



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: September 2, 2015

SUBJECT: **Special Agenda Item IV: Consideration of resolution authorizing a request to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for an amendment to the scope of work for grant SMM-40-1517 for Puerco Canyon Project Planning and Design.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a request to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for an amendment to the scope of work for grant SMM-40-1517 for Puerco Canyon Project Planning and Design.

Background: On March 30, 2015, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy approved a grant to MRCA for project planning and design activities for the Cameron Nature Preserve at Puerco Canyon. The work funded by that grant is specifically for the development of an overnight camping facility for underserved and disadvantaged communities, including children in the Los Angeles County Foster Care system. That project planning and design work is currently underway. Staff have been working with private sector consultants and non-profit camp providers to assess the property's capacity and necessary capital improvements. Community engagement for the project began in summer 2015 with weekend tent camping trips on the site with disadvantaged and foster youth. Additional programs and events for community outreach related to the project are planned for the coming year.

A primary operational concern for use of this location is the ability to quickly and safely react in case of an emergency, such as wildfire or mudslides. Currently, vehicular egress from the park is only provided via a narrow, unimproved dirt road that leads southward to Pacific Coast Highway. A rough dirt fire road winds north through the property to the Backbone Trail, but that route leads only to more undeveloped open space that would be at risk in an emergency. There are hiking trails that lead to MRCA-owned Corral Canyon and property owned by Pepperdine University, but they cannot be safely traversed by vehicle.

By most accounts, the 2015-16 seasons for wildfire and precipitation are predicted to be worse than normal. To provide more public safety on the property staff

proposes to make low-impact capital improvements to the Corral Canyon trail so that it may realistically function as emergency egress from the site. In addition, the property's well and water tanks need to be evaluated and upgraded to serve as a water supply in case of fire.

Due to the rapidly-approaching winter, this work is requested to be added to the scope of the existing project planning and design grant to prevent the administrative delays that would result from seeking a new grant. The California Coastal Commission approved mitigation funding for a youth camp at Puerco Canyon during their August 2015 meeting, and this funding is more than adequate to replace the funds to be used for road improvements. The mitigation funds will not be accessible for several months so they will not be available soon enough for the subject scope of work.