



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: December 5, 2007

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XI: Consideration of resolution authorizing entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District for improvements in the Big Tujunga watershed as part of the Big Tujunga Dam - Santa Ana Sucker Habitat Enhancement Project, or in the alternative authorizing assignment of said Proposition A Excess Funds to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works for said project, Angeles National Forest.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District in an amount not to exceed \$510,000 for improvements in the Big Tujunga watershed as part of the Big Tujunga Dam - Santa Ana Sucker Habitat Enhancement Project, or in the alternative authorizing assignment of said Proposition A Excess Funds to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works for said project, Angeles National Forest.

Background: Big Tujunga Creek is perhaps the last refuge for the Federally listed Threatened Santa Ana Sucker in Los Angeles County outside of the Santa Clara River. The Santa Ana Sucker Working Group (SAS) is composed of numerous Federal, State and local agencies focused on improving the fishes habitat conditions. The flow of water for the sucker's occupied habitat is dependent on releases from the Big Tujunga Dam in the Angeles National Forest. That dam is operated by the Watershed Protection Division of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works. The fish live between this dam and Hansen Dam downstream.

To create optimal habitat for the population stream flows must be carefully regulated. The antiquated release mechanisms on the are not capable of providing the precise flows needed for such habitat enhancement. The dam also does not

meet seismic and spillway capacity requirements. The County's plan is to both strengthen the dam and install new low flow valves. The total project cost is over \$106 million and will take over three years.

The County is seeking partners to assist with funding the environmental enhancement scope of the project. Most of the project components that appear eligible for Proposition A funding are tied to physical improvements to valves, stream gages, and interpretive displays. Such expenditures are

Staff met with the County and agreed to bring an approximately \$500,000 request for approval to the Governing Board to participate in this important project. The MRCA will soon own the 240 acres of Big Tujunga Wash located just upstream from the 210 Freeway. This is an important juncture to assure the survival and spread of a unique species.

The funding would entirely be 5th Supervisorial District Proposition A Excess funds. The expenditure of such funds is jointly determined by the MRCA and the Board of Supervisors. There are ample 5th District Excess funds and no other pending projects are hampered by the proposed use of these funds. In addition the Excess Funds account will receive a new balance in July 2008.

At this stage, the two staffs are not sure whether it is more advantageous to outright assign the funds to County or for the MRCA to expend all or a small portion of the funds. This obscurity accounts for the resolution with two alternative paths. By the time of Governing Board meeting that issue should be resolved and the appropriate resolution will be provided under separate cover as soon as possible.