

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: December 14, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 10: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for acquisition of approximately 326 acres in Alamos Canyon, unincorporated Simi Valley.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy authorize a matching grant of \$530,000 in Proposition 1 funds to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District (RSRPD) for acquisition of 326 acres of the Alamos Canyon habitat linkage across the 118 freeway in unincorporated and incorporated Simi Valley.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204 of the Public Resources Code and Section 79731(h) of the Water Code.

Background: Please see the attached Proposition 1 grant application from the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for full details. The Conservancy previously authorized a Proposition 84 grant to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in February 2014 for this project. However, since that time TNC has requested that Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District receive the grant funds as it will be the acquiring entity, and staff determined that Proposition 1 funds would be an appropriate funding source. Waste Management, Inc. is the property owner, and over a number of years, TNC and RSRPD have negotiated the acquisition. Time is of the essence as the option expires in March 2016. The \$530,000 requested from the Conservancy is the last increment needed to complete the purchase, and would go to the fair market value of the property plus title, appraisals, and closing costs. This Conservancy grant would contribute less than 20% of the full acquisition cost. The state Wildlife Conservation Board, Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, and contributions from TNC and RSRPD provide the majority of the acquisition cost. An additional 408 acres of Waste Management, Inc. land is anticipated to be protected in a future conservation easement.

The property, which straddles both north and south sides of the 118 Freeway between Simi Valley and Moorpark, is an essential wildlife habitat linkage between the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains. TNC has been working with the landowner for many years, with the full support of the Conservancy, RSRPD, and County of Ventura, among other agencies, in order to secure this vital property for the wildlife linkage, public open space and trails, preservation of Alamos Creek and wetland resources, and groundwater recharge.

Alamos Canyon is freeway frontage property and is zoned for development. Some years ago it was considered as potential industrial park land, and prior to the SOAR land use initiative, UNOCAL, the owner before Waste Management, had submitted plans for up to 900 residential units and commercial development. Preservation of the land can prevent substantial greenhouse gas emissions (over 110,000 metric tons) that might otherwise occur, and total CO₂e reduction of approximately 114,000 MT over 40 years. (The applicant has provided a comprehensive CalEEMod 2013.2.2 greenhouse gases analysis of the property.)

Scoring under the Conservancy's adopted Proposition 1 Grant Guidelines results in the Alamos Canyon acquisition receiving 116 points (out of a possible 137), with a perfect score of 18 from climate change value points, plus 28 out of 33 possible points under Additional Criteria. **Total points: 162** (out of possible 188). Staff strongly recommends award of \$530,000 for this project.