

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: August 29, 2011

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 15: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation, a non-profit organization for project planning and design for the Taylor Yard (G-2 site), Upper Los Angeles River Watershed.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution recommending a grant in the amount of \$120,000 of Proposition 84 funds to Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation, a non-profit organization for project planning and design for the Taylor Yard (G-2 site), Upper Los Angeles River Watershed.

Legislative Authority: Public Resources Code Section 33204.2(a) provides that the Conservancy may award grants to non-profit organizations.

Background: The Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation (LARRC) has submitted a grant application for project planning and design to develop an acquisition strategy for the G-2 parcel along the Los Angeles River. The LARRC was established in 2009 as a result of the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (LARRMP) to promote responsible development, redevelopment, and revitalization of properties along the LA River corridor in accordance with the LARRMP. This includes parks, open space, mixed-use buildings, retail opportunities, housing, and business space. The LARRC has strong ties to government agencies because it was established by the city of Los Angeles, but is a non-profit developer working independently on sustainable river development along the LA River corridor. The LARRC is uniquely positioned in alliance with government to negotiate an acquisition strategy that prioritizes the goals of a river revitalization above all else. The attached proposal describes the acquisition strategy in more detail.

The G-2 parcel is a critical site to Los Angeles River revitalization and acquiring it would define success for the Los Angeles River revitalization movement. The 42-acre site includes over two miles of river frontage to the soft-bottom portion of the river. Primarily because of the large size of G-2 and its proximity to naturalized open space, G-2 has been designated as a prime restoration site for habitat and water quality in the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan*, and the *Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan*. This large site has the potential to treat regional stormwater flows and therefore can impact the long-term water quality of the River. The eventual acquisition of the G-2 parcel would provide sufficient

land area to naturalize the east bank of the river and enhance the riparian habitat within the channel. Its proximity to existing open space and new riverly development – Rio de Los Angeles State Park, Elysian Park, urban riparian zone in the river channel, pocket watershed parks along the opposite bank of the river, and LAUSD Los Angeles River High School – means that G-2 will tie the open space together to create a regional multi-benefit space, enhancing habitat connectivity, passive recreation and the water quality of the Los Angeles River watershed. The attached proposal describes the history and attributes of the site in more detail.

Public Resources Code Section 75050(g)(2) allocated the sum of \$36,000,000 to the Conservancy for implementation of watershed protection activities throughout the Upper Los Angeles River pursuant to Section 79508 of the Water Code. The subject study area is within the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed. 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: Coordinate targeted land acquisition with regional and local land use planning; Acquire land for flood management, wetlands, cleansing of water, and compatible uses; and, Coordinate watershed planning across jurisdictions and boundaries. 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.