




MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: April 6, 2016

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing the acquisition of up to 37.05 acres comprised of all or portions of APNs 4434-008-007 and 4434-001-004 including conservation easement interests, and entering into necessary agreements with the owner to cover various pre-acquisition costs, Topanga Canyon watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the acquisition of up to 37.05 acres comprised of all or portions of APNs 4434-008-007 and 4434-001-004 including conservation easement interests, and entering into necessary agreements with the owner to cover various pre-acquisition costs, Topanga Canyon watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: The subject 37-acre ownership has been a longtime acquisition priority to the National Park Service, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). The visually prominent property is part of the 20,000-acre Big Wild and abuts both Topanga State Park and two MRCA ownerships. The attached maps show the subject parcels and parklands. The proposed Santa Maria Canyon Trail would connect south through the parcels from dirt Mulholland Drive. Any development of the property would have significant adverse ecological, visual, and recreational impacts.

The Governing Board adopted Resolution No. 14-118 in July 2014 authorizing entering into an agreement for Proposition A funding and authorizing fee simple acquisition of the property. The Board of Supervisors awarding the funding to the MRCA. The transaction has not been able to close for well over a year because of a road building requirement attached to the subject parcels. To move the project forward staff can potentially acquire three quarters of the larger (already subdivided) parcel and work on an agreement with the owner that would free the MRCA of the road building requirement. The MRCA may have to pay some costs to achieve this outcome. Those costs would come from a recent settlement agreement from another dirt Mulholland landowner. It may be that the MRCA only obtains a conservation easement on the remaining quarter portion of the larger parcel. In all cases, the owner is exceptionally cooperative and interested in seeing the land permanently preserved.