



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: October 4, 2017

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI(b): Consideration of resolution authorizing acceptance of APNs 3209-008-012, 013 and 016 (33 acres) and maintenance funding from the Trust for Public Land, Soledad Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of APNs 3209-008-012, 013 and 016 and maintenance funding from the Trust for Public Land or private sources.

Background: The 33-acre Robin's Nest property is located on the Soledad Canyon portion of the Santa Clara River adjacent to the Pacific Crest Trail river crossing. The attached map shows the property straddling the Metro tracks leading to Palmdale and touching corners with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's (MRCA) Bobcat Canyon properties. It also border BLM and Forest Service land. The property was operated as an RV campground and event facility until 2009. The property was one of few sections of Soledad Canyon that was for all intents and purposes spared from July 2016 Sand Fire. The site supports approximately 0.5 miles of clear flowing perennial stream with solid mature riparian canopy.

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) has the property under contract. Earlier this year the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy approved a \$1 million grant of Proposition 1 funds to TPL for the acquisition. Staff is working with a private entity to provide the remaining \$1.5 million sum for mitigation credits. As proposed, TPL would complete the acquisition and transfer the property to the MRCA. The MRCA provided a letter in the TPL Proposition 1 grant application stating that it would agree to accept the property and be the management agency. Part of the arrangement with TPL and the private funding party is that the MRCA would receive approximately \$75,000 to secure the property and do initial clean up.

Another key step is for the MRCA to enter into an agreement with the private party to assure that their financial contribution secures approximately 6.5 acres of

wetland-riparian habitat credits and the MRCA agrees to maintain and protect that riparian area in perpetuity. Staff intends to bring approval of that agreement before the Governing Board at the regularly scheduled November MRCA meeting.

The ecological value of the property both as is and with vast potential restoration is off the charts. Both the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and United States Fish and Wildlife Service have long targeted protection of the property for its aquatic resource values. Staff does not know yet about the presence or absence of the endangered unarmored three-spine stickleback fish. The property has numerous wells and vast groundwater available. The Pacific Crest Trail courses along the eastern property boundary via a trail easement.

The site has a wide stable bridge over the river from Soledad Canyon Road. The entry is gated and well secured from dumping and other unwanted intrusion. The recreational potential is also off the charts. The property has extensive electrical power that services wells, a house, a banquet hall, a large empty (uncracked) pool and bath houses. The current owner does extensive filming on the site. TPL has conducted a Phase One environmental report. It is a critical property along the Santa Clara River. It has a lifetime CUP for 120 RV spots and comes with a lifetime liquor license. If it is not protected the current owner plans to build huge RV resort area using vast amounts of groundwater.

The MRCA can take its time deciding what to do with the property and use it for ecologically sensitive film shoots in the interim. The anticipated close of escrow is in early 2018.