



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
570 West Avenue Twenty-six, Suite 100
Los Angeles, California 90065
Phone (323) 221-9944

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: July 3, 2013

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for interpretive and preservation improvements at the San Vicente Mountain Park, Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in the amount of \$50,000 for interpretive and preservation improvements at the San Vicente Mountain Park, Los Angeles.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority operates San Vicente Mountain Park in the heart of the Santa Monica Mountains above an unpaved portion of Mulholland Drive ("Dirt Mulholland"), 2.7 miles west of the 405 Freeway. The 10.2-acre park offers visitors stunning, 360-degree views, and is a gateway to a large network of hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails, and the nation's largest metropolitan wilderness area. The popular park, which was opened to the public in 1996, contains restrooms, accessible parking, shade structures, and picnic areas.

During the Cold War, from 1956-1968, San Vicente Mountain Park was the site of a Nike control and radar station, one of sixteen stations in the Los Angeles area built to protect the metropolis in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack. The site contained ground-based radar and computer systems to detect and track hostile aircraft, and to guide anti-aircraft missiles that could be launched from nearby Sepulveda Basin. The park was designed to retain some of the military atmosphere of the site, in order to enhance the public's understanding of its role in military and urban history. Features include fences, equipment, and structures--the most prominent of which is the original radar tower. From the tower, visitors can enjoy spectacular views of the Santa Monica Mountains, the San Fernando Valley and nearby Encino Reservoir, and the Los Angeles Basin.

Key to the educational resource of the park is visitor-serving thematic signage that was specially developed to interpret the historic and cultural significance of the site and the Cold War artifacts, and to provide self-guided information about the ecology and natural resources of the site and the Santa Monica Mountains. A series of ten signs were originally installed almost twenty years ago. While some of the signage has held up remarkably well, many are faded and are in deteriorating condition. Complicating the problem, the signage was created in the pre-computer era, when signage of this type was hand drawn and created in a cumbersome process unused today.

MRCA staff proposes seeking a grant from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to recreate the signs in a modern graphic format, and replace all interpretive signage at the park. This will serve the public in the future because the signs will be able to be easily reproduced and replaced when needed. In addition to restoration of the interpretive materials, many of the historic structures in the park, including the radar tower, are in need of protective work to ensure their continued longevity and function. Staff proposes including in the grant request funding to repaint some of the structures to preserve and protect these resources for public education and enjoyment.

Consideration: The MRCA will seek a grant from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in an amount not to exceed \$50,000.