



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: August 7, 2019

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 84 and Proposition 1 funds for River Green project planning and design, Upper Los Angeles River Watershed.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for Proposition 84 and Proposition 1 funds for River Green project planning and design, Upper Los Angeles River Watershed in the amount of \$1,000,000.

Background: River Green is the idea that the essence of a river can be understood through its identifiable natural resources, such as presence of water, wildlife, ability to support recreation, etc., and that those characteristics are fundamentally important to all. The historic pattern of land use and development around the Los Angeles River does not promote these values. Since the mid-1990s, MRCA, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and many community-based organizations have striven to keep protection of the river's natural resources in the forefront of discussions about the river's future. The success of MRCA's river parks, and their emotional appeal, attests both to the universal appeal of natural resources and to the need for more green projects on the river. These types of projects also increase the region's resiliency to the impacts of climate change, and benefit all communities.

Several important regional river planning efforts are currently underway (e.g. the Conservancy's Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries Revitalization Plan and the County's Los Angeles River Master Plan Update) that seek to coordinate stakeholders and unify planning efforts throughout the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed. While these planning efforts strive to find balance in competing policies, goals, and systemic issues that affect the watershed, the region's current needs for low-cost housing, transportation options, and the conscientious use of water resources have the potential to overshadow our equally dire needs for more green space, natural habitat, outdoor passive recreation, and spaces for respite.

Furthermore, there is little discussion about connecting the region's waterway corridors to the wildlife and trail corridors that existing in the surrounding mountains, and this also needs to be included in current planning.

The MRCA seeks to frame River discussions with the premise that revitalization is fundamentally a green process. There is a need to ensure that the policies and goals now being developed include the River Green concept, and deeply integrate it in the efforts of all of the jurisdictions working along the waterways of the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed. Staff plan to work with a team of consultants to develop a guiding vision and recommendations that will be recommended for implementation throughout all of the various planning efforts currently underway. Technical and engineering studies that support and quantify the River Green concept will be conducted. The proposed grant will also be used to identify and develop a wide range of potential projects that would implement the River Green concept, including acquisition of land, public access points, and recreational opportunities throughout the watershed.

In 2017, the State of California appropriated Proposition 1 Urban Creeks funding to the Conservancy. Staff is asking for authorization to apply for these funds as well as the Conservancy's Proposition 84 funds for project planning and design for the River Green efforts. The combination of the two funding sources will ensure that the River Green effort is applied to the river's main stem and its tributaries.

Consideration: The grant application will be for up to \$1,000,000, split equally between the two funding sources.

Fiscal Impact: If awarded, the subject grant will need to be added to the MRCA's fiscal year 2019-20 budget. There is no impact on the general fund.