



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
570 West Avenue Twenty-Six, Suite 100
Los Angeles, California 90065
Phone (323) 221-9944 Fax (323) 221-9934

October 7, 2020

Director Armando Quintero
California Department of Parks and Recreation
1419 9th Street
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: Letter of Support for Request for \$4.6M to Rio de Los Angeles State Park

Dear Director Quintero:

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) respectfully is writing to request that the \$4.6 million in Proposition 68 funds appropriated to the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) be allocated to Rio de Los Angeles State Park. This appropriation makes available grant funds for a local agency that operates a unit of the state park system to address urgent needs for restoration of aging infrastructure, pursuant to the budget trailer bill, SB 115, section 28, 2(e). We strongly support this year's funds be granted to the City of Los Angeles (City) for maintenance and improvements at the highly utilized Rio de Los Angeles State Park- one of DPR's first urban parks, which is an innovative partnership with the City at a former rail yard, now converted park/open space.

The MRCA is a public agency which was established in 1985 pursuant to the Joint Powers Act and is a partnership between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The MRCA manages more than 75,000 acres of parkland and is dedicated to the preservation and management of local open space and parkland, wildlife habitat, watershed lands, and trails as well as ensuring public access to public parkland. As advocates for the Los Angeles River, we have actively acquired and developed open spaces adjacent to the River to undergo river restoration efforts. Additionally, to develop and provide planning of River and tributary path greenways and existing parks and planned future parks, which provide habitat for Los Angeles' wildlife in an otherwise concretized city.

The MRCA with DPR and the City, 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 Rio de los Angeles State Park. 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 there are already active recreation facilities at Rio de Los Angeles State Park, investment in improvements to provide additional capacity and recreational opportunities, allows development of the river edge parcels to provide a portfolio of more nature based investments making the linked 100-acre open space a truly game changing area for the surrounding community.

As a Parks agency that works in open space conservation and park access, we agree that ensuring that there are safe and well-maintained parks in every community is of utmost importance. We understand that with the constraints on the budget due to COVID-19, it

may be difficult to consider spending on a park project, but we feel that it is all the more necessary since outdoor spaces are among the only safe places to visit during this crisis and can offer solace to many that are struggling during this time. Additionally, because we know that there are significant disparities across the state in the presence of parks and other outdoor spaces, we feel that strategic investments in communities that face barriers to access are necessary.

Rio de Los Angeles State Park is located in one of the most disadvantaged communities and is in the highest percentile of the state's CalEnviroScreen 3.0. The park serves communities in Los Angeles that have few, if any, other nearby options for outdoor recreation. Because of this, previous efforts to secure funding for Rio de Los Angeles State Park, which has not been maintained befitting its use levels and requires updates and improvements, has drawn overwhelming support and engagement from local communities. In fact, when the Los Angeles City Recreation and Parks Department 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 Rio de Los Angeles. 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.

However, there is still a dire need for improvements at Rio de Los Angeles State Park, as well as a valuable opportunity to develop 100 acres of contiguous park and open space along the Los Angeles River in the Bowtie parcel, if funding is made available for updates and maintenance. Because of this, we respectfully urge you to grant the \$4.6 million appropriated to DPR for grants to local agencies that operate a unit of the state park system in SB 115 from Proposition 68 to the City of Los Angeles for Rio de Los Angeles State Park. These funds are uniquely suited for the needs at Rio de Los Angeles, 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.

Thank you for your consideration. Please address any future notices and/or questions to Brian Baldauf, Chief of Watershed Planning at brian.baldauf@mrca.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

George Lange
Chairperson