



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens  
570 West Avenue Twenty-six, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, California 90065  
Phone (323) 221-9944

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: April 5, 2017

**SUBJECT: Agenda Item VI(f): Consideration of resolution approving the application for grant funds for California Climate Investments Urban Greening program for land acquisition and trail and public access improvements at Elephant Hill.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution approving the application for grant funds for California Climate Investments Urban Greening program for land acquisition and trail and public access improvements at Elephant Hill.

Background: This Urban Greening Grant Program under Assembly Bill (AB) 32, also known as the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 and Senate Bill (SB) 859 signed into law in 2016 authorizes the expenditure of Cap and Trade revenues, also known as the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) and allocates a sum of approximately \$76 million for urban greening projects that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The Urban Greening Program, funded by the GGRF, continues the legacy of previous programs administered by the Natural Resources Agency but with a specific focus of achieving GHG reductions. Consistent with AB 32, the Urban Greening Program will fund projects that reduce GHGs by sequestering carbon, decreasing energy consumption and reducing vehicle miles traveled, while also transforming the built environment into places that are more sustainable, enjoyable, and effective in creating healthy and vibrant communities. The "Grant Guidelines" (March 2017) require that applicants submit an Authorizing Resolution from the applicant's governing body.

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. The MRCA was previously awarded funding from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) to acquire 5 of the 20-acres from the City. The MRCA has since identified other funding sources, including this Urban Greening Program, for additional acquisition at Elephant Hill. Since the Elephant Hill area has a complex ownership pattern (mostly comprised of small, privately-owned parcels) staff has

identified and prioritized the acquisition of numerous parcels from many different land owners. Currently, multiple parcels previously identified as priority parcels, have potential sellers. If acquired, these parcels will both facilitate the construction of a trail and implement a larger plan for Elephant Hill preservation. Attached is a concept plan that illustrates the parcels identified for imminent acquisition and the trail alignment that was designed based on a recent Feasibility Study.

Community support for preservation of Elephant Hill is strong. A coalition of over 60 community leaders hopes to see the area preserved as open space and opened to the public as soon as possible.

MRCA proposes to apply for funding from the Urban Greening Grant Program for both acquisition and trail improvements. Based on the Feasibility Study, developed by Alta Planning and Design in 2016, improvements would include trail construction, wayfinding installation, plant restoration, and site amenities including benches. The estimated cost of these improvements (including the cost for final design and engineering) is \$600,000. MRCA proposes to apply for \$150,000 for acquisition of a portion of the parcels identified in the attached exhibit. An existing Conservancy grant could supplement the remaining acquisition costs.

Consideration: The proposed action would authorize a grant application to the Natural Resources Agency for the Urban Greening program in an amount not to exceed \$750,000.

Fiscal Impact: If the Urban Greening grant is awarded, funding for the acquisition and trail improvements will be paid for with a combination of an existing Conservancy grant and the Urban Greening grant and the expenditure will be anticipated in the FY 17/18 budget. Staff time and Professional Consultant costs to plan and coordinate the work will be paid for in the same way. Future annual maintenance cost has not been estimated.