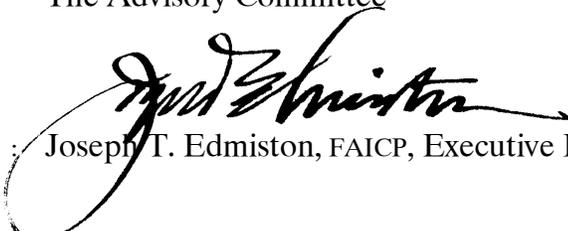


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: September 27, 2004

From : 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the Long Canyon-Santa Clara River acquisition (APN 3210-005-005, 3210-005-011-015, 3210-005-017, 3210-005-018, 3210-005-023, 3210-005-024, 3210-006-001, and 3210-005-022), unincorporated Soledad area.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds in the amount of \$163,485 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for the acquisition of approximately 220 acres in the Long Canyon tributary of the Santa Clara River.

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

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has submitted a grant application for Proposition 40 funding in the sum of \$163,485 for the Long Canyon-Santa Clara River acquisition project. The acquisition would protect significant land and water resources because the subject 220 acres occupy the majority of area in the Long Canyon tributary of Soledad Canyon which is one of the major tributaries of the Santa Clara River. The subject 220 acres are on the Conservancy's Acquisition Workprogram under the project entitled, "Soledad Canyon-Upper Santa Clara River Habitat Linkage." Project partners include the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC), and California Department of Fish and Game.

All but one 5-acre parcel are part of a single contiguous ownership. The entire project area is located within the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor. The agenda language includes one error. APN 3210-005-025 should have been included. It is a key 40-acre lot that includes the greatest length of USGS blue line stream of all the subject parcels. This error can be remedied because the subject Conservancy Proposition 40 funds are only to cover less than half of the total acquisition cost of the project. APN 3210-005-025 is part of the 220-acre acquisition discussed in this report.

Two-hundred and fifteen acres (including APN 3210-005-025) of the subject 220 acres is currently on the market for \$350,000. The separate 5-acre property (APN 3210-005-022) is also on the market for \$8,000.

Item No. 12 on this meeting agenda addresses adoption of a Long-Nellus Canyon Wildlife Corridor Project Plan. That project plan includes all of the subject parcels. The project plan provides additional information both about the subject 220 acres and surrounding parcels.

The subject 220 acres represent perhaps the most easily developable area in the multi-thousand acre habitat area between the Angeles National Forest and State Route 14 (SR-14). The property is located immediately east of approximately 10 occupied homesites that take access from Briggs Road, an official, unpaved County Road. Those sites all have telephone and electrical service. The next growth area is the subject property, which includes almost 3,000 feet of a USGS blueline stream. The 215-acre property includes a recently acquired easement across the Oasis Campground and the Santa Clara River to Soledad Canyon Road.

In addition to protecting the land and water resources of the Soledad Canyon watershed, the proposed acquisition will substantial new recreational opportunities. The subject property abuts an 880-acre Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holding. Much of the subject 220 acres can be reached by a series of dirt roads that will serve as excellent public trails. The Pacific Crest Trail comes within 1,600 feet of the northeast property corner. The BLM maintains an easily driven, dirt road that connects the subject property to the Pacific Crest Trail to the east. The western continuation of this same road connects all the way to Agua Dulce Canyon Road.

The subject Long Canyon property is part of a major Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) being prepared by the RMC in conjunction with the MRCA. The subject north-south oriented ownership provides a key wildlife and recreational corridor from the upper Santa Clara River-Soledad Canyon area to the portion of the Angeles National Forest located north of SR-14. The known wildlife crossings under SR-14 include the two EscondidoCreek undercrossings and the Agua Dulce Creek underpass.

The Long Canyon drainage supports a rich riparian plant community at its lower reaches. The drainage transitions into a dry ephemeral wash flora midway up the canyon. The upland area supports a transitional scrub flora with chaparral and high desert woody shrubs. The area recently burned.

The proposed acquisition would be funded by \$150,000 of the requested Proposition 40 funding and up to \$208,000 of the MRCA's eligible in-lieu fee funds. The property is eligible for riparian in-lieu fee funding because it includes almost 3,000 feet of the Long Canyon drainage bottom, a USGS blueline stream. The local California Department of Fish and Game staff members that interface with our staff on the in-lieu fee mitigation program are fully supportive of the proposed acquisition in the CAPP. Those staff members have also been integral to the preparation of the CAPP. The RMC staff is also in full support of this acquisition.

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The MRCA's application is for \$163,485. The additional funding beyond the \$150,000 for the acquisition is for staff time, closing costs, and project administration. The MRCA authorized acquisition of the property using in lieu mitigation funds at its September 8, 2004 meeting. Depending on the MRCA's future negotiated price on other parcels south of the subject 220 acres, insufficient funding may be available to acquire the separate 5-acre property (APN 3210-005-022). It contains no riparian habitat.