



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: February 3, 2021

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XIII: Consideration of resolution authorizing the acceptance of approximately six acres (APN 2813-024-800) from Southern California Edison in Mint Canyon, upper Santa Clara River watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the acceptance of approximately six acres (APN 2813-024-800) from Southern California Edison in Mint Canyon, upper Santa Clara River watershed, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: Southern California Edison (SCE) recently approached staff regarding SCE's potential divestment of approximately six acres (APN 2813-024-800) as surplus land in Mint Canyon of the upper Santa Clara River watershed. The subject property is located approximately five miles north of Soledad Canyon Road on the east side of Sierra Highway (see attached map).

The subject property is located within the South Coast Missing Linkages Project's *San Gabriel-Castaic Connection* and the Angeles Linkage CAPP approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The subject property contains approximately 700 feet of Mint Creek and approximately 225 feet of an unnamed tributary comprising a total of 925 feet of onsite USGS blue-line stream. The California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) lists Mint Canyon, including the subject property, as potential habitat for the federal- and state-listed endangered slender-horned spineflower (*Dodecahema leptoceras*). The CNDDDB also documents the Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)--a CDFW species of special concern--occurring within one-mile of the subject property. Further up Mint Canyon, CNDDDB lists occurrences of Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest, Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Woodland, and Southern Riparian Scrub indicating the subject property is likely to support similar habitats.

An adjacent property owner illegally graded a road and deposited fill on the subject property and the two adjoining properties with the intent of establishing a major access road for a large development. The process has been arrested by Los Angeles County. The property is strategically located. Prior to transferring the property SCE would clear up issues with the County and RWQCB. SCE would recontour the site to address the illegal grading and would put up the necessary fencing and lines of large boulders to prevent car and truck access. The transfer would take at least a year. SCE would reserve the rights it needs and provide the MRCA an access easement through its adjoining property.

The illegal grading is ugly and off high vehicles will continue to use the property initially, but this property is critical to regional habitat connectivity. All other liability issues shall be addressed prior to transfer. Natural restoration of the wash will occur. To achieve the Governor's 30% by 2030 land protection objective, free (pre-fenced and gated land) must be accepted, particularly in a narrow section of a regionally significant habitat linkage. In addition this project sets an excellent pathway for future land protection cooperation with SCE.