

# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 27, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 12: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for interpretive program development and delivery for ranger led public programs and ranger led interpretive programs specifically designed for disadvantaged youth.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for interpretive program development and delivery for ranger led public programs and ranger led interpretive programs specifically designed for disadvantaged youth.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2, 33204.27(a), 75005, 75050(g)(2) and 75060(d)(1) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: Interpretation has historically been an important element of the job duties of the MRCA generalist park ranger. This grant will fund the development and implementation of a successful River Program led by MRCA rangers and assistants that have as a key component the unique perspective of rangers as stewards of the land. These programs will be in addition to those offered by the Division of Interpretation and will not duplicate those efforts. While all programs will feature the interpretation of the natural and cultural resources of the Los Angeles River watershed, it will also include stories, hands-on demonstration and park specific scenarios from the field.

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 visitors 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. In the case of Proposition 84, protection is defined 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 interpretation as a means of doing so. Section 75005(m).

Interpretation, as defined in the measure, includes but is not limited to, "a visitors serving

amenity that educates and communicates the significance and value of natural, historical and cultural resources in a way that increases the understanding and enjoyment of these resources and that may utilize the expertise of a naturalist or other specialist skilled at educational interpretation." (Public Resources Code Section 75005(i)) 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 promotes stewardship and protection of the resources. These ranger led programs will increase the variety of programming available to visitors of parkland owned or managed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in the Los Angeles River watershed.

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. An element of this proposal is to provide an experience for children from urban areas who are enrolled in the various MRCA programs during which they will be mentored by MRCA Rangers.

In addition to the programs and materials developed for the general public, specific ranger interpretive programs which serve disadvantaged and severely disadvantage communities. This includes programs at Vista Hermosa Park and along the Los Angeles River, as well as programs for disadvantage youth from the River's watershed. A "severely disadvantage community" means a community with a median household income less than 60 percent of the statewide average. (Public Resources Code Section 75005(g))

Lastly, this grant will allow the addition of an interpretative element to the MRCA's youth leadership programs, River Safety Staff (at-risk young adults) and River Volunteers. The addition of these elements will broaden the expertise and abilities of participants by giving them the skills needed for program development and delivery as well as increase the interpretive amenities offered to the public by creating a new core group of interpreters.

The specific scope of services that will be provided, includes:

Guided interpretive programs, including program development and implementation, directly relating to the watershed's rich natural, cultural and historic resources. Programming will focus on interpretation of the site's endangered species, ecology, importance in the watershed, conservation, biodiversity, Mediterranean ecosystem, wildlife corridors, and fire ecology.

Consideration: The application from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is for \$350,000 of Proposition 84 funds.

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