

SANTA CLARITA WATERSHED RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

*A PUBLIC ENTITY OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA EXERCISING JOINT POWERS OF THE CITY OF SANTA
CLARITA AND THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE
SECTION 6500 ET SEQ.*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: December 3, 2015

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of an access easement over a portion of APN 3210-002-901 in the Agua Dulce area to Southern California Edison, in exchange for funding and land interests. Negotiators: Joseph T. Edmiston and Cynthia Calemme. Under consideration: price and terms. (This item may be heard in closed session pursuant to Section 54956.8 of the Government Code.)**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of an access easement over a portion of APN 3210-002-901 to Southern California Edison (SCE) in exchange for funding and/or land or land improvement interests.

Background: Southern California Edison (SCE) owns electrical towers located on the southern portion of APN 3210-002-901 owned by the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority (SCWRCA) in Agua Dulce Canyon. Until 2008, SCE was able to access these towers through this SCWRCA-owned parcel by way of a bridge on a County maintained access road connected Agua Dulce Canyon Road. In 2008, before SCWRCA owned the parcel, a fire burned the bridge and Los Angeles County Department of Public Works has no incentive to fix the closed bridge. A downstream owner, at least until last month, had also refused SCE access to the subject poles and other poles. SCE's only resort was to employ helicopters which apparently cannot accomplish all the tasks of pulling new wires.

When the MRCA begin its stream restoration work on the subject SCWRCA parcel, SCE expressed strong interest in an alternative vehicle access route to its power poles. The now completed grading phase of the MRCA restoration project created a new 20 percent grade, 12-foot-wide dirt access road from Agua Dulce Canyon Road to the flat canyon bottom. SCE was allowed to use the new road to complete a major wiring pulling operation and expressed great gratitude. Staff conveyed to SCE that discussions about permanent access easements through the subject SCWRCA parcel and an adjacent

Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) parcel could begin after the MRCA grading work was completed. There is no obligation to provide access easements to SCE, but such access can be provided for public benefit with minimal environmental cost.

The grading work is completed, and there is an obvious route for an SCE access way. That route minimizes impingement on the riparian restoration area and maximizes use of the existing, paved County-owned access easement. The attached figures show the location of the proposed new access route on the SCWRCA parcel both pre-grading and post-grading. The grading work provided an at grade unpaved stream crossing. The old stream crossing was filled in because a new channel was created.

SCE has stated that it needs a minimum 16-foot-wide easement. The finished grading and location of native trees in many locations permit a maximum 12-foot-wide dirt travel path. In short SCE most likely will just have to live with a less than 16-foot-wide easement. The arrangement of a wider easement for a relatively more narrow road provides inadequate protection from incremental road widening. Approximately 1,000-square-feet of newly created stream channel would be subject to vehicle crossing and thus would be lost as net acreage to the stream restoration project. That loss should factor into the cost of an easement. Nonetheless the access way is adequate for large trucks. If a severe erosion event renders the Agua Dulce Creek crossing impassable, SCE may have to apply for an Streambed Alteration Agreement for repairs.

A continuous access easement for SCE to reach its power poles will also require an easement from the MRCA and several feet of easement from a private sliver ownership that abuts Agua Dulce Canyon Road. It is assumed that SCE can continue to use the now stranded Los Angeles County Road fragment as part of its access route.

The property immediately downstream from the subject SCWRCA parcel is owned by SCE. This parcel and the SCWRCA parcel encompass the whole of the Agua Dulce Creek - Escondido Creek confluence. The SCE portion of the confluence has a hydrologically impaired channel with extensive inert debris. The MRCA is interested in rights to the property to do additional riparian restoration work.

The price and terms of the potential sale of an access easement to SCE can be discussed in closed session. The MRCA Governing Board is expected to take up such an item relative to its parcel in early in 2016. No loss of public access would come from the proposed sale of access easements.