

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: March 30, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy for the preparation of a Conceptual Area Protection Plan covering a portion of the Rim of the Valley Corridor from Big Tujunga Wash, Verdugo Mountains, San Rafael Hills, and upper Arroyo Seco.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds in the amount of \$16,667 to Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy for the preparation of a Conceptual Area Protection Plan for the Eastern Rim of the Valley area.

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

Background: The Verdugo Mountains and San Rafael Hills are near islands of habitat offset between the eastern end of the Santa Monica and San Gabriel Mountains. To maintain medium and large-sized mammal presence in these two near-island mountain systems, additional land acquisition must occur both in the cores of the two habitat blocks and within the habitat linkages that connect them to the San Gabriel Mountains via the Big Tujunga Wash and Arroyo Seco.

Because they extend far into the developed upper Los Angeles River watershed area, both the Verdugo Mountains and the San Rafael Hills provide readily accessible natural land and wildlife to many people. The connectivity between all of the above mountain systems is fragile, imperfect, and threatened. Near term, concentrated planning effort is vital to ensure that the habitat linkages are fully mapped, not degraded, and eventually permanently protected.

For over a year, members of the Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy have been talking to staff about preparing a Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) for this portion of the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor. A CAPP is a document that must be prepared to make parcels eligible to be funded by the State Wildlife Conservation Board. A CAPP covers multiple ownerships.

A CAPP addresses ecological resources, threats, and prioritizes land acquisitions. The CAPP process takes many months, but once approved by the California Department of Fish and

Wildlife, the documents is valid for a couple of decades.

The Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy, a non-profit organization, submitted the attached grant application to partially fund the preparation of an Eastern Rim of the Valley CAPP for the subject area. The application includes a figure that shows the proposed CAPP boundary. Per the application narrative, the proposed CAPP area includes approximately 10,000 acres of unprotected private land and 10,000 acres of permanently protected open space.

The Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy has had strong success acquiring land and raising funds. The Conservancy's contribution of \$16,667 to prepare such a large and important CAPP represents a key investment in securing additional State funding for land acquisition is the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's jurisdiction. The Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy will contribute \$8,333 to the document preparation. The document would be prepared by South Coast Wildlands, a proven CAPP preparer. Per the application, the CAPP document would be completed by mid-summer this year.

The submitted application left off the State representatives. For the record they include Carol Liu (25th Senate District), Chris Holden (41st Assembly District), Mike Gatto (43rd Assembly District), and Ed Chau (49th Assembly District).

Analysis - Proposition 84 and the Common Ground Plan

The State of California has authorized expenditure of funds from Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for capital outlay and grants for protection and restoration of land and water resources in the watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River and the Santa Monica Bay and its watersheds.

“Protection” is defined in Proposition 84 as those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, development, restoration, preservation and interpretation.

The proposed project constitutes watershed protection activities in the Upper Los Angeles River watershed. The site is within the Upper Los Angeles River watershed and is consistent with the Proposition 84 definition of protection. The project contains elements which protect and restore the Los Angeles River watershed and associated land, water and other natural resources.

Proposition 84 allocated the sum of \$36 million to the Conservancy for implementation of watershed protection activities throughout the watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River

pursuant to section 79508 of the water code (Public Resources Code section 75050(g)(2)).

Water Code section 79508 provides that watershed activities shall be consistent with the San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan (Common Ground). 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 project is consistent with the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan* as required by Section 79508 of the Water Code. *The San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan*, also known as and hereinafter referred to as the "Common Ground" plan, was jointly developed by the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.