

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 X: Discussion and possible action regarding the provisions of access easements to developed private parcels over APNs 3210-004-901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907; 3210-005-911, 913, 914, and 916 in exchange for funding and land interests.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board discuss and provide direction to staff regarding the provisions of access easements or rights to developed private parcels over APNs 3210-004-901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907; 3210-005-911, 913, 914, and 916 in exchange for funding and land interests.

Background: Approximately a dozen parcels in the Soledad Canyon watershed with various levels of permitted dwellings have residents that drive across Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority (SCWRCA) property for access to Agua Dulce Canyon Road. Their former primary access to the south to Soledad Canyon Road was severed approximately a decade ago by high flows in Soledad Creek. That collection of property owners litigated with the intervening ownership (Oasis RV Park) and apparently won a judgement. A copy of that judgement will be sent under separate cover and/or be available at the Board meeting. Nonetheless it appears that the consortium of owners has not exercised that judgement to allow access to the south.

The subject judgement may give those owners deeded legal access to the south that they apparently lacked before. To the west they have no access easements across potentially eleven SCWRCA parcels and one parcel owned by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). Pressure from the owners to provide alternative deeded access through SCWRCA and MRCA parcels has subsided over the past two years.

Part of a larger plan shepherded by the 5th Supervisorial District was to shorten the road across the SCWRCA ownership but cutting and filling now totally undisturbed natural land. The County's idea was that the County would abandon its paper Briggs Road right-of-way to SCWRCA and MRCA if the private owners got an easement over the new road. The

County would build the new road with would be no less than a mile in length. Staff recently surveyed that proposed new route from the existing dirt access road. It would require well over a mile of new impact over hilly terrain. Staff strongly recommends not considering that environmentally and visually damaging alternative. Much of the existing road is within the footprint of an SCE utility easement. So SCE provide superb free maintenance to all.

If the residents need certainty on the right to pass over the existing dirt road and/or deeded access to be able to sell their homes, staff recommends: 1) that such rights prohibit any major road improvements, 2) that all staff costs and expenses are covered in full, 3) that every easement holder provide a conservation easement over undeveloped portions of the subject owner's parcel(s), and 4) that SCWRCA is provided permanent adequate liability protection. Staff recommends that no easement or access rights be provided to parcels without existing homes or homes with no permits.