MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: May 4, 2011

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for grant funds for landscape improvements at King Gillette Ranch.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for grant funds in the amount of $200,000 for landscape improvements at King Gillette Ranch.

Background: As the future location of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area Visitor Center, King Gillette Ranch will be a highly visible property to tourists and the local community. The Visitor Center will be a model of sustainability as a net-zero and LEED-Platinum facility.

Many of the public landscape areas at King Gillette Ranch include open lawn, including the iconic vista at the mansion and areas frequently used for youth programs and picnicking. The health of these lawn areas is challenged by several factors, including infestation by burrowing rodents, high nutrient-content reclaimed water, aging and outdated irrigation systems, and inappropriate turf species. Rehabilitation of these landscape areas is necessary for continued public enjoyment and long-term viability of the property.

The rehabilitation of the landscape areas could complement the sustainability of the Visitor Center project if undertaken as a model demonstration project. The variety of landscape spaces provides an opportunity to use King Gillette Ranch as a “living laboratory” for best practices. Using the property to demonstrate sustainable lawn practices adds to the value of having such high visitation.

A variety of solutions to the landscape challenges are possible. MRCA staff have completed preliminary research into sustainable lawn options. Potential demonstrations may include no-mow and other turf species, sub-surface irrigation, reinforcement mesh made from recycled products, high-efficiency equipment, and edge plantings to protect adjacent habitat.