



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: January 6, 2021

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII(b): Consideration of resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant of Environment License Plate funds for the Community Nature Connection Youth Leadership Series.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant of Environmental License Plate funds for the Community Nature Connection Youth Leadership Series in the amount of \$120,000.

Background: The Youth Leadership Series, operated by Community Nature Connection (CNC), is a year long, multi-program series that leads young people from disadvantaged communities, through a series of training and on the job experience in furtherance of a pipeline to either a career in parks, entrance to university, or both. Programmatic and staffing components of the Youth Leadership Series includes Naturalist Explorers, the Community Naturalists Leadership Program and Outdoor Leaders.

By investing in young leaders from under represented communities and preparing them for jobs in the outdoor field and with public park agencies, we are also addressing a significant barrier to park access from these communities. Lack of representation of staff and volunteers from diverse communities is often cited as a source of fear or discomfort by new park visitors. "Will there be someone who looks like me?" "Someone who speaks my language." Many participants from the Series have gone on to be hired as Outdoors Leaders and Naturalist with CNC and local, state and federal agencies, addressing this important issue of representation and diversity in our profession.

Program participants are recruited through local community based organizations who are CNC partners.

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Consideration: Funding for the Youth Leadership Series has been allocated from the Environmental License Plate Fund in the amount of \$120,000. MRCA will grant these funds to Community Nature Connection for operation of these programs.