

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: December 14, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 12: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to the Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy for acquisition of Cottonwood Canyon parcels, approximately 11 acres, City of Pasadena.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy authorize a matching grant of \$345,000 in Proposition 1 funds to the Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy (AFC) for the acquisition of approximately 11 acres in Cottonwood Canyon, Pasadena.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204.2(a) of the Public Resources Code and Section 79731(h) of the Water Code.

Background: Please see the attached Proposition 1 grant application from the Arroyos and Foothills Conservancy for full details. The Cottonwood Canyon parcels are wooded undeveloped land near residential areas of the eastern San Rafael Hills that connect close to the Arroyo Seco and the City of Pasadena-owned Brookside Golf Course. The property forms a wildlife habitat linkage from the Arroyo Seco into the San Rafaeles, Verdugos, and ultimately the San Gabriel Mountains. The Conservancy previously granted funds to AFC toward preparation of a Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) for the area; the draft plan is scheduled for submission to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife this month.

Besides the habitat linkage importance, Cottonwood Canyon contains a spring-fed perennially-flowing stream that is very important for wildlife, and which helps recharge the Raymond Basin, a vital municipal water source for the City of Pasadena.

The application implies that public use may be limited to the easternmost parcel, nearest Brookside Golf Course, where an existing local trail is already used by residents. Additional opportunities for public access should be examined and provided, especially since ample street parking is available on Linda Vista which bisects the easternmost and middle parcels and is closest to the existing trail. Street parking also looks possible on Normandy, which runs through the middle of the two largest sections, also on Inverness, which borders the steep and westernmost section.

Greenhouse gas reduction analysis has been done by the applicant using a 30 year timeline,

estimating an avoidance of expected development benefit of 1409 MT CO₂e. Along with the benefit of existing trees on the property, the site may also provide small scale riparian restoration projects to result in enhanced carbon sequestration benefits.

AFC has requested a grant of \$688,482, which would cover approximately one half of the land cost plus all appraisal, survey, mapping, and closing costs. They have also applied to the Department of Fish and Wildlife for a \$676,000 grant to go toward the land cost (\$1,352,000). And they have indicated that they are planning to apply to other state sources prior to the fall expiration of their option to purchase. Staff recommends awarding approximately one-half of the request, \$345,000, at this time as an incentive to seeking other grantors for matching funding for the Cottonwood project. Depending on success in receiving other state grants and should there be a shortfall before the option expires, the Conservancy may consider augmenting this grant in the future on a 1:1.5 basis, not to exceed the total requested amount of \$688,482. AFC also indicates in their application that they plan to provide in-kind and other contributions of \$340,000 to the securing the project, including their attorney fees and administration costs.

Scoring under the Conservancy's adopted Proposition 1 Grant Guidelines results in the Cottonwood Canyon acquisition project receiving the minimum required 96 points (out of a possible 137), with 16 out of 18 possible climate change value points, plus 18 out of 33 possible points under Additional Criteria. **Total points: 130** (out of possible 188). Staff recommends a grant of up to \$345,000 for this project at this time.