

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 27, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 10: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Council for Watershed Health for an analysis of project opportunities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement water conservation measures.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Council for Watershed Health for an analysis of project opportunities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and implement water conservation measures.

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

Background: The Council for Watershed Health (CWH) promotes an integrated approach to managing regional water and land resources in the greater Los Angeles area through a combination of research and monitoring, outreach, and multiple-objective resource planning. Specifically, the CWH Water Program monitors traditional water quality parameters in rivers and streams, as well as green infrastructure in urban environments, to assess progress toward regional goals of improving water quality, the reliability of our local water resources, and promoting the benefits of native habitats that lead to improvements in water supply, water quality, flood protection, habitat, and recreation in natural and urban environments.

CWH supports the use green infrastructure in city planning and recognizes the valuable role that Best Management Practices (BMPs), such as green streets and the planting of native vegetation in urban areas, could play in mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Although there are numerous BMP projects in the Los Angeles area that increase vegetation biomass and promote soil nutrient cycling in urban areas, the cumulative benefit contribution of these projects to overall carbon sequestration on a regional scale are not well-understood.

The proposed grant will assist CWH in a quantitative study of key ecosystem benefits associated with green infrastructure projects located across Los Angeles County, with particular attention to disadvantaged communities. CWH will identify and quantify metrics that indicate overall benefit, identify existing data gaps, and develop workable strategies to reduce uncertainty regarding benefit estimations for carbon sequestration by BMPs in regards to regulating and

supporting services for climate, water, soil formation and nutrient cycling.

The proposed grant will assist the Conservancy in gathering key data regarding the benefits of green infrastructure BMPs and the nexus between these technologies and greenhouse gas reduction. The proposed grant aligns with the Conservancy's Climate Change Program and Policy guidelines adopted at the February 23, 2015 meeting.

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 sites to be studied lie within the Upper Los Angeles River watershed and CWH's proposed analysis 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 (the “Common Ground Plan”). The project is consistent with the Common Ground Plan as required by Section 79508 of the Water Code. The Common Ground, was jointly developed by the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.