



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: May 6, 2020

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VI(d): Consideration of resolution authorizing entering into license agreements with private parties to construct, maintain, and monitor native toad ponds on APNs 3244-014-908 and -909, 3247-017-900 through -912, and 3247-018-903 with fees paid to MRCA for land use and legal expenses, Marple Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board authorize entering into license agreements with private parties to construct, maintain, and monitor native toad ponds on APNs 3244-014-908 and -909, 3247-017-900 through -912, and 3247-018-903 with fees paid to MRCA for land use and legal expenses, Marple Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background:

In July of 2019, the MRCA completed acquisition of the final parcel connecting a two-mile contiguous stretch of parcels know as Marple Canyon, between the northbound and southbound portions of the I-5 freeway in Castaic, California. APNs 3244-014-908 and -909, 3247-017-900 through -912, and 3247-018-903.

Marple Canyon has potential for habitat improvement projects, including land available for the creation of ponds capable of holding rainwater to allow for amphibian breeding. The canyon contains an ephemeral creek running the length of the canyon, which is fed by a watershed on the south slope of the San Gabriel Mountains - Castaic linkage.

MRCA has been contacted by private parties seeking mitigation for impacts to toad habitats in nearby developments. Regulatory agencies are requiring these parties to create toad ponds as compensatory mitigation for their impacts. Marple Canyon presents itself as a suitable location to accommodate these mitigation needs.

Staff has corresponded with the United States Geologic Survey (USGS), whose staff are excited about the possibility of new toad breeding ponds in the area.

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The private parties are requesting access to MRCA land to create these ponds. In order to allow the use of the land, a license agreement needs to be in place between MRCA and the parties requesting use of the land. MRCA would receive land usage and legal fees upon execution of these agreements. Once the project reaches its five-year completion, MRCA will receive annual funding from an endowment to monitor the site in perpetuity.

MRCA has also been contacted by parties seeking riparian habitat mitigation. Marple Canyon has riparian restoration acreage available. See attached map for details on habitat improvement zones.

This action will allow MRCA to receive funding and facilitate the creation of a currently deficient habitat types within the greater Santa Clara River watershed.

Fiscal Impact: Land use fees, legal fees, and monitoring fees to be collected by MRCA.

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