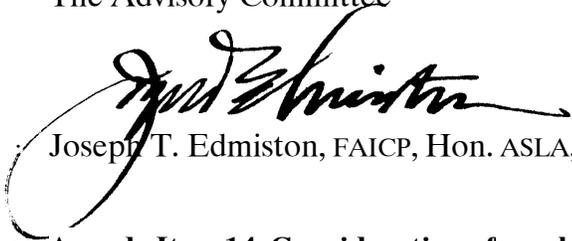


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: March 24, 2014

From : 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 14: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the acquisition of APN's 4465-004-053 and 4465-005-006 totaling approximately 78 acres, Escondido Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the acquisition of APN's 4465-004-053 and 4465-005-006 in Escondido Canyon, in the amount of \$750,000.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2(a) and 33204.27(a) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has submitted the attached grant application for the acquisition of approximately 78 acres of habitat and trail linkage property in upper Escondido Canyon. The subject parcels are included in the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Acquisition Work Program and the Conservancy-adopted Ramirez-Escondido Canyons Upper Project Plan from May 2001. Both parcels are given the highest priority with the fee acquisition designation in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area *Land Protection Plan*.

The subject parcels make up the only designated habitat linkage in the Los Angeles County General Plan for the Santa Monica Mountains, which provides for east-west wildlife movement from the Zuma/Trancas Canyon unit of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area to the Latigo-Solstice Canyon habitat complex. The subject parcels would create be part of a major eastern extension of the Zuma/Trancas Canyon unit. Most of the property is designated Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area in the existing Los Angeles County General Plan and the soon to be adopted Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program. The subject parcels support a variety of plant communities including sycamore oak riparian woodland, large stands of purple sage coastal sage scrub, multi-acre coastal live oak woodlands, walnut woodlands, and different species of ceanothus chaparral.

The subject parcels would provide a key trail linkage from the Weintraub Family Park to several public open space areas. A new trail to the west through the subject parcels would provide a gateway from the planned public use area in the Weintraub Family Park to Ramirez

Agenda Item 14
March 24, 2014
Page 2

Canyon and across Kanan Dume Road into Zuma/Trancas Canyon system. The north-south linkage would provide an opportunity to connect the Ramirez Canyon ridgeline trail southward to the proposed Coastal Slope Trail that would lead into Escondido and Ramirez Canyon Parks, and northward to the Backbone Trail.

Funding for the project would be balanced between the subject Proposition 40 grant, and a combination of Los Angeles County Proposition A funding and the Coastal Habitat Impact Mitigation Fund from the MRCA. The MRCA would request approval for that use of the Coastal Habitat Impact Mitigation Fund at the next Conservancy meeting. The heirs of the Stone family are divesting the family estate, creating important timing for the transaction.