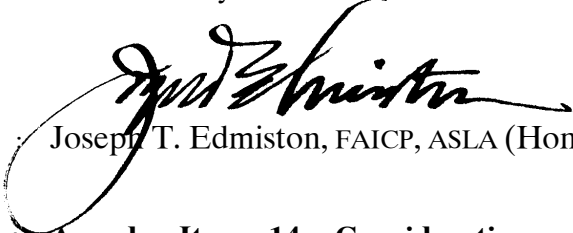


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: May 23rd, 2011

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 14: Consideration of resolution authorizing augmentation of grant agreement SMM-0757 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the protection and restoration of natural and developed resources by removal of invasive plant species, reduction of hazardous fire-fuel loads, and erosion protection. Parks operated and maintained by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing an augmentation of Proposition 84 SMM-0757 grant funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the protection and restoration of natural and developed resources by removal of invasive plant species, reduction of hazardous fire-fuel loads, and erosion protection in an amount not to exceed \$500,000.

Legislative Authority: 33204.2 (a) 33204.27 (a) 75050 (g)(2) 75060(d)(1) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The request augmentation of funds will be used for 'Phase 2' of this earlier approved grant request (SMM-0757). The project has proven very successful with thousands of acres of open space receiving fire fuels and exotic plants removal treatment. In addition, hundreds of residential and business structures have benefitted from the fire protection efforts of this project.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority operates and manages dozens of park sites and thousands of acres of open space located throughout Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. The protection and restoration of both natural and developed resources found on these lands can be facilitated by the systematic removal of invasive plants and restoration of native plant communities in their place. The removal of hazardous fuel-loads directly protects structures and other park features; moreover, such wildfire prevention efforts helps to protect wildlife & plant communities found in fragmented urban interface and open space areas. Erosion & watershed protection is also accomplished by restoration of native plant communities and the prevention of wildfires through the reduction of fuel loads. These actions also reduce sediment, ash, and organic matter loading of streams draining these watersheds.

Under General Obligation Law, bond funds may be used for the construction or acquisition of capital assets. "Capital assets" is defined in Section 16727(a) to 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 a capital asset." Also, equipment that has a useful life of more than two years is included.

Some durable equipment (with useful life of 2 years or more) related to performing the above augmented projects will also be purchased, amount not to exceed \$155,000. Due to the size of the project, purchasing this equipment will cost less than leasing. Equipment to be purchased may include (1) Bobcat Track Loader and brush cutter attachment (or equivalent) \$65,000; (1) Bandit Brush Chipper (or equivalent) \$45,000; (1) Heavy Duty Mower (or equivalent) \$15,000; (1) Work Utility Vehicle (or equivalent) \$15,000; (6) Heavy Duty Weed-whips \$5,000; and \$10,000 for related power tools and equipment. Contract vegetation management services and MRCA staff costs directly related to performing the restoration and protection projects are also included in the grant augmentation request.

The attached application is based on recent inventories of backlogged projects. The amounts listed are illustrative; some project work may be less or more expensive than estimated and staff recommends flexibility between categories and park sites depending upon actual bids.