



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:   
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: July 12, 2006

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI(i): Consideration of resolution authorizing acceptance of a 2.98-acre open space dedication and related maintenance endowment from Essex Property Trust, Parker Ranch Tract Map No. 5164, Simi Valley.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of an approximately 2.98-acre open space dedication (in fee simple or as a conservation easement) and related maintenance endowment from Tract Map No. 5164 along the Arroyo Simi.

Background: The proposed action would authorize the acceptance of a conservation easement or a fee simple dedication over an approximately 2.98-acre property (formerly Assessor's Parcel Number 644-0-210-13; "Parcel F"), adjacent to the Arroyo Simi, and a related maintenance endowment. The amount of the maintenance endowment shall be negotiated prior to the Governing Board meeting.

The Parker Ranch project (Tract No. 5164) consists of 256 acres of land in the southeast corner of the Simi Valley, with a portion outside the City limits. The project consists of 325 multi-family apartments and 195 single-family homes on approximately 95 acres of the site. The project is built. Per the DEIR (p. 1.0-1), the remaining 162.5 acres of the site would be left as open space and dedicated to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSRPD). Some (or all) of this land is now owned by RSRPD.

According to the development coordinator, the subject 2.98 acres are a subset of the 162.5 acres, which the RSRPD decided not to accept. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers also required that this 2.98 acres be protected.

The subject property is located adjacent to the Arroyo Simi, owned by the Ventura County Flood Control District. According to the vegetation communities map for the DEIR, the subject property consists of the road/cleared/scraped category, and this condition is evident in a 2000 aerial (see attached aerial). However, the development coordinator had indicated that since that aerial was taken, the area is more vegetated as the project proponent has done mitigation plantings and improved the Arroyo Simi with armorflex and native plantings. Staff believes the site

can recover through passive or active restoration, and that its location is important ecologically.

The 2.98-acre property is contiguous with to the RSRPD dedication to the southwest and a larger area of open space to the south in the Simi Hills leading to Sage Ranch.

Per the DEIR, vegetation communities on the contiguous RSRPD land include coastal sage scrub, valley oak woodland, and non-native grassland. Sensitive species identified on this RSRPD land include nesting Cooper's hawk and southern California rufous-crowned sparrow.

Although the aerial depicts some structures on the property, the development coordinator indicated that now no structures are on the property. A multi-purpose trail is shown on the RSRPD land. The 2.98-acre property is located adjacent to the Arroyo Simi, with some of the apartments for the Parker Ranch project just to the north of the channel. Based on Figure 4.4-2 of the DEIR, and the final tract map, no fuel modification is expected on the 2.98-acre property.

It is staff's understanding that a maintenance endowment will also be provided by the applicant to cover the cost of annual activities in perpetuity, including activities such as monitoring, enforcement, trash pick-up, etc. Staff anticipates that due to the previous disturbances on the site, ongoing weed removal will need to be done. A portion of that funding shall also be used to cover closing costs.

The form of the recorded easement may have to follow the requirements of the Army Corps of Engineers. The MRCA could potentially use in lieu fees to create oak woodland on the site, provided that this is consistent with any other previous Army Corps mitigation requirements for the site.