



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: December 02, 2020

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing acquisition of fee title to approximately 0.57 acres (APN 4460-028-012), Escondido Beach, Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of a donation and acquisition of fee title to approximately 0.57 acres (APN 4460-028-012), Escondido Beach, Los Angeles County.

Background: The beaches in western Malibu are the closest beaches for many of the 20 million residents of the greater Los Angeles Metropolitan Area and, importantly, for a large range of underserved communities that often have inadequate access to public spaces in the region.

Of these Malibu beaches, Escondido Beach is unusually wide and especially lovely. Escondido Beach is one of the few beaches that generally remains uncovered at high tide, open and safe for visitors to enjoy throughout the day. Its close proximity to the hiking trails across the Pacific Coast Highway (PCH)---and to the especially popular Escondido Canyon waterfalls---also makes Escondido a wonderful "mountains-to-ocean" destination. In fact, Escondido Canyon Park was top of the Los Angeles Times' best Thanksgiving hikes for 2020. See <https://www.latimes.com/travel/story/2020-11-24/la-hikes-2020-thanksgiving-weekend>.

The proposed donation and acquisition of the subject parcel (Los Angeles County Assessor's Parcel No. 4460-028-012) (beach parcel) will provide a fee interest directly on Escondido Beach for the public to recreate and access throughout the day. The fee owner is a member of the Rindge family and the beach parcel has been under the family's ownership since the late 1800s when the Rindge's purchased the 13,300-acre Spanish land grant Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit or "Malibu Rancho"; which is now present day Malibu, California. The Rindge family later expanded it to 17,000 acres known as Rindge Ranch.

There has been unadjudicated but observed historical public use of the beach parcel which lies immediately adjacent to the west of a public beach accessway owned and managed by Los Angeles County Beaches and Harbors. It is impossible for the public to distinguish the private beach property from the public beach property and to staff's knowledge, the beach parcel owner never prohibited public use of the private beach property.

With the MRCA's approval of another donation for safe access to Escondido Beach on today's agenda, beachgoers will be able to access the beach parcel from both the north and south sides of the PCH. From the north, access to the beach parcel will be via a safe pedestrian access utilizing a historic 10-foot earthen path running approximately 130 feet to a California Department of Transportation-managed box culvert under the PCH leading to Escondido Beach. From the south side of the PCH access will be via the County public accessway.

The PCH offers ample, unrestricted shoulder parking along both its northern and southern sides as it traverses the Escondido Beach area. In addition, parking is available at the MRCA's Winding Way parking lot that lies 0.5 miles to the west for the members of the public who wish to hike Escondido Canyon Park trail, visit Escondido Beach and return via the trail to the parking lot.

Bus stops for the #534 bus route are on the north and south side of the PCH at this intersection, providing direct access to Escondido Beach using local public transit. And the much-anticipated trail linkage via Meadows Court connecting Escondido Beach to Escondido Canyon Park and its waterfalls lies only a short walk of approximately 600 feet west. (See Exhibit 2).

Once accepted, the beach parcel will remain in its present condition to preserve existing natural conditions and the open space character of Escondido Beach. MRCA rules signs will be placed on the north side of the PCH for future management of the safe pedestrian crossing easement and this beach parcel.

Consideration: The proposed action would authorize MRCA to accept the donation and acquisition of fee title to approximately 0.57 acres (Los Angeles County Assessor's Parcel No 4460-028-012), securing the public's right to enjoy this sandy beach parcel on Escondido Beach.

CEQA : Acceptance of this beach parcel is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) section 15317 because it is an acceptance of a parcel in order to maintain the open space character of the area and section 15325 because acceptance of the fee title is a transfer of ownership of land to preserve open space. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.