



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM: 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: February 1, 2006

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI(g): Consideration of resolution authorizing acceptance of a conservation easement over approximately 28 acres and management funding from City of Santa Clarita, as mitigation required by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Section 404 Permit No. 200301262-JLB) for the Cross Valley Connector Gap Closure Project, Upper Bee Canyon, adjacent to State Highway 14.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of a conservation easement over approximately 28 acres and management funding from City of Santa Clarita, as mitigation required by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Section 404 Permit No. 200301262-JLB) for the Cross Valley Connector Gap Closure Project, Upper Bee Canyon, adjacent to State Highway 14.

Background: The City of Santa Clarita is obtaining final permits and trying to satisfy permit requirements for the Cross Valley Connector Gap Closure project. The Gap Closure Project consists of the construction of an 8-lane divided arterial and associated improvements. This results in impacts to approximately 8.88 acres of mulefat scrub, cottonwood gallery forest, and unvegetated drainage, according to the draft California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) (No. 1600-2004-0583-R5). Mitigation for impacts to jurisdictional waters is required pursuant to this SAA and pursuant to a U.S. Corps of Engineers permit (No. 200301262-JLB). According to the draft SAA, the required 28-acre mitigation parcel shall be placed in a conservation easement with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy or other entity approved by the Department with any necessary endowment fees. A management endowment of a minimum of \$25,000 would accompany this conservation easement.

The 28 acre mitigation site (all or part of Assessor's Parcel Number 3210-014-029) is part of the larger City-owned 412-acre property, known as the "Wagoner" property (shown on attached maps). It is located in Upper Bee Canyon, east of, and adjacent to, State Highway 14. Bee Canyon, a blue line stream partially located on

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the 28 acres, drains into the Santa Clara River. The property contains mulefat scrub and associated upland habitats, per the draft SAA. More specifically, the 28-acre mitigation site consists of sage scrub, chaparral, riparian scrub, annual grassland, and disturbed herbaceous habitat areas, according to the City's consultant.

It is unclear if restoration would occur on the subject 28-acre mitigation site. It appears possible that enhancement may occur on the 28-acre mitigation site per the draft permit conditions.

In the draft SAA, the applicant is responsible for monitoring wildlife movement for two years at the entrance to the large culvert(s) that pass under State Route 14. According to the City's consultant, one northern culvert is off-site, but another culvert is near the southern boundary of the mitigation area.