



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: March 1, 2017

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item X: Consideration of resolution authorizing a) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board, and b) the contingent advance of funds for non-refundable payment for the acquisition of APNs 3210-009-013 and 014, Stickleback Ranch, approximately 41 acres, Soledad Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board, and b) the contingent advance of funds for non-refundable payment for the acquisition of APNs 3210-009-013 and 014, Stickleback Ranch, approximately 41 acres, Soledad Canyon.

Background: At its February 1, 2017 special meeting, the Governing Board adopted a resolution authorizing the acquisition of APNs 3210-009-013 and 014 that comprise a 41-acre ownership in Soledad Canyon. The adopted resolution also authorized entering into agreements with public agencies for funding to complete the acquisition. The attached staff report and resolution for that meeting provide additional background not contained in this report. Maps of the property are attached.

The special meeting was held because one requirement of the signed agreement was that the Governing Board approve acquisition of the property by February 8<sup>th</sup>. The funding mix for the acquisition remains in flux. However, without question the MRCA will need to make a non-refundable \$20,000 payment by March 17<sup>th</sup> in order to extend the escrow closing date to June 30<sup>th</sup> per the acquisition agreement. Staff is working with the Metropolitan Water District (MWD) staff on an agreement to supply the \$20,000 in exchange for the rights to conduct possible future mitigation on the property for potential future impacts to the Federal and State-listed endangered unarmored three spine stickleback (UTS) fish. Per MWD staff, that arrangement and payment can be made within the subject time frame. The February 1<sup>st</sup> MRCA action authorized entering into such an agreement with a public

agency and the acceptance of such funds. The proposed action authorizes making the non-refundable \$20,000 payment.

The second part of this proposed action authorizes entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) if the applied for streamflow grant to WCB is awarded in the next few weeks. That outcome is anticipated any day. The State Department of General Services reviewed and approved the MRCA's appraisal.

Both the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recognize the regional significance of the subject 41 acres to the survival of this rare, un-hybridized population of this unique endangered fish. The unique flexibility of the MRCA is paving the way to protect the property. Staff is confident that with this unified interest that adequate funding can be put in place by the June 30, 2017 deadline.

The MWD will not complete the CEQA review for its possible impacts to UTS until August. That project is the release of water for pipeline maintenance in a lower portion of the Santa Clara River that may or may not affect UTS. The actual mitigation need cannot be further refined at this time except for the fact. MWD is working with CDFW on this formulation. In no case will the proposed agreement to allow MWD mitigation rights obligate the MRCA to incur any restoration costs.