

FULL TEXT OF BALLOT MEASURE GG

MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY SPECIAL TAX FOR WILDLIFE HABITAT, LOCAL FIRE PREVENTION, AND OPEN SPACE

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority ("MRCA") is a local park agency whose members include the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The MRCA maintains and improves open space, parkland and wildlife habitats and provides fire protection and prevention services and park ranger patrols and services within the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Zone. The MRCA currently maintains over 1,075 acres of local open space, parkland and wildlife habitats and corridors, in the Woodland Hills, Encino and Tarzana Hillside Areas (the "Woodland Hills, Encino and Tarzana Hillside Areas" or the "Areas").

Unlike most public agencies, the MRCA does not receive permanent funding from local, state or federal sources. For the past 12 years, the Woodland Hills, Encino and Tarzana Hillside Areas have thrived under the protection and maintenance afforded by locally controlled funding measures. These measures, approved by our community, have enabled the MRCA to both expand and maintain the beauty and safety of our parklands, open spaces, and wildlife corridors. This vital source of funding is in jeopardy. The special tax approved in 2012 has expired, and the 2016 parcel tax is set to expire in a few years. Without renewal, the MRCA will face a significant funding shortfall. Additionally, inflation and increasing labor costs further worsen the financial strain, resulting in reduced services for maintaining wildlife habitats, open space, parklands, fire safety measures, and ranger patrols. No new local wildlife habitat can be acquired.

The proposed measure would increase the funding available to save local habitat and wildlife corridors before they are lost to development. Renewed funding will ensure that the MRCA would be able to continue and improve its local services including open space brush clearing efforts and fire prevention strategies, and the added presence of park rangers for safety and crime prevention.

The Santa Monica Mountains are home to many different plants and animals. As more and more land is lost to development, it is critical that the few remaining wildlife habitats ~~between the 405 Freeway and Griffith Park~~ are permanently protected. These wildlife habitats are necessary to ensure native wildlife such as mountain lions, deer, bobcats and grey foxes can survive in these Areas. The MRCA is the only public agency that actively acquires and maintains open space and conservation easements for wildlife habitats and corridors in these Areas.

These funds are necessary to continue providing local fire protection and prevention services including brush clearance throughout the community and along Mulholland Drive; to remove illegal encampments; to preserve, improve and maintain open space, parkland, and wildlife habitat corridors, to save the remaining local springs and creeks; and to provide park ranger safety and security patrols and services. Therefore, the MRCA is proposing a voter-approved local special tax within a community facilities district located in a designated portion of the Woodland Hills, Encino and Tarzana Hillside Areas located west of Interstate 405, as shown on the map accompanying this proposition (the "Woodland Hills, Encino and Tarzana Hillside Areas").

The summary of the proposed ballot proposition is:

To preserve local habitat and wildlife corridors before they are lost to development, increase local fire prevention/protection services including clearing dry brush; maintain local open space and water quality; enhance park ranger patrols for safety, wildfire/crime prevention; shall the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority measure renewing and establishing a \$38 special tax for fifteen years only be adopted, providing \$614,000 annually with citizen oversight and all money spent in the hillside communities of Woodland Hills, Encino, and Tarzana?

Developed parcels subject to the special tax are those parcels that appear on the annual secured Los Angeles County property tax rolls, and that have been improved for residential, commercial or other purposes. Unimproved parcels within the Woodland Hills, Encino, and Tarzana Areas shall be exempt from the special tax.

Also, developed parcels owned and occupied by a person or persons whose combined family income is at or below 50% of the median family income for the Los Angeles Long Beach Glendale, CA United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Metro Fair Market Rents Area shall be exempt from the special tax. Property owners seeking a low income exemption must submit an application and provide the required verification documentation by June 1 prior to the tax year. The Board shall establish administrative procedures for the administration of this exemption.

If approved by the voters, the special tax will be used for the purposes of maintaining, improving, servicing, protecting, and preserving open space, parkland, wildlife corridors, natural habitats, lands, waters, and facilities owned, managed or maintained by the MRCA within the Woodland Hills, Encino, and Tarzana Areas; for financing the acquisition of additional lands and protection of such lands from development in the Woodland Hills, Encino, and Tarzana Areas; for park ranger patrols and services; and for the reduction of the risk of wildfires including fire protection, prevention and suppression and brush clearing ("Services and Facilities"); and paying any administrative or incidental expenses thereto, including any costs related to the collection or use of the special tax. The Services and Facilities include, but are not limited to, the protection of water quality, the reduction of the risk of wildfires, park ranger safety and security services, and the collection and accumulation of prudent financial reserves.

The special tax revenues shall be deposited into a separate account for exclusive use by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, in accordance with Government Code Section 50075.1, and shall be expended by the MRCA according to a plan developed annually by the MRCA's staff and approved and adopted by the MRCA's Board of Directors. A citizens' oversight committee appointed by the Board will review and report annually on the expenditure of the special tax revenues.

The MRCA will submit an annual report to its Board of Directors, which includes the amount of special tax revenues collected and expended, and fully complies with the accountability measures established in Government Code Sections 50075 et seq.