

# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 27, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 11: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Council for Watershed Health for the Glenoaks Greenway Project.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Council for Watershed Health for the Glenoaks Greenway Project in the amount of \$135,000, Sun Valley.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The Council for Watershed Health, a non-profit organization, has submitted the attached grant application for project planning and design of the Glenoaks Greenway project. Located in the community of Sun Valley, the Glenoaks Greenway is the conversion of a linear strip of land adjacent to the Burbank West Channel waterway into a pedestrian trail and water quality Best Management Practice (BMP). Storm water from a densely populated urban area currently flows untreated into the Burbank West Channel, and then flows downstream into the Upper Los Angeles River and out to the ocean. The Glenoaks Greenway site is an opportunity to treat and infiltrate the storm water before it enters the concrete flood control system. The specific methods of treatment and BMPs will be refined during the project planning process, but use of bioswales and native vegetation is expected.

Objectives of the grant are to protect the Los Angeles River watershed through the restoration of native habitat, and promote public access to the watershed's land, water and wildlife resources by creating a trail link along Glenoaks Boulevard. The scope of work for this initial planning phase will include site analysis and existing data review, development of green infrastructure options and costs, development of native plant palette, and a community engagement process for the project concept. The study area extends from Roscoe Boulevard at the northern end to Cohasset Street at the southern end, connecting to an existing bikeway in the City of Burbank. The requested funds will match funds from the Los Angeles Beautification Team and in-kind services from the Metropolitan Water District.

## **Analysis—Proposition 84 and the Common Ground Plan**

Section 75050 of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River

and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84), allocates funds to various entities “for the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water, and other natural resources.” Section 75050 (g)(2) of the Act specifically allocates funding to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy “for implementation of watershed protection activities throughout the watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River pursuant to Section 79508 of the Water Code.” The section of the Water Code referenced therein states that watershed protection activities in the Los Angeles River shall be consistent with the *San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan*.

The proposed project planning and design grant constitutes watershed protection activities in the Upper Los Angeles River watershed. The geographic area covered by the grant is within the Upper Los Angeles River watershed, and the project to be developed contains elements to protect and restore rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water and other natural resources. The improvement project that will be planned with the proposed project planning and design grant fits within the definitions of eligible activities: development, preservation, protection, interpretation, and/or restoration.

The project planning and design grant 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. The purpose of the plan is to “articulate a vision for the future of the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watersheds” and “provide a framework for future watershed and open space planning.” The plan outlines a holistic approach to watershed protection and development, organized by a set of Guiding Principles. These broad principles are designed to accommodate the varying priorities and needs of projects in the region.

To help guide decision making in watershed planning and project selection, the Common Ground plan includes a set of Project Evaluation Criteria (Appendix F), developed to help the agencies determine “regionally significant” park, trail, and restoration projects.

The Glenoaks Greenway scores highly as a project in the following categories:

Sustainability Value: The project proposes to provide innovative design of green infrastructure for storm water and substantial water conservation.

Urban Park Value: The project will significantly enhance open space parkland in a densely urban and park-poor community.

Trail Resource Value: The project will build a new trail that connects to an existing bikeway.

Natural Resources Enhancement Value: The project will remove exotic species and reestablish native species adjacent to Burbank Wash.

Based upon consistency with the selection criteria and Guiding Principles, the Glenoaks Greenway project is consistent with the Common Ground Plan as required by Section 79508 of the Water Code.

### **Analysis - General Obligation Bond Law**

The General Obligation Bond Law provides that bond funds may be used for the construction and acquisition of "capital assets." Capital assets include major maintenance, reconstruction, demolition for purposes of reconstruction of facilities, and retrofitting work that is ordinarily done no more often than once every 5 to 15 years or expenditures that continue or enhance the useful life of the capital asset (Government code Section 16727 (a)). Capital assets also includes equipment with an expected useful life of two years or more, and tangible physical property with an expected useful life of 10 to 15 years. Section 16727 (a) also allows bond funds to be used for costs that are incidentally but directly related to construction or acquisition including costs for planning, engineering and other design work.

The activities that the Council for Watershed Health proposes to fund with this grant constitute planning of a land improvement project to protect land and water resources, protect and restore rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water and other natural resources. Thus, the proposed activities fall within the definition of "capital assets" or are incidentally but directly related to acquisition or construction, and therefore are proper under the General Obligation Bond Law.

Consideration: The grant request from the Council for Watershed Health is for \$135,000 to fund design, initial engineering analysis, and initial community and agency engagement.