



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
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SMMC
Attachment
December 11, 2017
Agenda Item 18

December 1, 2017

Chairperson Irma Muñoz
c/o Rorie Skei, Chief Deputy Executive Director
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
570 Ramirez Canyon Road
Malibu, California 90265

Proposition 1 Grant Application – Reseda Park Project Planning and Design

Dear Chairperson Muñoz and Conservancy Members:

I am pleased to present the enclosed application for a grant for Reseda Park Project Planning and Design. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) requests a grant in the sum of \$350,000 from the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), under the Conservancy's Urban Creeks Program.

The proposed grant would fund the planning of restoration and rehabilitation activities for a portion of the park, focusing on stormwater Best Management Practices and other enhancements to habitat and the Los Angeles River. The MRCA's Governing Board approved submittal of this application on July 26, 2017.

Please refer to the enclosed materials that describe the proposed grant and how it fits the Conservancy's Evaluation Criteria. If you have any questions regarding this, please contact me at (323) 221-9944, extension 117.

Sincerely,

Cara Meyer
Deputy Executive Officer

Reseda Park - Project Planning & Design
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

Reseda Park is located in the West San Fernando Valley, situated in the 3rd Council District represented by Councilman Bob Blumenfield. The park is bisected by the Los Angeles River, although a pedestrian bridge connects the two parts. The northern portion of the park is an extremely underutilized space that does not incorporate native plants, has no Best Management Practices (BMPs) for water quality or infiltration, and offers no relation, integration or connection to the adjacent river. This portion of Reseda Park was identified a few years ago as a potential Los Angeles River improvement project. The proposed \$350,000 grant would be used to complete the project planning & design and permitting of the project.

Aspects of the subject project that make it a priority for the Conservancy's Urban Creeks program are its location directly adjacent to the main channel of the river, the ability to create multiple benefits including recreation, water quality enhancements and native habitat, the location adjacent to a disadvantaged neighborhood as defined by the CalEnviroScreen mapping tool, and potential connections upstream to the Aliso Confluence Park (recently completed by Trust for Public Land) and downstream to MRCA's Caballero Creek Park. Furthermore, the site is already publicly owned and improvements can be made to the site without displacing any entrenched uses. The MRCA's goals and mission can be carried out through our work in bringing natural environments and natural systems that increase efficiency of the current park. All aspects of the project will be designed to enhance water quality in the river and improve the health of the Los Angeles River watershed.

The proposed grant would fund project planning and design for a capital improvements project. Potential improvements include a riverside walkway, storm drain diversion for efficient infiltration, low-tech bioswales for storm water cleansing, efficient irrigation, interpretation of natural resources, and native habitat creation. Sources of stormwater that could be diverted onto the site are a large drain pipe on the eastern side of the property, and surface flows from the adjacent streets. Reseda High School is directly across the street, and offers an opportunity for joint use or partnerships. The river channel in this section has a trapezoidal channel, meaning that it may be possible to remove, or reduce, the fence that currently separates the park from the river. A maintenance ramp nearby could one day provide direct access to the water.

The project's stormwater management components will maximize public benefit and take advantage of the location adjacent to the river, schools, and residential neighborhood. The project has the potential to be a demonstration project for future, similar park rehabilitations in the Los Angeles River watershed and an important learning tool for the students of nearby schools. It will provide an opportunity to allow a wider segment of the public to learn about water quality and supply issues and potential sustainable solutions to those issues. The project will also significantly increase the accessibility and value of Reseda Park to the general public and users of all abilities. Currently, the northern section of the park is severely underused due to lack of amenities.

The Project would be a partnership between the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) and the City of Los Angeles (City). The City currently owns and

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

manages the park and they are open to the idea of rehabilitating the site to incorporate multiple benefit components including native habitat and stormwater capture and treatment. The project will eventually help with the City's TMDL goals to clean polluted runoff entering waterbodies and thus will improve the overall watershed health.

The specific needs addressed by this project include sustainable stormwater management, cleaner waterbodies and watersheds, and greater awareness and stewardship of coastal watershed resources. The project will lead to physical improvements which will increase public awareness of the natural resources, and provide a plant and wildlife learning tool for nearby students, which will contribute to future and additional environmental stewardship.

The proposed project is consistent with the goals set forth in the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Climate Change Policy, State Planning Priorities, and AB 32. The Project seeks to improve a locally and regionally significant public resource for public enjoyment and environmental benefit. The project seeks to ultimately mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and address the impacts of climate change on the state's natural resources. Further objectives of the project are to protect the Los Angeles River watershed through the restoration of native habitat, and promote public access to the watershed's land, water, and wildlife resources.

