



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
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Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Celebrates Trail Opening, Land Acquisition, and Major Investments at Elephant Hill Open Space

LOS ANGELES (May 2, 2026) — The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), in partnership with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) and community partner Save Elephant Hill, announced today the opening of a new public trail and the expansion of protected open space at Elephant Hill Open Space in the northeast Los Angeles community of El Sereno.

“The new Elephant Hill Open Space trail is the first official trail specifically for public use on Elephant Hill in El Sereno,” said Elva Yanez, Board President of Save Elephant Hill. “While the public has informally accessed the 10 acres of parkland managed by the MRCA for generations, hiking, birding, and nature exploration will now be safer and more enjoyable.”

Funded by a \$700,000 grant from the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District Proposition A, the new 0.75-mile trail enhances public access to this unique urban natural area. The grant also funded the acquisition of four additional parcels of public open space.

“The preservation of hillsides across Los Angeles County has not been equitable. For too long, hillsides have been protected for the benefit of a few, while communities of color have had limited access to open space and the natural resources. The Regional Park and Open Space District’s (RPOSD) grant represents a meaningful investment in not only preserving hillsides, but about ensuring that the last remaining hillsides in urbanized Los Angeles County are made available to the public and accessible spaces for recreation, respite, and community and nature connection. With this \$700,000 RPOSD grant, 16 additional parcels at Elephant Hill are now permanently protected, and a new trail is open to the community,” said Norma E. García-González, Director of the Regional Park and Open Space District.

Elephant Hill Open Space is a significant ecological and recreational asset within the historic El Sereno community, offering native habitat, scenic views, and opportunities for passive recreation in one of the most park-poor areas of Los Angeles. In addition to MRCA parkland, the City of Los Angeles has preserved 15 acres of the undeveloped 110-acre hilltop.

The natural area has a complex ownership pattern, consisting mainly of small, privately owned parcels across more than 200 non-contiguous holdings. The MRCA is actively working to acquire additional properties and bring more land under public protection. In 2025, the agency received \$2.3 million in grants of Proposition 68 funds from the Conservancy to support this effort including acquisition of 12 parcels.

“The Elephant Hill Trail project is a powerful reminder of what’s possible when a community comes together with shared purpose and determination,” said George Lange, Chair of the Governing Board of the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. “Our partner, Save

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Elephant Hill, has brought extraordinary tenacity and creativity to this effort, championing the protection and long-term stewardship of this irreplaceable landscape.”

The Conservancy also granted \$200,000 in Proposition 4 funds to Save Elephant Hill to develop a community-centered conservation vision and toolkit, including outreach, education, and engagement strategies to support land conservation and strengthen partnerships with property owners and stakeholders.

The new trail has been in development by the MRCA for many years. The agency hosted community workshops and engaged trail planning consultants, Alta Planning and Design, to identify a feasible trail alignment that best utilized MRCA land holdings given the steep terrain. The final trail design spans approximately 0.75 miles across MRCA-owned parcels, navigating the site’s topography with switchbacks and drainage features. Additional project elements include trailhead fencing, signage, landscape boulders, and new native trees. The Los Angeles Conservation Corps constructed the trail with support from Bellfree Contractors.

A \$1.2 million grant from California State Parks’ Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division supports increased ranger patrols, installation of gates, signage, and barriers, as well as collaborative community engagement efforts led by Save Elephant Hill in partnership with local community-based partner organizations. These measures help address ongoing challenges while preserving the site’s natural character. Additional ranger patrol funding of \$558,000 was secured by Congressman Jimmy Gomez through the Congressional Community Project Funding program through the Department of Justice.

Additionally, Elephant Hill Open Space has been selected for study under the Safe Clean Water Program Technical Resources Program. The feasibility study will evaluate opportunities to prioritize nature-based solutions that address water quality concerns and provide community benefits.

Save Elephant Hill is a community-based organization that emerged from a successful land use effort to protect Elephant Hill from development more than 15 years ago. Among its ongoing efforts, the organization works with the MRCA, other government agencies, and community-based partners to engage residents and stakeholders on conservation issues including acquisitions planning, habitat restoration and increasing access to open space. Save Elephant Hill works alongside a number of local partners on Elephant Hill issues including the California Native Plant Society, Coyotl + Macehualli, Heroes of Elephant Hill, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains, and Test Plot – Elephant Hill.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local government public entity exercising joint powers with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The MRCA is dedicated to preserving and managing local open space and parkland, wildlife habitat, coastal access, watershed lands, and trails in both wilderness and urban settings, while ensuring public access to these resources.

The MRCA works in cooperation with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and other local government partners to acquire parkland, participate in planning processes, promote wildfire resilience, and connect wildlife habitats. The MRCA manages more than 85,000 acres of parkland, including land it owns and land owned by the Conservancy. It is also one of the lead agencies involved in revitalizing the Los Angeles River.

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