



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: May , 2010

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XVI: Consideration of resolution authorizing acquisition of APN 2816-031-001 totaling 9.3 acres using in lieu mitigation fees, Santa Susana Mountains, Devil Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acquisition of APN 2816-031-001 totaling 9.3 acres in Devil Canyon using in lieu mitigation fees.

The subject property owned by Pepperdine University is located in the Devil Canyon watershed less than a mile upstream from the confluence with Browns Canyon. The property provide substantial ecological and riparian benefits. The property has long been on park agencies' and equestrians' radar screens because it provides a critical piece of the long-established trail up Devil Canyon. The trail is used on a near-daily basis by a wide range of public.

The following adjacent properties are shown on the attached map. A combination of trail easements on Tract 53235 (a developed condominium project south of the subject Pepperdine property) and the large, County-approved Deerlake Ranch project to the south and east provide an existing network of public trails to the subject property from the 118 freeway near the termini of Topanga Canyon Boulevard and Canoga Avenue. Los Angeles County then has a trail easement that extends from the western boundary of the Pepperdine property several thousand feet up Devil Creek. An additional trail easement will be necessary to get across APN 2821-025-001 and continue up Devil Creek to the northwest. However the County has perfected trail easement and constructed trail from the western boundary of APN 2821-025-001 to a trailhead to the south shown on Iverson Road north of the 118 Freeway. If acquired by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), staff would work with Los Angeles County Park Department staff to stitch together this trail system through the subject property. In addition the MRCA is slated to receive an approximately six-acre fee simple open space dedication from Tract 53235 that abuts the southern boundary of Pepperdine property.

Devil Creek is one of the premier riparian corridors on the south-facing slope of the Santa Susana Mountains. The subject 9.3-acre Pepperdine property contains more than 800 linear feet of the creek and in excess of 1.5 acres of riparian habitat.

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There is often surface water on portions of the subject section of creek. The subject habitat is fully integrated with the Santa Susana Mountains core habitat area. All portions of Devil Creek downstream are required to be dedicated to the MRCA as a condition precedent to the recordation of the Deerlake Ranch tract map. That action assures permanent protection of the riparian corridor downstream of the subject property. The portion of the creek upstream from the Pepperdine property is on a 70-acre parcel that should have been dedicated to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in the mid-eighties but correct of this omission has been difficult to remedy.