

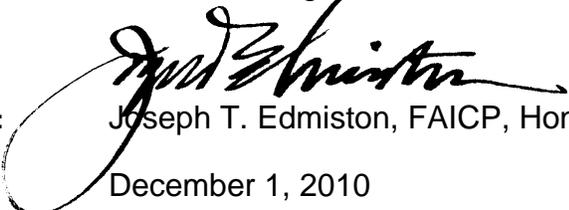


MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: December 1, 2010

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps for demolition and site preparation for the Compton Creek-Washington Elementary School Natural Park project.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps for demolition and site preparation in the amount of \$64,459 for the Compton Creek-Washington Elementary School Natural Park project.

Background: The proposed project will convert a portion of a three acre site behind Washington Elementary School, in the City of Compton, into a public park with native riparian plantings, adjacent to the Compton Creek Bike Path. The site is currently vacant and is not used by the school or the public. The project is a partnership between Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), Compton Unified School District (CUSD), City of Compton, Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC), and County of Los Angeles.

In August 2010, a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperative Agreement (MOU) between MRCA, CUSD, and LACC was executed. CUSD agreed to let the land be used for public recreation and open space, MRCA agreed to design and construct public access improvements, and LACC agreed to operate the park and maintain the improvements. Currently the project is in the design phase, and the landscape architecture consultant, MIG, Inc., is preparing construction drawings.

The project is funded through grants from the Los Angeles Regional Park and Open Space District (Proposition A) and the California Natural Resources Agency. The Resources Agency grant was made in late 2008 and comes from a competitive application for River Parkways Proposition 12 funds. Those funds must be expended by May 1, 2011. Work on the project was suspended for several months in 2009 due to the Department of Finance's suspension of bond funds.

In 2006 MRCA and CUSD entered into a Memorandum of Understanding wherein

CUSD agreed to maintain the park improvements. MRCA entered into the grant agreement with the Resources Agency funds with that MOU in place. When MRCA began project planning and design in 2009, CUSD expressed concerns about not having funds or capacity to maintain native plantings. Over the course of 2009 and the first part of 2010, MRCA staff worked with CUSD staff and LACC to develop the new MOU. LACC's commitment to maintain the park improvements was a key development that allowed the project to move forward, and their experience with other native plant installations is a plus. To facilitate LACC's operation and maintenance, MRCA has requested that an existing grant from the Los Angeles Regional Park and Open Space District for an At-risk Youth Facility on Compton Creek be used to fund a modest facility that LACC can use as a base of operations for their South Los Angeles programs. LACC has agreed to employ local youth to maintain the project when possible, providing a benefit to the Compton community.

To meet the requirements of the Resources Agency grant by May 1, 2011, implementation of the park improvements has been divided into phases. The first phase (called "1A") incorporates all of the park elements required by the Resources Agency grant and will result in over two acres of new parkland open to the public. Later phases will add the LACC facilities and additional parkland. Since execution of the MOU in August, MRCA staff and consultants have proceeded on an accelerated fast-track basis. MIG is expected to submit a 50% complete set of construction drawings for phase 1A in early December. Following that submission, the drawings must be reviewed by staff, CUSD, and LACC, revised, and sent to a plan checking firm for a code compliance review before construction can begin.

Staff is recommending that the Los Angeles Conservation Corps be utilized to build the first phase of park improvements. Involving LACC for this work will aid their future maintenance responsibilities because they will have direct experience on the site and a complete understanding of the work. Los Angeles Conservation Corps will use at-risk youth to complete the work, and MRCA will be able to count that labor toward the agency's Youth Employment Goal for Proposition A. LACC employs approximately 300 young adults and 2,200 junior high and high school students annually to serve the greater Los Angeles community through environmental enhancement and improvement projects.

Construction of Phase 1A must commence in early 2011 to meet the grant deadline, but demolition and site preparation activities can proceed before the construction drawings are completed. Initiating this phase of work now will be beneficial to the project because it will aid in meeting the tight schedule required by the competitive Resources Agency grant.

Consideration: The grant for demolition and site preparation is \$64,459 and funding will come from the existing Resources Agency and Proposition A grants.