

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 29, 2013

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 12(b) - Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for project planning and design for the Browns Canyon watershed project in the upper Los Angeles River watershed, Santa Susana Mountains, Chatsworth area.**

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 to implement the Browns Canyon watershed project in the upper Los Angeles River watershed in the Santa Susana Mountains, 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 a discrete section of the upper Los Angeles River watershed. Staff has worked collaboratively with the MRCA staff to identify key project areas where project planning and design services are needed. The application includes extensive background, mapping, and justification. The project area overlaps the Browns Canyon-Upper, Browns Canyon-Central, Browns Canyon-Lower, Rocky Peak Adjacent Southport-Altimini, Devil-Ybarra Canyons-Central, Oat Mountain-Upper Southface, Towsley Canyon-Upper, Santa Susana Mountains-Joughin Inholding, And Devil Canyon-Lower projects from the SMMC Workprogram.

As the premiere natural area on the south-facing slope of the Santa Susana Mountains, Browns Canyon has the potential for many additional new trail systems and recreation staging areas. There are also many additional parcels necessary to acquire to complete the existing protected core habitat area comprised of Browns, Devil and Mormon Canyons. The Browns Canyon watershed project is geared to continue to fill out the framework put in place by two decades of SMMC and MRCA land acquisition and development in this area. This work shall set the critical stage for many existing funding sources including Los Angeles County Proposition A funds.

The proposed project area included under this grant would encompass over 13 miles of blue line streams including the creeks of Browns, Devil, Ybarra and Mormon Canyons.

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Approximately 174 undeveloped private parcels, totaling approximately 3,500 acres, exist within this Santa Susana Mountains project area. These include a potential 5-mile east-west segment of the planned Rim of the Valley Trail. There are also numerous trail opportunities leading to and from Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch (MDA) and Rocky Peak Park. The easternmost parcels could potentially be acquired as a buffer to the ongoing larger development in Porter Ranch. The westernmost parcels could serve to bridge the gap between Indian Springs Open Space, Rocky Peak Park, and MDA.

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: *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.