



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: April 3, 2013

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII: Consideration of resolution further authorizing the use of Coastal Habitat Impact Mitigation Funds towards the acquisition of APN 4465-004-045 and 4465-004-084 in the Ramirez Canyon watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the use of an additional \$50,000 of Coastal Habitat Impact Mitigation Funds, for a total of \$250,000 towards the acquisition of APNs 4465-004-045 and 4465-004-084 in the Ramirez Canyon watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: Ramirez Canyon is a premiere coastal watershed of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has long sought to secure east-west habitat and trail connections from the National Park Service's Zuma-Trancas Unit across Ramirez Canyon into the core of Escondido Canyon. The MRCA has successfully completed one such connection between Kanan Dume Road and the MRCA's Escondido Canyon Park for the Coast Slope Trail via Ramirez Canyon Park. A second effort has been underway to the north since 2002 (Ramirez - Escondido Canyon Workprogram project). This northern east-west connection has superior terrain for regional wildlife movement and excellent grades and existing paved and dirt roads for trail connections. The Trust for Public Land's total 110-acre project is vital to maintaining one of the largest and most scenic viewsheds along Kanan Dume Road.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has teamed up with the MRCA to submit a grant application to the State's Habitat Conservation Fund Grant Program (HCF) to acquire a 56-acre property (APN 4465-004-045) that is located 95 percent in Ramirez Canyon with a small portion edging over the Ramirez Ridge Trail into the Escondido Canyon watershed. The subject property is bordered on the north and south by MRCA properties. The narrow but paved Dume Canyon Motorway bisects the site and links the Ramirez Ridge Trail (extension of Ramera Motorway) with

Kanan Dume Road. TPL has a long held option on the property. If the acquisition is completed the MRCA would ultimately be the fee simple property owner and management entity. However, TPL may first take title to the property and thus the MRCA is effectively contributing the proposed funding to TPL's acquisition.

In order to improve both the odds of the MRCA receiving the subject \$175,000 grant from HCF Program, and of subsequently compiling enough funding to complete the acquisition of the property, this action proposes to add an additional \$50,000 to the previously approved \$200,000 of the MRCA's Coastal Habitat Impact Mitigation Fund (CHIMF) as grant matching funds. The adjacent APN 4465-004-084 is included in the action because TPL also has that parcel under option and it considered Phase II of the project. If APN 4465-004-045 can be acquired with less than \$200,000 of CHIMF funding then the proposed action authorizes using the difference on APN 4465-004-084.

As with all CHIMF expenditures, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy must pre-approve the use of the funding. Staff intends to seek approval from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy at the Conservancy's April 2013 meeting.