

# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: December 12, 2016

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 11: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for acquisition of ten parcels totaling approximately 95 acres (APNs 2072-024-005, -019, -020, 2072-025-014, -015, -016, 2072-027-004, -005, -006, 2072-030-010), Dry Creek Canyon, City of Calabasas.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy authorize a grant not to exceed \$1,112,000 in Proposition 1 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for acquisition of APNs 2072-024-005, -019, -020, 2072-025-014, -015, -016, 2072-027-004, -005, -006, and 2072-030-010 in the Upper Los Angeles River watershed of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204.2(a) and 33204.27(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 Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.

Matching funds in the amount of \$1,000,000 will be provided for the proposed acquisition under Proposition A, as approved by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on November 22, 2016. The grant request and matching funds are expected to cover the land cost, appraisal, title report, closing costs, and staff time. The MRCA expects to close escrow within one month upon the award of the grant.

The ten-parcel, approximately 95-acre property is located in the City of Calabasas, southwest of the intersection of Dry Canyon Cold Creek Road and Old Topanga Canyon Road. The property contains a mix of large stands of coast live oaks, coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and ridgelines that can be seen from several vantage points along the Mulholland Highway Scenic Corridor and nearby Creekside Park, Wild Walnut Park, Headwaters Corner, and adjacent MRCA open space in the Calabasas Highlands.

Approximately 740 horizontal feet of an unnamed tributary crosses the property to the Dry Canyon Creek confluence, which flows into Calabasas Creek. The subject property is within the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Acquisition Workprogram project, entitled,

Calabasas Highland Adjacent. A section of the Calabasas Highland Connector trail provides access at the southeastern point of the property. That trail spur connects to the Summit to Summit Motorway.

The proposed acquisition would protect water resources, preserve natural stormwater infiltration, preserve carbon sequestration, and allow for passive recreational activities. Additionally, the proposed acquisition would preserve habitat for the coast horned lizard (*Phrynosoma blainvillii*), a Species of Special Concern designated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The coast horned lizard has the potential to occur over the entire extent of the approximately 95-acre property.

The property has the potential to be developed with nine dwelling units as allowed by its zoning designation. The grant applicant has prepared a greenhouse gas analysis that indicates preservation of the property would avoid approximately 1,294 metric tons of annual carbon emissions that otherwise would result from residential development.

Scoring under the Conservancy's adopted Proposition 1 Grant Guidelines for Land Acquisition results in the Dry Canyon Creek-Old Topanga acquisition project receiving 104 points out of 137, exceeding the minimum of 96 points; with 15 out of 18 Quantifiable Carbon Reduction points; and 23 out of 33 Additional Criteria points.

Staff recommends award of \$1,112,000 for this project.