



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: December 5, 2018

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant of Proposition 1 funds for Temescal Gateway Park safety and restoration improvements, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant of Proposition 1 funds for Temescal Gateway Park safety and restoration improvements in the amount of \$200,000, City of Los Angeles.

Background: Located in the Santa Monica Bay Watershed in the Pacific Palisades, Temescal Gateway Park is one of the most popular parks in the Santa Monica Mountains. The park encompasses 141 acres of oak and sycamore canyons, ridgetop views, and access to trails in Topanga State Park and Will Rogers State Historic Park.

The recent Woolsey Fire provides a clear picture of how a wildfire in the Santa Monica Mountains is likely to progress and what types of built facilities are most vulnerable. Buildings that are in close proximity to each other, such as in Temescal Gateway Park, make for a situation that can be difficult for firefighters to control. Woodlands and forests that are stressed after continued years of drought and various pests also present a challenge when they contain significant amounts of combustible dead wood and litter. During a conflagration, firefighting resources are highly likely to be stretched thinly and/or concentrating their efforts in areas outside of natural parkland. Given that the weather and ignition conditions which contributed to the Woolsey Fire are likely to occur again this season, it is imperative that capital improvements targeted toward protecting and restoring the resources of Temescal Gateway Park commence immediately.

Structures within the property that could be vulnerable to natural disasters include the classrooms, administration offices, restrooms, Elizabeth A. Cheadle Hall, staff

residences, maintenance storage buildings, Stewart Hall, bungalows, cabins, dormitories, and the former pool house. Infrastructure elements that could be vulnerable include culverts, roads, various drainages, utilities, water tanks and storage, and trees within the park's forest that are undergoing stress from continued drought. While fire may still occur on the property, the proposed improvements will improve firefighters' ability to defend structures and other resources.

Work proposed includes removal and thinning of vulnerable vegetation, clearance of litter and debris around and on structures, clearing drainage ways and pipes, sealing of vents and building penetrations/openings, and adding water storage. The maintenance storage buildings will be evaluated and may be replaced depending on the feasibility of upgrades. The work will be concentrated in the developed areas of the park and focused on a goal of structure protection. Materials will be chosen to minimize maintenance costs where possible. The requested grant would fund project planning and design and construction of improvements. Work will be accomplished by a combination of MRCA staff and subcontractors.

Consideration: The grant application will be for \$200,000 of Proposition 1 funds.

Fiscal Impact: The subject grant was not anticipated in the adopted FY 18/19 budget and will need to be added if the funds are awarded. The majority of the funds will be spent during the current fiscal year. Where possible, the improvements will be designed to decrease the amount of existing maintenance costs for the site. The proposed work will not result in any new maintenance obligations.

If the grant is not awarded, the proposed work could be scaled back or eliminated, but that would leave the property more vulnerable. There would be a higher potential of significant but unrecoverable damage costs. Such costs would have to be paid from the limited general fund, Benefit Assessment District, or Proposition A/Measure A operations and maintenance funds.