

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 XIV: Consideration of resolution authorizing entering into a management agreement with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for properties owned by the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing entering into a management agreement with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for properties owned by the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority (SCWRCA).

Background: In late 2001 and early 2002, SCWRCA (Resolution No. 01-6) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for the long-term management and conservation of SCWRCA's Whitney Canyon property. The MRCA has maintained the property since that time. The agreement allows for the MRCA to post and enforce park rules. The MRCA maintains and patrols the property at no cost to SCWRCA.

SCWRCA did not acquire any additional property until approximately 2008 when it acquired the approximately 1,100-acre Rio Dulce Ranch property mostly east of Agua Dulce Canyon Road. That three unit ownership is sandwiched between smaller MRCA ownerships. The MRCA has defacto watched over that land for the last seven years but no rules signs have ever been posted. SCWRCA acquired a third ownership in 2014 at the northwest corner of State Route 14 and Agua Dulce Canyon Road.

With approval of the Governing Board, this October the MRCA began a large-scale stream restoration project on the small (25.5 acre) portion of the Rio Dulce Ranch property located west of Agua Dulce Canyon Road. The grading for the project is complete. However, to instigate and complete the restoration it was necessary to create a new dirt access road from Agua Dulce Canyon Road down to the flat streambed area. That road also first

crosses a small MRCA ownership. The road is now blocked by large boulders to stop all four wheel vehicle traffic but not smaller vehicles.

The MRCA grading for its stream restoration project created topography that is attractive to off road vehicle use. The MRCA intends to seed the majority of the restoration area beginning on December 1st and seeks the authority to post and enforce protective rules on the subject restoration parcel, at a minimum. That need brings up the issue of SCWRCA partnering with a management agency for all of its non-Whitney Canyon Park holdings. The MRCA has no funding to commit to any level of maintenance and patrol of these holdings. However, such as in the case of the stream bed mitigation parcel, the MRCA seeks authority to post and enforce rules signs that encompass the MRCA Ordinance. Assuming insurance issues are adequately addressed, no cost MRCA oversight of the property appears to only have upsides for SCWRCA. Without posted rules signs, MRCA rangers cannot enforce most illegal activities on SCWRCA parkland. In discussions with the MRCA, their representative make it clear that patrol and response would be wholly at the MRCA's discretion or as new funding permits.

The MRCA has made a request that any movie or event income derived from the property be paid directly to the MRCA and that all such funding be directly used and accounted for to patrol and maintain SCWRCA-owned properties. An incentive to create a maintenance funding source commensurate with adequate resource protection makes obvious sense.

The MRCA seeks the immediate authority to post and enforce rules on the subject 25.5-acre restoration parcel. The attached resolution would authorize such authority. The attached resolution also authorizes the MRCA to post and enforce rules—including the MRCA Ordinance—at all existing and future SCWRCA properties providing adequate insurance is in place.

If SCWRCA, the City, the MRCA, or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy contribute funding for patrol and maintenance, the authorization allows the MRCA to increase its level of activity commensurate with that funding.

As proposed, the resolution authorizes the Chairperson to sign a management agreement with the MRCA to manage and patrol all SCWRCA properties. Staff would prepare that agreement for the Chairperson's signature.