BUDGET

See attached budget.

TIMELINE

The project planning and design will take place over the next 2-3 years.

RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

Project achieves eight or more of the thirteen purposes of Proposition 1 per Water Code Section 79732(a).

The project will involve the protection and restoration of California rivers, lakes, streams and watersheds. The proposed grant achieves the following eight (8) Proposition 1 purposes:

1) Protect and increase the economic benefits arising from healthy watersheds, fishery resources, and instream flow.

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

Since the project is expected to improve the accessibility and increase the usage of the subject park, it will thereby ultimately bring more visitors to the area and encourage spending at local businesses. Additionally, the construction of the project itself (once at that phase) will provide economic benefits by creating new jobs and profit for the companies providing project supplies and materials, sub-contractors and crews working on-site.

2) Implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on California's communities and ecosystems.

Los Angeles County will likely be affected by climate change with more severe droughts, more intense heat spells and loss of California's native biodiversity. The design of this project will anticipate these changes and will mitigate them. Native plant landscaping will cover the park. This will serve as new and enhanced habitat and open space for wildlife, minimizing the threats of Global Warming on California's biodiversity. The project will also employ water treatment and conservation measures to improve the quality of water and reduce trash and other pollutants within the Los Angeles River, which is used as a wildlife corridor. Improving the water quality within the river is essential to the survival of the area's wildlife species. Additionally, the addition of trees and vegetation will one day sequester carbon and cool the atmosphere.

3) Restore river parkways throughout the state, including, but not limited to, projects pursuant to the California River Parkway Act of 2004, in the Urban streams Restoration Program established pursuant to Section 7048, and urban river greenways.

The Los Angeles River is both a River Parkway and an Urban Stream. The project is directly adjacent to the river, upstream from the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area, and is located in a highly urbanized watershed. The community surrounding the park is predominantly residential. This area is so densely populated that that the current parks translate into only 3-acres of open space per 1,000 residents. This is far below the accepted national standard of 10-acres per 1,000 residents, and is low even compared to other areas of Los Angeles County. Southern California contains a wonderful network of open space and trails throughout local mountains and the coastline, but it is not readily accessible to all urban residents.

4) Protect and restore aquatic, wetland, and migratory bird ecosystems, including fish and wildlife corridors and the acquisition of water rights for instream flow.

Open waterways, such as the Los Angeles River, function as habitat corridors for migratory birds and small mammals, and therefore provide an appropriate location for greening and restoration efforts. The site is located near to the Santa Monica Mountains and the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Preserve, both of which provide a habitat stepping stone to facilitate movement of wildlife. In case of fire or extreme drought in the western Santa Monica Mountains, once implemented the project will act as a greater reserve of food, water, and shelter to migrating species. Through the future stormwater treatment, which

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

will be designed, the project will help to reduce the amount of pollutants presently being expelled into the river untreated and thus improve the habitat potential and water quality within the river and Pacific Ocean. As mentioned, the project is just upstream from the Sepulveda Basin which is home to many plant and animal species. By capturing and treating urban runoff in the park, it will improve water quality in the river and basin and help to protect the aquatic and migratory bird ecosystems. Additionally, the eventual installation of native plant landscaping (trees and shrubs) will provide new habitat for area bird and other species.

9) Protect and restore rural and urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, protection of life and property, stormwater resource management, and greenhouse gas reduction.

As mentioned in response #4 above, the stormwater treatment that will be designed will ultimately reduce the amount of pollutants presently being expelled into the river untreated and will thus restore the health of the watershed, protect the diverse species located downstream in the Sepulveda Basin, and improve storage within the local aquifer. We intend to design a system that captures, treats and infiltrates stormwater which will help to improve water quality, increase watershed storage capacity, and reduce the volume of water and amount of pollutants expelled into the Los Angeles River untreated, thus protecting and restoring the health of the watershed. The intent is to design a retrofitted park to convert it from simply having turf and trees with low-ecological value into a functioning treatment park and habitat area that not only captures stormwater but also trash, further helping to clean our waterways while still providing recreation to the public.

Furthermore, the project will plan for installation of additional California native trees and shrubs. The purpose of the trees will be to create habitat for local wildlife, provide shade for pedestrians, reduce the Urban Heat Island effect created by the urban environment, generate oxygen, and remove pollutants from the air thus helping to address and reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and helping with the adverse impacts of global warming. The spacing of the vegetation will be designed to maximize those benefits.

10) Protect and restore coastal watersheds, including, but not limited to, bays, marine estuaries, and nearshore ecosystems.

Los Angeles River is a coastal watershed, and the Project aims to plan and design a park rehabilitation that will benefit its natural resources and water quality.

