



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: May 2, 2007

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item V(j): Consideration of resolution authorizing acceptance of an approximately 280-acre open space dedication, conservation easements, trail easements and maintenance funding in the Big Tujunga Wash, Sunland-Tujunga.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of an approximately 280-acre open space dedication, conservation easements, trail easement and construction funding, and maintenance funding in the Big Tujunga Wash.

Background: The Los Angeles City Council approved the then Red Tail golf course in the Big Tujunga Wash over five years ago. The course has been open for almost two years despite the fact that the 280-acre open space dedication should have been transferred prior to the course even being graded. The Big Tujunga Wash is the best example of Alluvial Fan Scrub vegetation in Los Angeles County and is a County-designated Significant Ecological Area. The land should be in public hands and the MRCA is currently the most appropriate entity to manage the property.

There are still numerous issues with the golf course's condition compliance. The attached letter dated March 26, 2007 from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to the City's Building and Safety Commission outlines those concerns as they relate to the acceptance, management and funding of the open space and trails. Staff recommends that the MRCA remain in lock step with the Conservancy in terms of holding the course owners feet to the fire to meet all the relevant conditions before the City signs off on the project and issues a Certificate of Occupancy. However, the MRCA needs to have a standing resolution to accept the land, trail easements, and funding such that the lack of such a resolution not be an excuse for delay or non-performance.

The most clear cut items that will be available to the MRCA are the 280-acre fee simple open space dedication, as shown on the attached figure, and maintenance funding for trails. Which trails and trail easements the MRCA will be offered is still a pending issue. Technically the City's Department of Parks and Recreation can accept most of the trails.

The Conservancy's attached letter recommends that the City accept the Foothill Boulevard trail and that the MRCA be offered the remainder of the trails and trail easements. City trails prohibit mountain bikes, and mountain bikes should be able to travel from one end of the wash to the other. The potential realm of trails that could come into MRCA possession are all shown on the attached figure. Staff will continue to negotiate these issues in the best interest of the public and the MRCA. The City's conditions of approval do not set specific amounts for trail maintenance but do require some amount. The Conservancy's letter requests specific amounts. That letter also requests that the City require that the property be free of trash and all human encampments prior to transfer.

The other funding that could come into MRCA possession is penalties for the public's lost opportunity not having access to the property as conditioned. In addition, if the opportunity arises, conservation easements in the natural terrain between golf holes would be of great public benefit. Lastly, if the applicant punts and opts to give the MRCA trail easements with money for environmental review and construction, it may be of great public benefit to oblige that request.