



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: June 7, 2017

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI(s): Consideration of resolution authorizing a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Audubon Society for adoption of portions of the Los Angeles River Greenway, Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Audubon Society for adoption of portions of the Los Angeles River Greenway, Los Angeles.

Background: In 2014, MRCA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Audubon Youth Environmental Stewards (YES) in the Summer of 2014 for adoption of parks along the Los Angeles River Greenway. Pursuant to that MOU, the Audubon YES program provided volunteer maintenance work at Steelhead and Rattlesnake Parks. Since that time, the leader of the YES program, who was instrumental in coordinating the successful partnership, has moved to a more general management position at the Audubon Center at Ernest E. Debs Regional Park. The term of that MOU was for three (3) years. The proposed new agreement would replace it, formally changing the partner to be National Audubon Society's (Audubon) local chapter serving the subject parks.

The National Audubon Society, operating out of the Audubon Center at Ernest E. Debs Regional Park, engages a large pool of local youth volunteers and connects them with local environmental organizations. The facilities at the Audubon Center contain a newly developed native plant nursery to help provide volunteer projects with a locally grown supply of native species.

A partnership between MRCA and Audubon will encourage use, understanding, and care for the MRCA Los Angeles River Greenway parks and the environment of the Los Angeles River. The MOU outlines the roles and responsibilities of each partner to ensure good communication and successful collaboration. MRCA will continue to be responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of the parks and will provide guidance, approval, and oversight of the activities that Audubon proposes.

Adoption activities will include land stewardship activities such as weeding, mulching, planting of California native plants, shrubs, and trees. Activities to inspire youth and community involvement may also include outdoor environmental educational programming with partnering Audubon schools, organizations, and community volunteer events and socials. Directed community involvement in the on-going stewardship will lead to an increased awareness and understanding of the benefits to habitat, wildlife, and recreational visitors that these spaces provide.

MRCA has been implementing Los Angeles River Greenway projects since 1996 and has continued to acquire and enhance land adjacent to the Los Angeles River with multiple-benefit parks, recreational amenities, and native landscaping. One of the benefits for which these parks were developed is to give the visitors a place to experience and connect with nature. Guided hands-on stewardship activities are an opportunity for youth and the community to connect with the environment in a meaningful way.

Fiscal Impact: The staff time to coordinate volunteer activities will come out of the general fund. This cost for the previous MOU was negligible and it is anticipated to also be negligible in the future. Maintenance needs for the subject parks may be slightly reduced, freeing staff up to work at other locations.