



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: February 2, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI: Consideration of resolution authorizing application to Wildlife Conservation Board for funding the acquisition of 120-acre property (APNs 4455-006-032 and 033) in Cold Creek watershed and further authorizing the acquisition of the subject parcels, Calabasas.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing application to Wildlife Conservation Board for funding the acquisition of 120-acre property (APNs 4455-006-032 and 033) in Cold Creek watershed and further authorizing the acquisition of the subject parcels, Calabasas.

Background: The 120-acre property is located on Mulholland Highway and contains the County-maintained Secret Trail, which climbs two miles from the trailhead on Mulholland to the Calabasas Ridge Motorway. The property was originally intended to be the open space dedication of the adjacent Mountain Park development, but was inadequately conditioned to restrict potential development. Incorporation into the City of Calabasas maintained the by-right development potential of the subject property.

When the City of Calabasas could not prohibit the by-right development, a generous individual stepped forward to purchase and hold the property until such a time as long-term preservation was possible. The property was subsequently transferred to Mountains Restoration Trust in 2009, with \$1.2 million in debt. The debt has since been reduced to \$850,000. The holder of the note has agreed to a short sale, reducing the amount due to the proposed purchase price.

MRCA staff sought outside funding to allow for the purchase and permanent protection of the subject 120 acres. In collaboration with the Department of Fish and Game, MRCA staff completed a Land Acquisition Evaluation proposal and was recently recommended by the Director of the Department for acquisition. The Wildlife Conservation Board will consider the grant request at their February meeting. The balance of the purchase price will come from the County of Los Angeles Third Supervisorial District, City of Calabasas, and the same generous

private donor who originally secured the property.

The property will be managed as parkland and preserved in its natural state. Removal of non-native species and habitat restoration will occur in collaboration with Mountains Restoration Trust. A conservation easement will be granted to a third party if requested by either the Department of Fish and Game or Wildlife Conservation Board.