MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** The Governing Board

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

**DATE:** November 1, 2017

**SUBJECT:** **Agenda Item VIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 1 funds for pond improvements at King Gillette Ranch and Franklin Canyon Park.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 1 funds for pond improvements at King Gillette Ranch and Franklin Canyon Park in the amount of $300,000.

Background: Both King Gillette Ranch and Franklin Canyon Park feature man-made ponds that pre-date MRCA's management tenure. No as-builts, engineering drawings, or maintenance manuals have ever been located for either pond. At the time these ponds were constructed, it is likely that water and energy conservation were not a design priority. Over the years, MRCA's maintenance and construction staff have been able to keep the ponds functioning through trial and error and occasional equipment replacements. Both ponds are highly visible and enjoyed by visitors and local wildlife, and keeping them operational is crucial. Rehabilitation of these water resources at this time to make operation more sustainable would also result in easier and lower cost maintenance.

The King Gillette Ranch pond was part of the property's original development in the 1920s by Wallace Neff. The pond, created by diverting water from Stokes Creek, was a critical component of the estate's landscape design. It is possible that clay soil from the pond excavation was used to form the adoblar for the Gillette residence and other structures. In the 1960s the Claretians bisected the pond with a levee supporting a new access road to their new novitiate center. In 2012 a surface water heat exchanger system was installed in the pond to provide cooling for the National Park Service's Visitor Center. The pond maintains a consistent nuisance growth of duckweed due to the amount of nitrogen in the reclaimed water and runoff from the lawn. Currently the lining is deteriorated, causing higher rates of water loss, and a substantial layer of sediment prevents the circulation pump from operating optimally. There are a variety of rehabilitation ideas, ranging from replacement of the levee to

reconnect the two sections, modification or burial of the heat exchanger system, new aquatic landscape treatment along the pond edges, development of a well to provide a better water source, and various options for pumps and mechanical systems.

Heavenly Pond in Franklin Canyon Park also is in subprime condition and a variety of options exist that would increase sustainability. The circulation pump and the aeration and filtration systems all require replacement, however the new systems need to be engineered and evaluated as part of a comprehensive rehabilitation effort. Measures to reduce the rate of water loss are also needed, as well as an evaluation of sustainable water sources for replenishment.

The feasibility of these multiple options has not yet been deeply evaluated since the capital funding for substantial repairs was not secured. A comprehensive plan for both of these water resources is needed in order to determine the rehabilitation measures. The proposed grant would fund the planning and investigations needed and some improvements. A more detailed cost proposal for capital improvements at each site will be prepared once the approach is determined.

Consideration: The grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy will be for $300,000 of Proposition 1 funding.

Fiscal Impact: The subject grant was not included in the fiscal year 17/18 budget and will need to be added. The subject grant will not result in any new maintenance obligations. A capital investment in the ponds will extend their useful life span and is expected to reduce MRCA's maintenance costs over the long term.