engineer to look for suitable locations. That engineer worked on the Bel Air Crest tract. The attached figures show where fill could be placed on the fire road to restore portions of the natural terrain. The proposed project presents the opportunity for MRCA to restore parkland owned by the Conservancy and to generate funding. The Executive Director of the Conservancy stated he can approve this restoration administratively.

The proposed project involves cutting the material at 2100 Stafford Circle and taking the dirt in trucks along the East Sepulveda Fire Road to some of the shown locations. All fill sites would be designed by a licensed civil engineer and would be adequately compacted. Fill and fill preparation would only occur on already scarified areas, which for all intents and purposes have no native vegetation cover. The agreement would require the initial restoration of every fill site with early succession vegetation—such as deerweed, buckwheat, and native fescue. The owner's would be responsible for contracting the watering with water trucks and would be subject to reasonable performance standards. The width of the fire road would never be reduced to less than 15-feet-wide for public safety and recreation purposes.

Natural terrain would be restored in the fire road cut to the extent possible. Complete restoration is impossible because the fire road must be retained and the steepness of fill slopes should be limited. Staff's other goal is to intercept, capture and infiltrate erosion runoff on the fire road. This goal can be achieved by constructing natural looking retention areas on the up slope end of fill areas. Over time these areas could silt in. However, for many years they would provide temporal water sources and probably meet the permanent water requirements of native trees. In addition they would eliminate substantial erosion where the water is shunted off of the fire road.

The net result would be more and better habitat on the Conservancy parkland and additional funding available to the MRCA. A Notice of Categorical Exemption was posted with the County Clerk and the State Clearinghouse from February 22 to March 22, 2005. The project description covers the placement of up to 40,000 cubic yards of fill material. The exact amount of fill and the amount the MRCA will be paid, including staff time and administrative costs, will depend on the physical constraints of the land and what can be negotiated, respectively. Only glimpses of the work areas on State-land or off the haul route would be visible from the 405 freeway.