



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: August 3, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing acquisition of Elephant Hill Open Space (APNs 5306-006-906, 907, 908, 909, 910; 5306-017-905, 906, 907, 908, 909; 5307-023-901, 906, 907, 916, 917, 918; 5306-006-912, 5306-007-900), El Sereno, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acquisition of approximately five acres of City of Los Angeles-owned Elephant Hill Open Space (APNs 5306-006-906, 907, 908, 909, 910; 5306-017-905, 906, 907, 908, 909; 5307-023-901, 906, 907, 916, 917, 918; 5306-006-912, 5306-007-900) in El Sereno.

Background: Elephant Hill is a long-embattled island of relict habitat in the northeast Los Angeles hills. Proposed for residential development multiple times over the years, the City acquired 20 acres in 2009 as part of a legal settlement with a would-be developer. MRCA acquisition of five of the 20 acres would defray the City's expense and prepare the site for public access. The funding source used by the City to pay for the settlement prohibits public access, therefore MRCA ownership is required before park improvements can be constructed.

Community support for preservation of Elephant Hill is strong. A coalition of over 60 community leaders representing diverse organizations was instrumental in blocking the last attempt to develop the site. This group hopes to see the area preserved as open space and opened to the public as soon as possible.

MRCA acquisition of the 5-acre site is a necessary prerequisite to applying for funding for later improvements. Sixteen parcels totaling five acres were appraised at \$495,000. An additional two parcels on Pullman Street may be acquired if funding for drainage improvements is awarded, subject to the City's agreement.

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Due to a staff oversight, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy did not consider the MRCA's grant application at its July 25th meeting. Nonetheless, it is prudent to authorize this acquisition, contingent upon funding, to satisfy site control requirements for the pending State grant application.