

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: February 22, 2016

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 15: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for trail improvements at King Gillette Ranch, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution recommending authorization of a grant of Proposition 50 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for trail improvements at King Gillette Ranch in the amount of \$200,000, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2 and 33204.27 of the Public Resources Code and Section 79570 of the Water Code.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has submitted the attached grant application for trail improvements at King Gillette Ranch. The 588-acre King Gillette Ranch is situated in the heart of the Malibu Creek watershed (Santa Monica Bay watershed), adjacent to Malibu Creek State Park. MRCA manages the park in cooperation with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area unit of the National Park Service, and California State Parks.

As the home of the National Park Service's Anthony C. Beilenson Visitor Center since 2012, King Gillette Ranch is a popular starting point for many visitors to the Santa Monica Mountains. The property itself offers diverse attractions, including scenic parkland, wildlife, native plant botanic gardens, and a view of California's rich archaeological, cultural, and historic resources. These include a Chumash settlement and the nationally significant structures designed for razor magnate King C. Gillette in the 1920's by Wallace Neff, architect of California's Golden Age. MRCA operates many public interpretation and student education programs at King Gillette Ranch, including summer campfires, outdoor science camp, tours and hikes. These programs are in addition to the daily staffing of the Visitor Center and its related offerings.

The primary circulation through King Gillette Ranch follows the historic road alignment planned by Mr. Neff, in addition to some secondary roads built later. With the exception of the parking and pathways constructed as part of the Visitor Center, none of the property's

circulation system was design with considerations for ADA accessibility. Although Neff's planned approach to the Gillette mansion is an ingenious series of rural vistas that give visitors the impression of a quintessential gentleman's ranch, the roads are narrow and no provision was made to separate pedestrian and auto traffic. Currently hikers and cyclists share narrow roads and one-lane bridges with automobiles.

MRCA has submitted a grant application for trail improvements on the property. In cooperation with California State Parks and National Park Service, new trails and pathways will be created to provide accessible routes from ADA-compliant parking to other areas of the property, eventually linking up with State Parks-owned property to the south. The park's high volume of visitors, easy access from Mulholland and Las Virgenes Road, and relatively flat open spaces make it an ideal site for accessible trail and to increase connectivity through the Santa Monica Mountains. The new trail improvements will ensure visitor safety and enhance the visitor experience.

California State Parks staff will take the lead role in planning the specific routes and developing priorities for implementation. Potential impacts to the riparian habitat of Stokes Creek, park and Visitor Center operations, and archaeological resources must all be taken into consideration along with aesthetics, maintenance needs, funding limitations, and building code requirements.

Analysis–Proposition 50

The State of California has authorized expenditure of funds from the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 50) to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, in Chapter 10, Section 79570(c), for purpose of protecting coastal watersheds, including but not limited to, acquisition, protection and restoration of land and water resources and associated planning, permitting, and administrative costs, and for the acquisition and development of facilities to promote public access to and participation in conservation of land, water, and wildlife resources. Eligible projects include nature centers that provide wildlife viewing, outdoor experiences, and conservation education programs to the public and to students.

The King Gillette Ranch Trail Improvements project lies within the Santa Monica Bay coastal watershed, and the property and its facilities are resources for public recreational use. As outlined in the application, the proposed project is consistent with Proposition 50's goal to promote public access to land, water and wildlife resources. MRCA is requesting a grant to protect and restore trails that serve both the Anthony C. Beilenson Visitor Center and visitors to King Gillette Ranch.

Analysis - General Obligation Bond Law

The General Obligation Bond Law provides that bond funds may be used for the construction and acquisition of "capital assets." Capital assets include major maintenance, reconstruction, demolition for purposes of reconstruction of facilities, and retrofitting work that is ordinarily done no more often than once every 5 to 15 years or expenditures that continue or enhance the useful life of the capital asset (Government code Section 16727 (a)). Capital assets also includes equipment with an expected useful life of two years or more. Section 16727 (a) also allows bond funds to be used for costs that are incidentally but directly related to construction including costs for planning, engineering and other design work.

This project is for the development, preservation, protection and restoration of a capital asset, that is, a land and water resource in the Santa Monica Bay watershed. As such, it is a proper expenditure of bond funds. In addition, the activities that this grant will fund will enhance the useful life of the facilities and on that basis as well qualify as capital assets for purposes of the General Obligation Bond Law.

Consideration: The application from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is for \$200,000 of Proposition 50 funds.