



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: June 1, 2016

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XIV: Consideration of resolution authorizing an application for Environmental Enhancement Mitigation Program (EEMP) grant funds for the Temescal Ranch Acquisition project.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing an application for Environmental Enhancement Mitigation Program (EEMP) grant funds for Phase 2 of the Temescal (Hathaway) Ranch Acquisition project in the Piru Creek watershed.

Background: The Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP), as provided by the Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56, authorizes the allocation of up to \$10 million each year for grants to State, local and federal governmental agencies and non-profit organizations to mitigate the environmental impacts of modified or new public transportation facilities. The "Grant Guidelines" require that the applicant submit an Authorizing Resolution from the applicant's governing body.

In the last EEMP grant cycle the Trust for Public Land (TPL) was successful with a grant application to acquire the phase one (1,229-acre) part of the 6,006-acre Temescal Ranch that abuts both the Los Padres and Angeles National Forests (see attached maps). The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) staff provided a letter in May 2015 to the Natural Resources Agency stating that the MRCA would commit to accept ownership and permanent management of all or a portion of the Ranch. Staff did not follow up until now to agendaize a Board action (see agenda item XV).

TPL has external pressures to transfer phase one to the MRCA in June 2016. Legal staff is working on that transfer. Staff toured the entire property with the Natural Resources Agency grant representative last spring. It is imperative to provide authority to accept phase one at this juncture to not jeopardize funding. It is the farthest north and most remote portion of the property with least management issues. The only improvements are ranch fences, gates, and one well.

TPL is now seeking funding for the 4776.69-acre phase two portion of the ranch. The collective wisdom between staff and TPL staff is that it looks good for one of the phase two grant applicants to be the MRCA. That is particularly true if the MRCA is the future landowner and manager.

The proposed action would authorize staff to submit an application to the EEMP grant program to partially fund the phase two acquisition. TPL staff would prepare the grant application to be approved by MRCA staff.

The ranch is located at the eastern edge of the Sierra Madre Mountains, adjacent to the western unit of the Angeles National Forest and Los Padres National Forest. The remote property contains a rich assemblage of coastal sage scrub, and numerous creeks that flow directly into a regional water source, Lake Piru.

Protection of the ranch would provide significant permanent connectivity between the San Gabriel, Sierra Madre, Santa Susanna and Santa Monica Mountains, as identified by the *Southern California Missing Linkages Project*.

California condors have been tracked by the dozens over the land, as the property represents a huge piece of their habitat around the nearby Sespe Condor Sanctuary. Several streams on the property feed Lake Piru, which not only recharges groundwater for the agricultural operations in the Oxnard Plain, but also releases water at critical points for federally endangered Southern California steelhead in the Santa Clara River.

The southernmost portion of phase two includes old ranch buildings, springs, and wells. It would be a minimum of one year before phase two would close. This should allow adequate time to negotiate the property condition and status of any existing grazing arrangements.

The grant application would be for less than \$750,000 or as limited by the grant program.