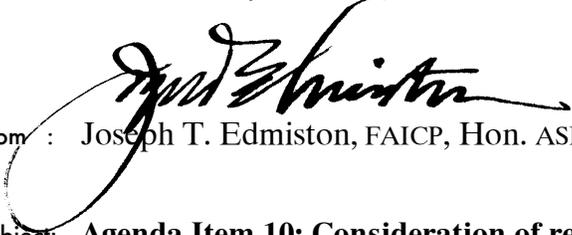


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 2, 2014

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 10: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for project planning and design for the Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor in the upper Los Angeles River watershed, Santa Monica Mountains, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for project planning and design for the Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor in the upper Los Angeles River watershed, Santa Monica Mountains, City of Los Angeles in the amount of \$65,000.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2(a), 33204.27(a), and 75050(g)(2) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority has submitted the attached grant application for project planning and design services in the upper Los Angeles River watershed portion of the Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor. The Mulholland Corridor has been a critical part of the Conservancy mission since the agency's inception. The Conservancy has made a significant public investment in this area over a 30 year period. The subject application includes background, a map, and justification. The project area overlaps the Summit Valley-North Addition, Encino Reservoir, Mulholland Gateway - Chapter-Natoma, Oak Forest-Fossil Ridge Adjacent, Cahuenga Pass Property, Lake Hollywood, Ventura Canyon, Longridge Connector, Mulholland Gateway- 21000 Mulholland, Oak Forest Canyon-West, and Wilacre Park Additions projects from the SMMC Workprogram.

The Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor, running between the Lake Hollywood area and Woodland Hills, is the backbone of the eastern Santa Monica Mountains. The remarkable habitat linkage that ties Griffith Park to the 20,000-acre Big Wild habitat area, anchored by Topanga State Park and Marvin Braude Mulholland Gateway Park, creates varied and unique open space protection and development needs, which require complex work to maintain. The

numerous parks along the corridor need habitat and trail connections to expand both their ecological and recreational capacity flanked by dense city on two sides.

The project area included under this grant, approximately 6,982 acres, encompasses only area within the Los Angeles River watershed. Within the proposed project area are approximately 500 undeveloped, privately-owned acres. These potential open space acquisitions include approximately 20 miles of a contiguous Rim of the Valley Trail segment along Mulholland Drive. Public parklands along this route, beginning with at the western terminus with Marvin Braude Mulholland Gateway Park, include Wilacre Park, Fryman Canyon Park, Franklin Canyon Park and Griffith Park. Trailheads exist throughout the project area.

The application states that the MRCA pursues every possible opportunity in the City of Los Angeles entitlement process to secure deed restrictions, conservation easements, and trail easements to achieve a permanently functioning wildlife corridor, high quality habitat blocks, and the Mulholland Specific Plan mandated core trail. In the past 12 months the MRCA has commented on 21 projects, has recorded an easement or deed restriction on 6 projects, and has achieved City conditions of approval for the required recordation of land interests on an additional 5 projects.

All of these land interests are achieved at no public cost. The only expense is MRCA staff time to develop the projects and close the transactions. The value of the permanently protected real estate dwarfs this modest amount of public expense. The MRCA staff will also continue to seek out outright land donations in the project area. The expense of a title report and legal time for otherwise cost free permanent public open space provides incomparable value to the public.

The watershed protection activities proposed within the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed under this grant are consistent with Water Code Section 79508. Water Code Section 79508 provides that watershed protection activities shall be consistent with the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan (Common Ground)*. The proposed project would provide opportunities to implement planning principles in *Common Ground* including: *Improve habitat quality, quantity and connectivity*, and *Establish riverfront greenways to cleanse water, hold floodwaters and extend open space*. This project is also consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Objectives: Further Cooperation with Local Governments in the Region to Secure Open Space and Parkland and Expand Efforts to Integrate Nature into the Urban Environment.

The proposed grant would allocate \$65,000 under Section 75050(g)(2) of Proposition 84 for the Upper Los Angeles River portion of the Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor.