



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: June 1, 2016

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XV: Consideration of resolution authorizing acceptance of all or portion of the 6,006-acre Temescal Ranch in the Piru Creek watershed (APNs 3247-022-001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, 007; 3247-023-001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, 007, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of all or portion of the 6,006-acre Temescal Ranch in the Piru Creek watershed (APNs 3247-022-001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, 007; 3247-023-001, 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, 007, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has assembled all necessary funding to close on 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 agendize a Board action.

TPL has external pressures to retain funding 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 plan is for the MRCA to be the future landowner and manager.

The ranch is located at the eastern edge of the Sierra Madre Mountains, adjacent to both the western unit of the Angeles National Forest and the Los Padres National Forest. The remote property contains a rich assemblage of coastal sage scrub, grasslands, and numerous creeks that flow into Lake Piru and then the Santa Clara River. Multiple ranch road and a trail connection to National Forest land provide large scale recreation opportunities. There is deeded road access from the City of Santa Clarita but the site works best as a natural preserve with the opportunity for organized group visits. Grazing has degraded many areas of the property but not to the extent that benign neglect will not allow it to heal naturally upon the removal of cattle.

Protection of the ranch would provide significant permanent connectivity between the San Gabriel, Sierra Madre, and Santa Susana Mountains, as identified by the *Southern California Missing Linkages Project*. The whole property is part of a Los Angeles County-designated Significant Ecological Area.

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. A visit to the property is like going back in time. It would be a minimum of one year before phase two would close. This should allow adequate time to negotiate the handover property condition and the status of any existing grazing arrangements.

Agenda item XIV addresses the MRCA submitting a grant application to partially fund the acquisition of phase two.