

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: September 25, 2017

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 15: Consideration of resolution authorizing a vegetation management grant of Proposition 1 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy authorize a grant not to exceed \$1,500,000 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for vegetation management and fuel modification in watersheds managed by the MRCA.

Legislative Authority: 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 (MRCA). The grant is to be used for the reduction of hazardous fuels and drought-damaged vegetation over more than 1000 acres, in order to reduce wildfire risks, protect parkland watersheds, and promote establishment of fire-resistant native trees and vegetation such as oaks and toyon. Prevention of wildfire on public parklands is a high priority. Removal of dead or diseased trees continues to be a difficult task, especially as they present a safety risk and also since compromised trees are susceptible to invasive pests. The past season's rainfall, while welcome, has greatly increased flashy fuels such as non-native grasses. Fuel management resources have been negatively impacted: Costs are higher, with slower field work to reduce fuel loads due to greatly increased vegetative production.

Wildfires release significant amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and as was evident during the recent La Tuna Fire in the Verdugos, impose huge public safety impacts on residents, fire fighting personnel, and parkland resources. This grant will fund capital suppression equipment including chainsaws, weedwhips, chippers, personal protection and safety equipment, potential suppression 4wd vehicles, contract and staff services.

Vegetation management and hazardous fuels reduction provides multiple direct and indirect benefits for watersheds and water quality, from prevention of erosion and sediment-loading in streams, to re-establishment of native species, to enhancing groundwater recharge.

The applicant has provided a greenhouse gases analysis using an EPA model, showing a potential reduction of over 72,500 metric tons of CO₂. Preservation of healthy tree canopy and

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greenways also ameliorates heat island effects.

Scoring under the Conservancy's adopted Proposition 1 Grant Guidelines for Vegetation Management results in the application receiving 89 points out of a possible 104 (minimum required is 73); 15 out of a total 18 climate change value points, and 10 out of 20 possible Additional Criteria points. Total points 114 out of possible 142.