11) Reduce pollution or contamination of rivers, lakes, streams, or coastal waters, prevent and remediate mercury contamination from legacy mines, and protect or restore natural system functions that contribute to water supply, water quality, or flood management.

The project will be designed to reduce sediment, trash, and organic matter from loading and contaminating the Los Angeles River draining the Upper Los Angeles watershed

thereby limiting sedimentation and encouraging ground water recharge. As mentioned, the project will be designed to capture, treat, and infiltrate the maximum amount of wet and dry weather urban runoff in order to remove various pollutants including trash, metals, bacteria, and oil from the water before they can reach the river. Once implemented, the captured runoff will infiltrate thereby increasing the water supply in the local aquifer and will reduce the volume of water entering the river (helping with flood management). The overall cumulative impact of this project is potentially substantial for the given urban area and will treat water that would otherwise enter the river untreated.

12) Assist in the recovery of endangered, threatened, or migratory species by improving watershed health, instream flows, fish passage, coastal or inland wetland restoration, or other means, such as natural community conservation plan and habitat conservation plan implementation.

The project will improve watershed health and benefit migratory species. Stormwater treatment and improvement projects help to protect plant and animal species and their habitat found in fragmented urban interface. As mentioned, the project will design water conservation measures to improve the quality of water and reduce the trash within the river. Improving the water quality within the river is essential to the survival of the area's wildlife species. Cleaner water upstream means cleaner water within the nearby Sepulveda Basin restoring and enhancing local wildlife habitat. Additionally, the density of trees and vegetation will be designed to sequester carbon as well as cool the atmosphere, further helping California's native biodiversity by reducing intense heat spells created by climate change.

The project will provide multiple benefits related to water quality, water supply, and/or watershed protection and restoration.

Upon completion of the design, the project will feature many uses and benefits including: nature education and habitat for the area's animal species; stormwater capture and treatment resulting in improved watershed health and water quality in the river; increased vegetation will reduce concentration of greenhouse gases (slowing the rate of global warming) and reduce the heat-island effect; promotion of infiltration projects; aesthetic enhancement to the area; and encouragement and increased usage of Reseda Park for recreation. Additionally, the project will result in a design that highlights the adjacent river, facing towards it instead of ignoring the river's presence.

The project results in more reliable water supplies pursuant to the California Water Action Plan.

The design will incorporate infiltration of stormwater with the goal of reducing the amount of potable water needed for irrigation, thereby reducing the amount of imported water needed for Southern California.

The project results in restoration or protection of important species and habitat pursuant to the California Water Action Plan.

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

The project's design and eventual implementation will benefit the Los Angeles River and watershed, which provides a migratory route and habitat to both sensitive and endangered species.

The project results in more resilient and sustainably managed water infrastructure pursuant to the California Water Action Plan.

By designing to infiltrate and filter stormwater, the water entering the infrastructure of the river will be both reduced and cleaner.

The project employs new or innovative technology or practices, including decision support tools that support the integration of multiple jurisdictions, including, but not limited to, water supply, flood control, land use, and sanitation.

The project's stormwater treatment will most likely be innovative and require a partnership with many City of Los Angeles Departments as well as the County Flood Control District. The design and details used in the project's Construction Documents (CDs) will seek to employ some of the standard plans developed by the City's Bureau of Engineering. By the time the design is complete, the plans will have been vetted by two more City departments: Department of Parks and Recreation and Bureau of Sanitation Watershed Protection Division. This Project will be a partnership between jurisdictions in that the MRCA will be re-habilitating a City-owned and managed park.

Applicant has proven that implementation of the project is feasible.

As mentioned, the City is supportive of the rehabilitation project. MRCA has years of experience planning, designing, permitting and implementing projects more complex than this. The project's design and Construction Documents will be developed in partnership with the City in order to make it more likely to be permitted and implemented faster.

Applicant has financial capacity to perform project on a reimbursable basis.

The MRCA has the financial capacity to perform this project on a reimbursable basis. MRCA has been implementing capital projects on a reimbursable basis for many years, and anticipates reimbursable payments in our budgets. MRCA also maintains a line of credit that can be drawn upon in the event of an extended delay.

Applicant, or active project partner, has successfully completed multiple projects of similar size and scope.

The MRCA has successfully designed and implemented many multiple benefit recreational projects throughout Los Angeles: Several completed MRCA projects are similar in size, budget, scope and duration to the proposed Project including Ballona Creek Milton Park, Marsh Park, Pacoima Wash Natural Park, and the Tujunga Wash Stream Restoration, all exemplary urban projects with innovative water quality treatment components. All of the projects listed above are multi-million dollar projects that bear similarities to the proposed Project and serve park-poor neighborhoods.

