




MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
570 West Avenue Twenty-six, Suite 100
Los Angeles, California 90065
Phone (323) 221-9944

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: October 7, 2020

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII: Consideration of resolution of the governing board of the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority authorizing a Letter of Support to the California Department of Parks and Recreation to allocate SB 115 Proposition 68 funds Rio de Los Angeles State Park, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution to send a Letter of Support to the California Department of Parks and Recreation to allocate SB 115 Proposition 68 funds for Rio de Los Angeles State Park.

Background: Rio de Los Angeles State Park (RdLA) has been a tremendous example and success story as a park that has been developed from an industrial brownfield into a greenfield and offers both habitat restoration areas with passive recreational opportunities, as well as active recreational spaces alongside. In the 13 years since the park has been opened, it has seen incredible use by the park starved surrounding communities and region, so much so that many areas have been overused and now are in need of significant investment due to aging infrastructure. Likely the most abundant use area has been in the park's active recreation soccer fields, where only one of the four fields is lighted to facilitate evening use, thereby shrinking the time period the fields can be used. RdLA is also unique in that it is a State Parks property that is operated in partnership by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). RdLA is one of DPR's first urban parks that utilizes an innovative and successful partnership with the City at a former rail yard/brownfield site, now remediated and converted to park and open space. This has been a success in joint-use development, but has also led to difficulty in identifying and receiving resources to maintain the park to a standard commensurate with the significant daily use.

The MRCA with DPR and the City of Los Angeles, through our "100-Acre Partnership at Taylor Yard" (Partnership) in development, are readying to begin a coordinated community-driven, design effort that will initiate phased improvements across the G1 (Bowtie) and G2 parcels to create a long-term interconnected 100-acre open space area, including at RdLA. Our intent is that the river edge parcels (Bowtie and G2) will be designed to provide high quality habitat and ecological restoration with public access that provides passive recreational opportunities that fit with the similar missions of DPR and MRCA. As mentioned above, there are already active recreation facilities at RdLA, though overutilized, but additional investment in improvements at RdLA to provide additional capacity and recreational opportunities will allow development of the river edge parcels to provide a portfolio

of nature based investments making the linked 100-acre open space a truly game changing area for the surrounding communities.

Rio de Los Angeles State Park is one of the first and *only* urban State Parks in California. It is located in a disadvantaged community, situated on a converted former rail yard which is now a park as a result of community advocacy and action. The park is located in one of the most disadvantaged communities statewide and is in the highest percentile of the state's CalEnviroScreen 3.0. RdLA serves communities in Los Angeles that currently have few, if any, other nearby options for outdoor recreation. Because of this, previous efforts to secure funding for RdLA, which has not been maintained befitting its use levels and requires updates and improvements, has drawn overwhelming support and engagement from local communities and a broad coalition working in conservation, climate, outdoor education and access issues. In fact, when RAP applied for the Proposition 68 AB 31/Local Parks Program last year, the proposal was largely informed by feedback from community members and groups nearby that want to see active and passive recreation facilities at RdLA. Unfortunately, because the Proposition 68 AB 31/Local Parks Program is intended to fund the creation of new parks, Rio de Los Angeles did not qualify to be funded by the program and did not receive funding.

Staff's understanding is that in budget trailer bill, SB 115, section 28, 2(e) regarding Proposition 68 local assistance grants from DPR, \$4.625M in funding was intended to be appropriated towards aging infrastructure improvements at RdLA directly to the City of Los Angeles. However, due to earmarks being removed from this year's budget, the language tying these funds to RdLA became less clear despite the intent that the local agency be the City. In order to reconcile that this funding could be distributed to other local agencies working within State Park units needing improvements, it is imperative to request that the DPR Director appropriate all of these funds towards RdLA. Furthermore, the City of Los Angeles has recently committed a 25% match of all funds received from DPR Proposition 68, which would allocate over \$5.5M total in needed resources. These funds are uniquely suited for the needs at RdLA, since it often does not qualify for other funding programs, being a State Park owned property that is managed by the City of Los Angeles. Active recreation funding for RdLA will directly benefit the surrounding communities and further help in the Partnership's planning activities throughout the remainder of the 100-acres of open space at Taylor Yard.

Consideration: The Chair to send a Letter of Support to the California Department of Parks and Recreation to provide \$4.625M in SB 115 Proposition 68 local assistance funding for improvements at Rio de Los Angeles State Park, as well as supporting an additional 25% match funding commitment by the City.

Fiscal Impact: There will be no fiscal impacts to the Agency if the Proposition 68 funds are awarded to the City of Los Angeles for infrastructure improvements at Rio de Los Angeles State Park, as the site is maintained in partnership by California Department of Parks and Recreation and the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks.