



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: October 7, 2009

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item V(c): Consideration of resolution authorizing sponsorship of a documentary film on the Western Ranger Program funded by the California Council for the Humanities.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing sponsorship of a documentary film on the Western Ranger Program funded by the California Council for the Humanities.

Background: In 1914 two Canadians met up on the film lot of DW Griffith's studio in Hollywood. The older, a popular Abenaki Indian actor named Elijah Tahamont soon took the younger one, the teenaged studio roustabout Harry James in hand and introduced him to walks and talks in the nearby Santa Monica Mountains. Elijah Tahamont sadly died in the influenza pandemic of 1919, but out of their hiking and conversations James later developed a local youth movement, a school, camps, established what became a field research station for young scientists, helped found the Desert Protection League and became an influence on generations of young people who grew up to help shape environmental thinking in California. He left a considerable body of writing, both published and unpublished, including ethnographic work and children's stories.

Dr. Teri Brewer, Dr. Aparna Sharma and Director Mason Funk have submitted a grant application to the California Council for the Humanities proposing a documentary film which would explore the story of Tahamont and James, looking at favorite places and traditions of the Western Rangers and some of the influence that they and their families and other such groups have had on the way we understand and use the wild lands of southern California today. They have already begun to interview surviving members of the Western Rangers such as 97 year old Glenn Dawson, who became the first life member of the Sierra Club as a young boy.

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This initial funding will allow them to produce a short trailer, a treatment and work on a preliminary script for a longer documentary aimed at a television audience. They have asked for the MRCA to be the sponsoring organization, which would mean administering the small budget for the project, for which the MRCA will receive 5% overhead costs. This project is the result of an initial conversation that MRCA staff had this spring Dr. Brewer and Dr. Sharma regarding possible Chautauqua programs at Temescal Gateway Park. Both the film and the results of the interview will be developed into a Chautauqua program.