



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: January 7, 2013

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII: Consideration of resolution authorizing submission of joint application with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to the California Coastal Commission for a coastal development permit for construction of one supervised ADA-accessible campsite, not more than seven supervised standard campsites, and related improvements in that portion of Charmlee Wilderness Park located in unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing submission of joint application with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) to the California Coastal Commission for a coastal development permit for construction of one supervised ADA-accessible campsite, not more than seven supervised standard campsites, and related improvements in that portion of Charmlee Wilderness Park located in unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: City of Malibu-owned and operated 534-acre Charmlee Wilderness Park is the most user friendly upland coastal open space park in Los Angeles County west of the National Park Service's Solstice Canyon Park. It contains parking, permanent restrooms, a water tank, fire hydrants, a nature center, a caretaker's residence (mobile home), an outdoor classroom, picnic sites, and an extensive trail system. The future Coastal Slope Trail will also course through the southern portion of the park and right between the two proposed campsite clusters. The mountain, ocean, and coastline views from the park match any other in the Santa Monica Mountains. It is located less than five miles from Pacific Coast Highway up Encinal Canyon Road. Attached figures show the park location.

National Park Service vegetation mapping shows a broad array of coastal sage scrub and chaparral associations mixed with varying sized clusters of coast live oak. The park also supports widely disbursed sandstone outcroppings. In 2007 the

MRCA hired an environmental consulting firm to do vegetation mapping in the proposed improvement areas. The same consultant also did geology, archeology, and traffic analyses.

One element the park lacks, and is well laid out to support, is overnight camping. In the 1980s Los Angeles County certified a FEIR for a project that included group and family camping. The Coastal Commission approved the project too. In 2007 the Conservancy and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) produced a *Malibu Parks Public Access Enhancement Plans* document that included conceptual plans for Charmlee Park, Ramirez Canyon, Escondido Canyon, and Corral Canyon. Excerpts from this document addressing Charmlee Park are attached. The Conservancy and MRCA staffs worked with the City planning staff on a plan to add eight campsites and five parking spaces to Charmlee Wilderness Park. When negotiations broke down with the City on supporting these public access improvements, the Charmlee Park plans were shelved and more extensive coastal camping was introduced on Conservancy-owned Malibu Bluffs property as part of revised proposed public access facility mix.

Recent negotiations with the City of Malibu are geared to providing the Conservancy with a ground lease over the entire park in short order and subsequent full transfer of fee title in the near future. A sublease might then be issued to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA).

Based on that ground lease being in place, the proposed action would authorize staff to submit a joint application with the Conservancy to the California Coastal Commission for a coastal development permit for construction of one supervised ADA-accessible campsite, not more than seven supervised standard campsites, and related improvements including adding five additional parking spaces.

The proposed plans for the eight campsites and five parking spaces are attached. A single ADA accessible campsite is placed near the existing restroom facility. Four standard campsites (pad with tent space and picnic table) are located in a historically cleared area by the main existing parking lot. Three "walk in" campsites are sited up a gravel road on a gentle ridgeline just above the main cluster of park facilities. These three sites are in the broad footprint of a fuel break that was cut for a fire that burned much of the park soon before then. A map showing approximate boundaries of potential vegetation impacts is attached. The new parking would slightly expand an existing auxiliary parking area. The design minimizes disturbance to natural resources and maximizes compatibility to the existing park uses. All of the proposed improvement areas are visible from the caretaker's compound.

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Approximately 167 acres of Charmlee Park is located outside of the City of Malibu in unincorporated Los Angeles County. All of the existing park facilities and all of the proposed camping and parking improvements are located in this unincorporated area. The City of Malibu has no permit authority over the area.