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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Secures New Public Open Space in the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor Named for Retiring California State Senator Fran Pavley

New 71-acre Fran Pavley Meadow acquisition will double the amount of permanently protected core habitat along the 101 freeway leading to the proposed wildlife passage over the eight-lane freeway.

AGOURA HILLS, CALIFORNIA (November 18, 2016)--The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy announced today that they had obtained both sufficient funding and an agreement to purchase the 71-acre Chesebro Meadow property in the Liberty Canyon Wildlife Corridor that will provide key connectivity to the proposed wildlife crossing over the 101 freeway in Agoura Hills.

“We are naming this new open space Fran Pavley Meadow for our beloved State Senator,” said Joseph T. Edmiston, Executive Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. “Fran has been on the front lines of every land use battle to protect the wildlife corridor between the Simi Hills and the Santa Monica Mountains for her 14 years in the Legislature, her years as City Councilmember and Mayor of Agoura Hills, and before that as a citizen activist who recognized the importance of preserving open space for future generations.”

Senator Pavley was instrumental in working through conflicting interests to secure multiple funding sources to purchase the critical wildlife connection. Last Wednesday, the California Wildlife Conservation Board approved a \$3.35 million grant of Proposition 50 funds to complete the acquisition. Other funding was from Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl (\$1.1 million), and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Proposition 1 appropriation (\$2.55 million). The 71 acres support a mix of chaparral, coastal sage scrub, grassland, oak woodland-savannah vegetation, and include a section of Chesebro Creek in the upper Malibu Canyon watershed.

A robust, dedicated group of activists and environmentalists have worked for years to stave off development of this stunning open space adjacent to 400-acre Liberty Canyon Open Space purchased by the MRCA in the early 1990's. A housing development, a private high school, and, as recently as last year, fifteen approved equestrian estates were formerly proposed for the site. Now, with the public protection of this habitat

adjacent to the freeway, construction of the proposed dedicated wildlife passage over the 101 freeway becomes more inevitable.

Recognizing the regional importance to build the wildlife crossing, last year, Senator Pavley convened a summit to focus government and scientific resources on developing a state of the art structure to provide safe passage across the freeway and Agoura Road. This resulted in The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) initiating a groundbreaking planning process which will eventually lead to the construction of the overcrossing. In addition to Caltrans, the MRCA and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, partners include State Assemblymember Richard Bloom, U.S. Congressman Ted Lieu, Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, the National Wildlife Federation, Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (Project Architect), and the City of Agoura Hills. Caltrans is currently preparing the environmental impact documentation for the freeway overcrossing.

“The wildlife overcrossing will be Senator Pavley’s legacy,” said Edmiston.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local government public entity dedicated to the preservation and management of open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat. The MRCA works in cooperation with other government partners to acquire parkland, participate in vital planning processes, provide natural resources and scientific expertise, and complete major park improvement projects. The MRCA manages and provides ranger services and fire protection for almost 72,000 acres of parkland that it owns and that are owned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy or other agencies and provides comprehensive education and interpretation and leadership programs for youth. It is one of the lead agencies providing for the revitalization of the Los Angeles River.

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