




# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: June 5, 2019

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XV: Consideration of resolution (a) authorizing an application to the Wildlife Conservation Board's (WCB) Wildlife Corridor and Fish Passage Program, (b) accepting the WCB grant award, and (c) entering into a grant agreement with WCB to implement the Marple Canyon Wildlife Crossing Enhancement Project in unincorporated Castaic area, Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing an application to the WCB's Wildlife Corridor and Fish Passage Program, accepting the WCB grant award, and entering into a grant agreement with WCB to implement the Marple Canyon Wildlife Crossing Enhancement Project near Castaic.

Background: In December 2018, MRCA accepted a donation of approximately 250 acres in the Marple Canyon tributary of the Santa Clara River in unincorporated Castaic area, Los Angeles County.

The Marple Canyon Wildlife Crossing Enhancement Project seeks \$247,000 to restore/enhance approximately 2.75 acres of native habitat on the west and east approaches to the single-lane box culvert for the Marple Canyon access road under the southbound lanes of Interstate 5 (I-5). The Project Area is located in the northeastern portion of MRCA's recent 250-acre acquisition.

The South Coast Missing Linkages Project identifies Marple Canyon as the southerly portion of the Sierra Madre - Castaic Connection's least cost corridor for mountain lion, mule deer, and the Pacific kangaroo rat among other species of concern and further recognizes enhancing connectivity and linking natural landscapes as the single most important adaptation strategy to conserve biodiversity during climate change.

Implementation of this Project will increase the ecological functionality of the Project Area, and because I-5 represents a major barrier to all types of wildlife, successful Project completion will help maintain regional biodiversity and improve terrestrial habitat

and connectivity across the I-5 barrier.

Non-native grasses and forbs currently dominate the 2.75-acre Project Area. Project implementation will improve conditions for wildlife usage of the access road undercrossing by controlling non-native vegetation and installing native vegetation to shield light and noise from southbound I-5 traffic and provide shade and cover for wildlife before and after crossing. The bulk of native plant installation will occur in Fall 2020 followed by three years of active maintenance, monitoring, and, if necessary, adaptive management. No jurisdiction agency permits are needed for this Project.

As part of this Project, MRCA staff would also install, monitor, and maintain wildlife cameras to collect wildlife usage data. Wildlife camera monitoring prior to native vegetation installation would provide a limited baseline usage of the Project Area culvert. Regular camera monitoring post-installation will document wildlife usage for, at minimum, the three-year Project monitoring period.