



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: April 2, 2014

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing acquisition of and accepting funding for the following 24 APNs: 4457-004-056 through 072, 4457-005-012, 015, 017, 027, 028; 4458-031-001 and 002, totaling approximately 703 acres located in Puerco Canyon in unincorporated Los Angeles County and the City of Malibu.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acquisition of and accepting funding for the following 24 APNs: 4457-004-056 through 072, 4457-005-012, 015, 017, 027, 028; 4458-031-001 and 002, totaling approximately 703 acres located in Puerco Canyon in unincorporated Los Angeles County and the City of Malibu.

Background: The subject property is reportedly the largest remaining privately owned open space parcels in the Santa Monica Mountains. It is an outstanding example of the Mediterranean biome with a range of plant communities including chaparral, coastal sage scrub, native grasslands, and oak woodlands.

The property is mainly situated in the Puerco Canyon Watershed that drains directly into Santa Monica Bay approximately 0.8 miles downstream from the property. However, drainages of the Corral Canyon and Malibu Canyon watersheds are also within the property boundaries. The property includes the entire headwaters of Puerco Canyon. The property contains 17,314 linear feet of USGS blueline stream. The property features gentle terrain ranging from 620 feet above sea level to ridges as high as 1,840 feet above sea level. Thriving riparian vegetation lines the tributaries and includes western sycamore, and coast live oak.

Currently the property is vacant open space. The northeastern corner is in the Malibu Canyon watershed and the northwestern corner is in the Corral Canyon

watershed. Paved access is from the south via Puerco Canyon Road 2,000 feet from Pacific Coast Highway. Dirt-surfaced De Bell Ranch Road runs up the center of the property up Puerco Canyon. This dirt road leads to scattered ranching and homestead pads that were graded long prior to the adoption of the California Coastal Act. The historic, unpaved, Puerco Motorway ridgeline fire road courses along the western property boundary and then connects to the unpaved Mesa Peak Motorway to Malibu Creek State Park and the Backbone Trail.

This property provides important linkage between 1,000-acre Corral Canyon Park and 8,000-acre Malibu Creek State Park and would secure a large block of the Santa Monica Mountains coastal core habitat with uncommonly gentle terrain. The Puerco Canyon Coastal Core Habitat project abuts numerous public lands: California State Parks, National Park Service, Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Pepperdine University Open Space (conservation easement). Acquisition of the subject property is an opportunity to approximately double the size of Corral Canyon Park complex, owned by the MRCA and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

Staff has been in contact with representatives for the property owners who have indicated that time is off the essence in entering into an agreement for this acquisition. MRCA plans to apply to the Wildlife Conservation Board, State Coastal Conservancy, and Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District (Prop. A) for grant funding for the purchase price. Developers have expressed interest in this property and approval of this acquisition and the successful purchase will ensure that this critical piece of habitat is preserved in perpetuity.

Approval of this item authorizes entering into a purchase agreement for acquisition of the property and acceptance of funding for the purchase price.