

# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: January 27, 2020

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to The River Project for project planning and design for a Feasibility Study for Restoration of the Los Angeles River in Sepulveda Basin Project, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to The River Project for project planning and design for a Feasibility Study for Restoration of the Los Angeles River in Sepulveda Basin Project, in the amount of \$161,750, City of Los Angeles.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2 and 33204.27 of the Public Resources Code; and Section 79735(a) of the Water Code.

Background: The River Project (TRP) has submitted the attached application for Proposition 1 funding for project planning and design for the Los Angeles River that flows through Sepulveda Basin. The 2,000-acre basin serves as a significant flood management area, detaining and infiltrating stormwater that would otherwise flood downstream communities. The Sepulveda Basin provides many uses and amenities, including City of Los Angeles active recreational parks, a water treatment plant, open space habitat with trails and creeks, and the River Recreation Zone. The mainstem Los Angeles River within the basin is a semi-natural stream, with three distinct segments, including a concrete channel, a natural channel bottom with concrete upper banks, and a natural channel bottom with rip rap banks. In the natural channel reaches, the channel exhibits limited geomorphic functionality with riparian habitat appropriate to that level of functionality. Within the concrete channel, there is no geomorphic functionality.

The goal of the Project is to study the feasibility of revitalizing the Los Angeles River within the Sepulveda Basin toward a healthier and more functional ecosystem by investigating: 1) removing concrete and other modifications; 2) increasing regenerative wetland and riparian habitat functions and values; 3) using geomorphic and bioengineering design principles to restore geomorphic and ecosystem functionality to the River and riparian corridor within the Sepulveda Basin; 4) adding capacity for stormwater detention to reduce downstream flood hazards and increase potential for groundwater recharge; 5) improving the recreational interface with the River and its tributaries, which will enhance access and could expand the existing RRZ.

The Project has been identified within the Conservancy's Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries (ULART) Working Group Draft Revitalization Plan as an Opportunity Area within Sepulveda Basin for multi-benefit improvements. Additionally, this Feasibility Study can be utilized to help support the pre-improvement planning project that the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority currently has initiated to develop capital improvements within the RRZ, and also funded by the Conservancy with Proposition 1 funds. TRP has previously received support by the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) to perform a Feasibility Study that could examine multi-benefit solutions that reduce flood damage within the basin, while re-armoring the sideslopes with woody vegetation. If this analysis proves the concept to be practical, it is significant that this could be the first location on the Los Angeles River in which concrete could be removed.

#### **Analysis - General Obligation Bond Law**

The General Obligation Bond Law provides that bond funds may be used for the construction and acquisition of "capital assets." Capital assets include major maintenance, reconstruction, demolition for purposes of reconstruction of facilities, and retrofitting work that is ordinarily done no more often than once every 5 to 15 years or expenditures that continue or enhance the useful life of the capital asset (Government Code Section 16727 (a)). Capital assets also includes equipment with an expected useful life of two years or more, and tangible physical property with an expected useful life of 10 to 15 years. Section 16727 (a) also allows bond funds to be used for costs that are incidentally but directly related to construction or acquisition including costs for planning, engineering and other design work.

The activities that TRP proposes to fund with this grant constitute acquisition of a capital asset, as well as planning of a land improvement project to protect land and water resources, protect and restore rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water and other natural resources. Thus, the proposed activities fall within the definition of "capital assets" or are incidentally but directly related to acquisition or construction, and therefore are proper under the General Obligation Bond Law.

#### **Scoring - Competitive Grant Program**

Scoring under the Conservancy's Proposition 1 Guidelines for Project Planning and Design resulted in the Feasibility Study for the Restoration of the Los Angeles River in Sepulveda Basin Project receiving 78 points out of 86 (minimum of 61 required); plus 4 out of 4 climate change value points, plus 15 out of 25 Additional Criteria points . Total points: 97 out of 115.

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Consideration: The application from the The River Project is for \$161,750 of Proposition 1 funds. Staff recommends award of this grant.