

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: July 28, 2014

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for interpretation of land, air, and water resources, including visitor serving amenities and naturalist led interpretive programs for the public as well as programs specifically designed for disadvantaged youth.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for interpretation of land, air, and water resources, including visitor serving amenities and naturalist led interpretive programs for the public as well as programs specifically designed for disadvantaged youth.

Legislative Authority: 5096.605 (c), Section 5096.605 (j), Section 5096.650 (b), Section 33204.27 (a).

Background: Parkland is preserved to protect the resources found therein and to provide access to the disappearing natural world for generations to come. The challenge then is to both protect and care for those resources while providing access to public lands to the millions of urban residents who have had little or not exposure to the nature.

Research demonstrates that interpretation is an effective management tool leading to protection of resources. Educating visitors and inspiring the emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the visitor and the meanings inherent in the resources leads to greater understanding of and commitment to protection of those resources. People care for what they value and value comes from the “interpretive continuum” that starts with awareness and understanding and ends with stewardship and preservation. In the case of Proposition 40, preservation is defined as “identification, evaluation, recordation, documentation, **interpretation**, protection, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, development, and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.” Section 5096.605 (j) of the Public Resources Code.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has a long history of providing relevant and meaningful interpretation and education programs that not only enhance the visitor experience but promote stewardship and preservation and protection of our

land, air and water resources. These programs will serve visitors to parkland owned or managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and other parkland within the Conservancy zone with a focus on parkland outside of the Los Angeles River Watershed.

Programs specifically designed for urban communities is also an important focus of this grant. The Conservancy statute, Section 33204.5 of the Public Resource Code, says “The Conservancy shall implement a program to provide recreational access from downtown Los Angeles and the inner city. .. in order to provide recreational opportunities for all income and ethnic groups wishing to enjoy the Santa Monica Mountains.” Los Angeles has fewer acres of accessible parks per person than any major U.S. city, and poor neighborhoods suffer the most. Only 30 percent of Angelenos live within a quarter mile of a park, compared with between 80 percent and 90 percent in Boston and New York.

This grant of \$100,000 will fund interpretation of land air and water resources for the public as well as programs specifically designed for disadvantaged youth.

The type of services that may be provided, include:

- Guided interpretive programs, including program development and implementation, directly relating to the area’s rich natural, cultural and historic resources.

- Programming will focus on interpretation of endangered species, ecology, importance of land, air, and water resources, conservation, biodiversity, Mediterranean ecosystems, wildlife corridors, and fire ecology.

- Partial funding of an interpretive newsletter, “Symbiosis” which is printed and digitally distributed three times a year and distributed to over 3,000 addresses as well as being available at all park locations;

- Campfire programs at locations not currently funded by other measures, and featuring presentations that increase the understanding and enjoyment of the outdoors, and land, air and water resources;

- Interpretive materials, including site specific materials, program schedules, safety information and self guided interpretation that are designed and implemented to increase visitors enjoyment and understanding of land, air and water resources;

- Camping programs for disadvantaged youth ensuring that they enjoy the access to parklands and to increase their understanding and appreciation of land, air and water resources;

Transit to Trails Program providing staffing and programs for families from disadvantaged communities to parklands. Transportation funds for this program are provided by a separate funding source;

This grant may be used for partial funding for staffing at the Anthony C. Belenson Interagency Visitor Center in Calabasas, which will include interpreting parks and land, air and water resources of the Santa Monica Mountains.

This grant supports the guiding principles of the Common Ground report including improving access to public open space for all communities, promoting stewardship of the landscape, and involving the public through education and outreach programs.

Budget -	
Salaries/Benefits/Overhead	\$95,000
Interpretive supplies and Expenses	\$ 2,500
Vehicles	\$ 2,500
Expenses Total	\$ 100,000