

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: May 23, 2015

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 12: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant from Proposition 84 for park information, materials, and non-personal interpretive services.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant from Proposition 84 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for park information, materials, and non-personal interpretive services in the amount of \$300,000.

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

Background: Parkland is preserved to protect the resources found therein and to provide access to the disappearing natural world for generations to come. The challenge then is to both protect and care for those resources while providing access to public lands to the millions of urban residents who have had little or no exposure to nature.

Research demonstrates that interpretation is an effective management tool leading to the protection of resources. Educating visitors and inspiring the emotional and intellectual connections between the interest of the visitor and the meanings inherent in the resources leads to greater understanding and commitment to protection of those resources. People care for what they value and value comes from the “interpretive continuum” that starts with awareness and understanding and ends with stewardship. In Proposition 84, protection is defined as “those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources” and includes interpretation as a means of doing so (Public Resources Code Section 75005(m)).

Interpretation, as defined in Proposition 84, includes but is not limited to, a visitor serving amenity that educates and communicates the significance and value of natural, historical, and cultural resources in a way that increases the understanding and enjoyment of these resources and that may utilize the expertise of a naturalist or other specialist skilled at education interpretation” (Public Resources Code Section 75005(l)). Proposition 84 interpretive grants to the MRCA have always focused on disadvantaged and extremely disadvantaged communities and have been vetted and approved by the Attorney General.

Interpretation is typically divided into two basic types: personal and nonpersonal. Personal interpretation involves some type of physical interaction between the interpreter

(naturalist/guide/ranger) and the visitor. Traditionally the Conservancy has invested heavily in personal interpretive programs and services. Nonpersonal interpretation involves the communication of a message without physical interaction or discourse with a live interpreter. Signs and brochures are classic examples of nonpersonal interpretive services. Nonpersonal interpretation typically reaches more visitors than personal interpretation, allows visitors freedom and individual exploration, and is often the first line of contact with the park or resource.

Funding from the Conservancy has for many years supported a robust set of MRCA programs that use personal interpretation as a mechanism for community engagement in under served communities, introduction to parks and the outdoors for non traditional audiences and leadership and skill development for young people from disadvantaged communities interested in careers in the parks. These past grants have included both personal and nonpersonal interpretation programs and services.

Given the position of the Natural Resources Agency that, notwithstanding allowable language and approval by the Attorney General, grants for personal interpretation will no longer be funded by bond measures, those MRCA programs using personal interpretation such as community programs, job training and other programs to address the barriers faced by under served communities will necessarily be moved to a nonprofit partner.

The requested grant would fund the MRCA's nonpersonal interpretation, including park information, exhibit design, maps, digital media, and other tangible communication. The proposed \$300,000 budget would fund production and design of park information. Specific exhibits and wayside signs for new or improved projects will be funded separately.