



## MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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### MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: January 7, 2009

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant from the Conservancy Fund to restore approximately seven acres of habitat in the Gopher Canyon tributary of Browns Canyon owned by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and acceptance of said funds, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant from the Conservancy Fund to restore approximately seven acres of habitat in the Gopher Canyon tributary of Browns Canyon owned by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and acceptance of said funds.

Background: California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) conducted an emergency maintenance project on State Route 118 in 2004 in the vicinity of Alamos Canyon Road in the City of Simi Valley in Ventura County. Project consisted of the removal of sediment build up in the stream culvert, installation of a new energy dissipater, installation of a debris rack near the culvert inlet, deepening of the existing stream bed, and the trimming and removal of trees upstream. Project resulted in impacts to .7046 acres of waters of the United States. Army Corps of engineers required a 10:1 mitigation ratio, resulting in 7.046 acres of restoration needed to complete the mitigation. The SMMC/MRCA was approached in 2005 to conduct the mitigation. The negotiation and transfer of funds has been a work-in-progress until December 2008, when the SMMC received the funds. Caltrans would not provide the money directly to the MRCA because the MRCA, although a signator, is not directly represented in the title of the "Agreement for Establishment and Administration of The Los Angeles County Aquatic Resource In-Lieu Fee Mitigation Program". The SMMC received \$915,980 in mitigation funds in December 2008.

In order to accommodate such a large restoration project, a new location had to be identified. Staff chose Gopher Canyon, a tributary to Browns Canyon, north of Chatsworth, to be the project location, and the regulatory agencies agreed. A map of the future restoration site is attached. The agreement between SMMC, Caltrans, ACOE, and FHWA specifically requires the mitigation to be done at this site. Recreation and life safety improvements will be fully integrated into the restoration.

In order for the MRCA to initiate the project, the funds must be granted by the SMMC to the MRCA. This item would authorize the application to the SMMC for the total amount of \$915,980 from the SMMC Conservancy Fund, and authorize the acceptance of said funds.

The project budget submitted to Caltrans and the FHWA is attached. Work on the project will proceed immediately once funding is available. There is some question as to whether the State will issue the funds until the current economic climate improves.