



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: January 3, 2018

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII: Consideration of resolution authorizing 1) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board; 2) entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District; 3) acceptance of funds from State of California and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; and 4) the approved use of mitigation funds to acquire approximately 111 acres (APNs 2552-001-003, 004, 005, 010 and 011; 2552-002-003, 004, 009, 010, 012, 013, and 014) in Big Tujunga Canyon, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing 1) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board; 2) entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District including adoption of a Youth Employment Plan; 3) acceptance of funds from State of California and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; and 4) the approved use of mitigation funds to acquire approximately 111 acres (APNs 2552-001-003, 004, 005, 010 and 011; 2552-002-003, 004, 009, 010, 012, 013, and 014) in Big Tujunga Canyon.

Background: The subject 111-acres adjacent to the Angeles National Forest in Tujunga were subject to an approximately one hundred home subdivision in 2013. The applicants worked with the local Assembly office to move in the direction of public acquisition. The property is bordered on all sides (and virtually surrounded) by public open space. The property occupies the prime transitional area between the broad lower Big Tujunga Wash and the more narrow wash section entering the Angeles National Forest. The Rim of the Valley Trail crosses the property in every potential alignment. Much of the property is unusually flat with a system of dirt roads that provide immediate recreation and access opportunities. The property lies just beyond the developed fringes of the San Fernando Valley but looks and feels like it is deep into the National Forest. Virtually no other property in the Rim of the Valley Corridor can provide the recreation access, viewshed, watershed, and ecological benefits of the subject ownership.

The Big Tujunga Wash is a Los Angeles County Significant Ecological area and perhaps the most ecologically diverse geographic area in the County. The portion of the wash conterminous with the 111 acres supports clear perennial stream flow with native fish populations. The USGS blue line stream tributary on the site supports exceptionally robust alluvial fan scrub vegetation. Other vegetation types include coast live oak woodland, coastal sage scrub, and chaparral.

Assemblymember Raul Bocanegra was able to secure \$3.5 million of general fund in the 2017-2018 State budget to apply towards the subject 111-acre property. This month staff was able to secure State approval for an appraisal and a signed offer for the appraised value. The Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) staff has agreed to take an \$800,000 grant proposal to its board at their February 2018 meeting. The Arroyo and Foothills Conservancy were successful in getting a Conceptual Area Protection Plan approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to make the project eligible for WCB funding. The proposed action authorizes entering into a grant agreement with WCB and expenditure of the funds. It also authorizes acceptance and expenditure of the \$3.5 million of State general fund either directly from the State or through the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

The final \$100,000 of acquisition funding has been requested of the 5<sup>th</sup> Supervisorial District's Proposition A funding. That request has not yet been granted. However, because of timing issues the proposed action also authorizes in advance entering into a Project Agreement and adoption of a Youth Employment Plan with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District. If that request is not granted by the 5<sup>th</sup> District, staff will have to seek approval from the WCB legal staff to use mitigation funds for the final \$100,000. Many types of mitigation funding cannot be pooled with WCB funds.

The expected closing date is before March 30, 2018. The MRCA would own and manage the land. Staff's request for funds to the 5<sup>th</sup> Supervisorial District includes the use of such money for site securing and clean up.