

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 25, 2005

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 17: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority contingent upon approval by the Attorney General to acquire approximately 68-acres of surplus property owned by Los Angeles County in the Sylvia Park and Garapito Canyon areas of Topanga Canyon.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds in an amount not to exceed \$110,000 the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) contingent upon approval by the Attorney General to acquire approximately 62-acres of surplus property owned by Los Angeles County in the Sylvia Park, Garapito Canyon, and Hillside Drive areas of Topanga Canyon.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(c) of Public Resources Code.

Background: The MRCA has submitted a grant application for Proposition 50 funding in the sum of \$110,000.00 to acquire 18 Los Angeles County owned parcels totaling approximately 62 acres. The MRCA would hold title to the subject acreage in the heart of Topanga Canyon.

At its November 24, 2003 meeting the Conservancy adopted resolution No. 03-201 waiving its first right of refusal pursuant to Section 33207 of the Public Resources Code on over 100 surplus parcels totaling approximately 57 acres in the subject area of Topanga Canyon. In exchange for the Conservancy's waiver, Los Angeles County has subsequently offered to sell the remaining 18 of the surplus parcels in this area to the MRCA for \$100,000. The actual acreage is closer to 62 rather than 68 acres. The County is in the process of selling the approximately 57 acres that the Conservancy waived its right on. However, all of those parcels require, or are likely to soon require, extensive fuel modification.

As shown on the attached map APNS, 4441-009-900, 901,902, 4441-012-900, 4441-014-900, 4441-016-901, and 4441-015-901 are located east of Topanga Canyon Boulevard adjacent to Topanga State Park. Los Angeles County is negotiating additional deals with landowners that have inholdings within these future MRCA parcels to trade them for surplus parcels in the developed area immediately to the north. The subject parcels (49.5 acres) support high quality north face chaparral vegetation with minimal development interface. Fuel modification requirements should be less than one quarter-acre.

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APNS 4440-008-900, 4440-010-900 through 905, 4440-011-901,902, 4440-012-900 and 4440-016-901 are located west of Topanga Canyon Boulevard just north of Hillside Drive and south of the Theatricum Botanicum. These parcels encompass two small, but pristine tributaries of Topanga Creek. The parcels (11.6 acres) contain the highest quality chaparral vegetation and extensive oak woodland along the above mentioned tributaries. No brushing is required for these parcels. A trail from the Theatricum Botanicum currently courses through some of the parcels.

The subject 18 parcels were added to the Conservancy's Acquisition Workprogram at its August 30, 2004 meeting under the project name Topanga Canyon-Garapito Canyon-Hillside Drive.

The County's acquisition price for the subject 62 acres is \$100,000. The MRCA's requested grant amount of \$110,000 provides for closing costs, title, and nominal staff time.

The ability to acquire 62 acres in one of the premier watersheds of the Santa Monica Mountains at a cost of approximately \$1,600 per acre is an excellent opportunity. The parcels are integral to the Topanga Canyon watershed and to the protection of water quality and quantity in Topanga Creek. The acquisition will clearly protect both land and water resources.