The MRCA, founded in 1985, is a local public agency exercising joint powers of [Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy](#), the [Conejo Recreation and Park District](#), and the

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

[Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District](#). MRCA's mission is to complement the work of these and other agencies in protecting land and public access to natural lands in southern California mountains. Since its inception, the MRCA has designed, planned and constructed scores of small and large projects throughout Los Angeles. The MRCA currently manages over 75,000 acres of parkland and holds fee title to approximately 10,000 acres. The overall goal for MRCA's urban parklands program is to "integrate nature into the urban environment". The completion of this Project will represent one additional step toward that goal.

As a project partner, the City also has years of experience implementing, managing and operating a wide range of projects that are similar in size and scope. One of those projects is the Riverdale Green Street project which extends on Riverdale from Crystal Street to the Los Angeles River in Elysian Valley and retrofits the existing street to clean stormwater runoff before it enters the Los Angeles River.

The project is a partnership between two or more organizations and each organization has committed to contributing toward project implementation.

As mentioned, the Project is a partnership between jurisdictions: The MRCA will be managing the planning and design within the City's property and the City of Los Angeles will be approving and permitting.

Completion of the project would assist a government agency in fulfilling a water resources protection, watershed ecosystem restoration or multi-benefit river parkway plan.

The Greater Los Angeles County Integrated Regional Water Management (GLAC IRWM) includes Los Angeles River TMDL Plan. The Project will help contribute to one day meeting the TMDL plan and the GLAC regional planning goals, objectives, and targets for watershed health.

The project provides a plan or feasibility study that enhances cooperative watershed health protection and restoration important to two or more organizations.

The goal of the project is to develop a plan for a rehabilitation of Reseda Park north to enhance watershed protection and restoration with is important to the City of Los Angeles, County of Los Angeles, and MRCA among other organizations throughout Los Angeles.

Applicant, or project partner, has 1+ years experience maintaining and operating projects of similar size and scope.

As mentioned, since its inception in 1985, the MRCA has designed, planned and constructed scores of small and large projects throughout Los Angeles.

The project implements a major component of an existing relevant plan related to a major recreational public use facility or watershed ecosystem restoration plan.

The Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan (2007) envisions Reseda Park embracing the Los Angeles River. The park currently does not accomplish that, and the

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

project seeks to achieve that Master Plan goal. The site is also identified in the Reseda-West Van Nuys Community Plan (1999) which recommends acceleration of the addition, expansion, and/or improvement of needed local parks throughout the community and “to conserve, maintain and better utilize existing recreation and park facilities which promote the recreational experience”.

The project provides a high quality access point for nearby open space, parkland, regional multi-modal trails, or water-based recreation.

The improved design of this portion of the park will ensure a higher quality access point and amenity for the community. This is a regional park which is highly utilized on the southern portion and the improvement of the northern portion will help to balance the use and promote the use of the connector bridge. It will also highlight the river and its value.

Applicant has conducted outreach to the affected communities.

N/A. This will be completed during the planning and design process: The affected community will participate in public meetings, design workshops, and be updated on project progress. MRCA will engage with local community-based organizations to ensure high-quality participation from a variety of residents.

The project includes interpretive programming or personal interpretation, and a plan to reach community audiences with meaningful information about a watershed resource.

The proposed project planning and design for Reseda Park will include meaningful participation from the local community. MRCA may partner with community-based organizations to conduct design workshops and other engagement mechanism. Through this process, information about the Los Angeles River will reach a wider audience, who will influence the final outcome. The final design will consider opportunities for interpretive moments to occur with all park visitors.

The project adds visitor-serving amenities, accessibility, and public safety improvements to public parkland with multiple ecosystem benefits.

The project will design visitor-serving amenities that the park currently lacks, including interpretative signage, greater accessibility, seating, improved walking paths, updated signage for security, and more. Public safety will be increased by renovating pathways, upgrading fencing and lights. The renovated park is expected to attract more people than currently use this portion of the park, and this can also lead to improved public safety.

The project provides non-personal interpretive elements that will significantly enhance appreciation and enjoyment of a watershed resource.

Interpretive signage or online resources will be incorporated into the design in order to provide information about the future stormwater treatment as well as the natural resources of river. This will promote environmental stewardship by teaching the public about environmental issues, potential solutions, and about the areas’ precious natural resources and how they can play a role in improving the environment and supporting a healthy watershed.

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

The project creates a new venue for education and/or interpretation activities that promote water conservation and stewardship, or enhance and existing venue.

