



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: August 5, 2015

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI(c): Consideration of resolution authorizing the acquisition of an approximately one-acre Los Angeles Flood Control District surplus property (APN 2840-009-900) using non-USACE associated in-lieu mitigation funds, Oak Springs Canyon, City of Santa Clarita.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the acquisition of approximately one-half-acre of Los Angeles County Flood Control District surplus property (APN 2840-009-900) in Oak Springs Canyon using mitigation funding.

Background: In October 2014 the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy exercised its first right of refusal with the Los Angeles County Flood Control District on a one acre parcel located essentially at the confluence of Oak Springs Canyon and the Santa Clara River (see attached map). Approximately half the parcel was and is illegally occupied by horse stalls, sheds, and other ranch infrastructure. The County had intended to sell the property to this adjacent private owner. Rather than deal with the removal of encroachments, the Conservancy struck a deal with the County to acquire 21,503 square feet of the property that contained the key habitat resources. The total valuation of the parcel per the County is \$65,655. Because the Conservancy portion is in the active stream channel, ninety percent of the property value would be held by the private owner. So the sale price to the Conservancy is 10 percent of the value or \$6,565.

The County also agreed to allow the Conservancy to conditionally waive its first right of refusal and allow the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to be the acquiring agency.

The railroad tracks that run along the south side of the Santa Clara River from the Sand Canyon and SR 14 overcrossing area to a location miles up Soledad Canyon, provide just one or two under-crossing for animals over a distance of approximately five miles. One of those two under-crossing is at Oak Springs Canyon. The protection of such under-crossings is paramount to maintain wildlife movement

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between the Santa Clara River and regional upland habitats. Pure alluvial habitat and one Arizona crossing remain between the subject parcel and City of Santa Clarita open space in the Santa Clara River. To the south beyond the elevated railroad tracks, Oak Springs Creeks filters through horse properties, private open space, and then Sand Canyon golf course for a total of 1.25 miles to reach the Angeles National Forest.

The property is regionally significant for habitat connectivity. It currently supports limited alluvial scrub vegetation at the margins of the active channel and not where vehicles drive to go up Oak Springs Canyon Road.

The acquisition would be funded by non-Army Corps of Engineers associated mitigation funds held by the MRCA. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is slated to take an action to waive its first right of refusal on August 17th. Then the County would proceed with the sale.