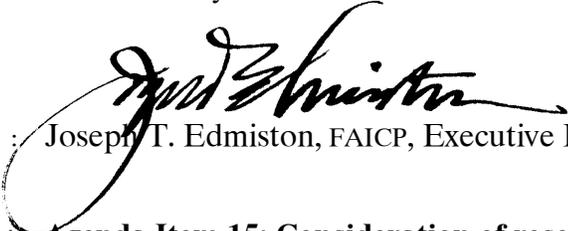


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: December 6, 2004

From : 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 15: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for acquisition of Verdugo Mountains-Majors property (APN 2545-016-005; 2545-017-007, 2545-019-001,-004,-008,-010,-011; 2545-020-001; 2546-009-006; 2546-010-011; 2546-011-002,-004), Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds in the amount of \$1,005,000 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for acquisition of Verdugo Mountains-Majors property (APN 2545-016-005; 2545-017-007, 2545-019-001,-004,-008,-010,-011; 2545-020-001; 2546-009-006; 2546-010-011; 2546-011-002,-004), Los Angeles.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204(c), 5096.650(b) of Public Resources Code.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has submitted a grant application for Proposition 40 funding in the sum of \$1,005,000 for the Verdugo Mountains-Majors property acquisition. The proposed acquisition will protect the land and water resources of the Verdugo Mountains, including core habitat, and augment a key inter-mountain range wildlife corridor. The Board approved a Project Plan for the Verdugo Mountains-Big Tujunga Wash Wildlife Corridor on 4/28/03. In September 2003, the Conservancy acquired three of the most critical parcels identified in the Project Plan, and the MRCA now manages those properties.

The subject properties are on generally rugged terrain with high quality cover of chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and scattered oaks. Several blue line streams are located on the property, as well as other smaller drainages. The habitat linkage between Big Tujunga Wash and the Verdugo Mountains is narrow but does not require any additional road crossing structures to be functional.

Given the proximity to the Foothill Freeway and the surrounding infrastructure, the subject properties would be a prime opportunity for residential and commercial development if not protected as open space. Purchase of the property for public parkland will provide protection of native plant communities, wildlife habitat, and scenic viewsheds. The proposed acquisition will also provide for public access and low-impact recreation. Sunland Boulevard could provide a good recreational access point for the public. The MRCA would manage the property.

The subject properties, totaling 461.8 acres, are owned by Major Land Company and a private individual. The owners are willing sellers. The properties have been appraised and the appraisal was reviewed and approved by the Department of General Services. Because the appraisal is over two years old, an updated appraisal has been commissioned. The original appraised value exceeded the amount of public funds to be used to acquire the property. The MRCA estimates that the transaction could be completed by January 31, 2005.

The total project cost is \$2,010,000. Additional funds to complete the acquisition will come from private donation, and the MRCA is also requesting a Proposition 12 grant (see related item on agenda). All of the APNs listed will be purchased as a part of the project, however it is not known at this time which specific parcels will be purchased with the requested Proposition 40 funds, versus the private donation or Proposition 12 funds.

The proposed acquisition is consistent with Article 5, Land, Air, and Water Conservation, Section 5096.650(b) of Proposition 40, the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002, and is in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

Acquisition of the subject property would implement the Conservancy's Strategic Objectives to implement the *Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan* and link key habitat areas strategically to protect species and ecosystems through acquisition and cooperation with other resource management agencies. The project is consistent with all applicable land use plans and ordinances. It is also consistent with all relevant Los Angeles City ordinances and general plan documents. Amendments to local plans or the *Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan* are not required.

Consideration: The grant to the MRCA is \$1,005,000 to be used for fee acquisition, closing and transaction costs.