If space and feasibility allows, the design may include a group seating area that could be used as an education and interpretation venue. As mentioned, the project will reimage and redesign a currently underutilized park to be a multiple benefit space that will enhance the resource, highlight the adjacent river, educate the public about the importance of the use of native plants and stormwater treatment.

The project results in new public access to a watershed resource with high interpretive and/or educational value, or enhance existing access.

The rehabilitated site will attract more visitors than currently use this portion of Reseda Park. The project goal of highlighting the river's proximity, and focusing a walking trail and other uses on that edge, will result in far more people accessing the river. By designing a more environmentally conscious park, the project will promote water conservation and habitat and will focus on the value of our watershed and natural resources which will benefit the community and enhance its use by the public.

Project will benefit specially protected species pursuant to the California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990.

The proposed improvements are not expected to benefit such species, due to its urban location.

EXTRA CONSIDERATION POINTS

QUANTIFIABLE CARBON REDUCTION POINTS

The project develops or maintains multi-use trails that connect communities, provides access to public resources and reduces vehicle miles traveled.

Investment in this project will support the protection of natural resources and facilitate the further development of a livable, walkable, and healthy community, which is a principal goal of this grant program: As part of the Project's scope, MRCA plans to design a system of trails within the park and also enhance and highlight the bridge that connects the remainder of the park on the opposite side of the river. This will enable visitors to more conveniently access and utilize the amenity and will encourage more outdoor activity. These proposed new improvements are expected to create better user experiences and watershed benefits. The location of the Project adjacent to a residential community and the river will encourage people to bicycle or walk to the park to exercise or simply enjoy the outdoors instead of commuting to a similar amenity, thereby reducing GHG emissions from transportation sources. The Project would result in very limited new vehicle trips and, as mentioned, is expected to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

The project engages local communities through outreach, education, and interpretation regarding long-term stewardship and climate change awareness.

Proposition 1 Grant Application
Reseda Park PP&D, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

As previously mentioned, the surrounding community will be engaged to participate in public meetings, design workshops. During these meetings, the importance of providing multiple benefit spaces, protecting our natural resources, establishing healthy watersheds, and providing wildlife habitat will be promoted and discussed. This will lead increase public awareness and eventually provide an outdoor learning tool for nearby students, which will contribute to future and additional environmental stewardship.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

Completion of the project would assist in fulfilling a Federal water resources protection or watershed ecosystem restoration plan.

Section 303 of the Federal Clean Water Act requires that each State identify waters where the quality is impaired for applicable standards. The list of impaired waters, called the §303(d) list, evaluates water bodies in terms of pollution levels, the severity of pollution, and the beneficial uses. Where quality is impaired, a total maximum daily load (TMDL) is required to be established for each pollutant. The Los Angeles River ultimately drains into the Pacific Ocean, and is listed as impaired waterbody for trash, cadmium, coliform bacteria, lead, copper, and other pollutants.

Project utilizes a local job training entity for a portion of the work.

While the design phase of the project will not utilize a local job training entity, a portion of future improvements can be implemented by at-risk youth. MRCA frequently partners with Community Nature Connection, a local environmental non-profit that trains and employs youth, for community engagement and outreach services.

Project has secured matching funds of at least 25 percent of total project costs.

No matching funds have been secured at this time.

Project is within 1 mile of public transportation.

Multiple Metro bus stops are located on every major street crossing surrounding the entire 30-acre footprint of Reseda Park. Also, more stops are located in every direction approximately .25 miles away.

Project results in additional uses for users of a wide range of ability levels.

As mentioned, the design will incorporate a wide range of new amenities that currently do not exist within Reseda Park. The improvements will be designed to accommodate users of all ability levels.

**Budget for Grant Application
Reseda Park Project Planning and Design**

Grant Request: \$ 350,000

Budget Item	Amount
A. MRCA Staff	
various Direct Salaries, Payroll Tax, Benefits & Allocations	\$ 70,000
9998, 9999 Administrative Cost	\$ 40,000
SUBTOTAL A, MRCA Staff:	\$ 110,000
B. Materials and Supplies	
5115 Land & Building Improvement - Pre-Construction	\$ 6,000
5116 Land & Building Improvement - Other	\$ 1,500
7777 Equipment Allocation	\$ 2,500
SUBTOTAL B, Materials and Supplies:	\$ 10,000
C. Consultants and Contractors	
5115 Land & Building Improvement - Pre-Construction	\$ 220,000
5116 Land & Building Improvement - Other	\$ 10,000
SUBTOTAL C, Consultants and Contractors:	\$ 230,000
Grand Total (A+B+C):	\$ 350,000