



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: October 2, 2019

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XI: Consideration of resolution authorizing 1) entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, 2) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board, 3) use of mitigation funds and acceptance of private funds for said acquisition and option payment, 4) acquisition of APNs 2821-008-031 and 035 approximately 261 acres, and 5) entering into an option agreement as necessary, Mormon and Browns Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board authorize 1) entering into a Project Agreement with the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, 2) entering into a grant agreement with the Wildlife Conservation Board, 3) use of mitigation funds and acceptance of private funds for said acquisition and option payment, 4) acquisition of APNs 2821-008-031 and 035 approximately 261 acres, and 5) entering into an option agreement as necessary, Mormon and Browns Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: Staff has sought to acquire the 273 acre Hidden Creek property in Browns Canyon for over a decade. The current project ownership has suspended moving forward with entitlements for its 188 home proposed project. They are willing sellers at a specific price for the whole property and at a lesser price for two parcels that make up the bulk of the ownership. Staff has recent appraisals for the 273-acre and reduced 261-acre offerings. It appears that only the 261-acre version is within the MRCA's financial means at this time. The 261 acres would include dirt road access for public use from Browns Canyon Road.

The Wildlife Conservation Board staff and the Fifth Supervisorial District Supervisor have both agreed to generous funding contributions. All elements to complete the deal are in place except at the time of this report writing insufficient funds have been secured to meet the minimum price. If the ownership agrees to the funding that is currently available, the Wildlife Conservation Board would consider its grant this

Agenda Item XI  
October 2, 2019  
Page 2

November and the deal would close in 2019. The attached resolution also authorizes entering into an option agreement to seek additional funding if the Seller is willing. It further authorizes making an option payment if necessary.

The property is regionally significant within the Santa Susana Mountains ecosystem. The section of Mormon Creek within and adjacent to the property provides year-round clear surface flows even in the waning summer months of consecutive drought years. The property abuts Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch that is part of an 11,000-acre contiguous MRCA-owned block of habitat.