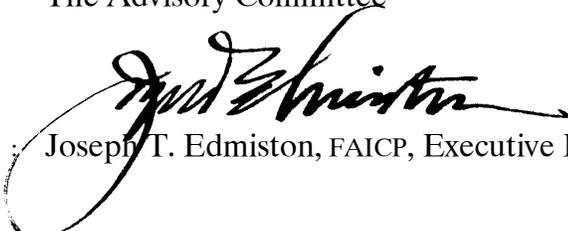


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: August 30, 2004

From : 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for construction and project management for Phase I and a portion of Phase II for the Vista Hermosa Los Angeles River Watershed Restoration Project, Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds in an amount not to exceed \$3,269,700 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for construction and project management for Phase I and a portion of Phase II for the Vista Hermosa Los Angeles River Watershed Restoration Project, Los Angeles.

Legislative Authority: Section 6500 *et seq.* of the Government Code and Section 33204 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: At its January 26, 2003 meeting, the Conservancy authorized a grant augmentation to the Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority (MRCA) for \$600,000 for design services and project management to complete construction documents for construction contract bidding for the Vista Hermosa Los Angeles River Watershed Restoration Project (Vista Hermosa). This project is located at the former Belmont Learning Complex and is a joint-use project between Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and MRCA. On May 22, 2003, the Vista Hermosa option was adopted by LAUSD, which includes a natural park and a state-of-the-art soccer field adjacent to proposed Central High School #11. Vista Hermosa will be located on approximately 8 acres of a 34-acre lot owned by LAUSD. A joint use lease agreement was executed on December 23, 2003 that describes the use and the development of a natural park. A separate operating agreement is proposed between LAUSD and the Stuart M. Ketchum Downtown YMCA for the operation of the soccer field. In addition, LAUSD will implement the Remedial Action Plan, a gas mitigation and monitoring system, for the entire site (school and park) as approved by the Department of Toxic Substances Control.

The lease agreement provides that MRCA is responsible for the construction of all the improvements on the Park site. Because LAUSD is obligated to complete all remediation work before MRCA can begin any improvements, both agencies desire that LAUSD undertake Phase I construction of underground work (utilities, etc.) in order to not disrupt the implementation of the Remedial Action Plan. Combining the utility work, construction of terraced walls,

contour grading of the park, and the remediation grading is a best management practice and best use of public funds. MRCA will enter into a construction agreement contract with LAUSD for work performed.

Final construction documents for Phases I and II are complete, pending Division of State Architects(DSA) approval. The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) approved the Remedial Action Plan on June 10, 2004, and LAUSD certified the project's Environmental Impact Report on June 22, 2004. In Fall 2004, MRCA and LAUSD will proceed with a public bidding process and will commence construction for Phase I and a portion of Phase II.

The MRCA will use the proposed grant to fund the construction and for project management for all of Phase I and for a portion of Phase II work for the project. Although the amount of the proposed grant is based upon thorough cost estimates, LAUSD has advised the MRCA that it cannot proceed with the bidding process until the grant has been awarded. The work funded by this grant for Phase I includes demolition and site preparation, site development, utilities, landscaping and irrigation, retaining walls, and installation of park amenities. Additionally, MRCA will fund landscaping, irrigation, and some building components of Phase II. The amount of Phase II construction funded by this grant will be determined by the construction bids for Phase I.

Many aspects of the park design will implement the objectives of Proposition 50, specifically 79501(e): "Improve practices within watersheds to improve water quality, reduce pollution, capture additional storm water runoff, protect and manage groundwater better, and increase water use efficiency." The cistern is designed to prevent stormwater from becoming urban runoff, and a portion of the captured water will be used for irrigation. The pond and cistern were designed together as a system to maximize water conservation. Students at the neighboring high school will be able to see these systems in use on a daily basis, improving their understanding of watershed processes and water quality.

Section 79508 of the Water Code requires the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to implement the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan*, commonly known as the *Common Ground* plan. The Vista Hermosa project implements several of the guiding principles¹, strategies², and opportunities³ identified in the *Common Ground* plan adopted by the Conservancy and the San Gabriel in October 2001. These include: creating public open space throughout the region; improving urban lands for opportunities for access to parks and recreation; improving habitat quality, educational and interpretive opportunities; and partnerships for multi-objective planning, among others. Furthermore, Vista Hermosa is consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan adopted by the Department of Finance in 1997: "Expand local government, school district, and nonprofit ventures to provide increased educational and access opportunities."⁴

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- 1 The San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan p. 47
- 2 The San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan pp. 52, 53
- 3 The San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan p. 56
- 4 The Santa Monica Mountains Strategic Plan p. 10