



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
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SMMC
Attachment
December 11, 2017
Agenda Item 25

December 11, 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 Competitive Grant Application –
River Ranger Program Planning**

Dear Chairperson Muñoz and Conservancy Members:

I am pleased to present the enclosed application for a grant for River Ranger Program Planning. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) requests a grant in the sum of \$250,000 from the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), under the Conservancy's Urban Creeks Program. The MRCA's Governing Board approved submittal of this application on December 6, 2017.

The proposed grant would fund the development of a plan for the design and implementation of the River Ranger program, containing specified components and information, and to provide a copy of the completed plan to certain legislative committees by June 30, 2018.

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

Since the 1940s, the County of Los Angeles and Army Corps of Engineers have managed the Los Angeles River (River) as a concrete flood channel. The communities through which the River passes have had limited contact with or responsibility for the River. In the last several decades, the River has received greater public attention and support for its restoration and availability as an environmental and recreational resource.

Assembly Bill 1558 (AB 1558), Chapter 452, Statutes of 2017, was authored by Assemblymember Cristina Garcia and signed by the Governor on October 3, 2017. ab 1558 requires the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Conservancy (RMC) to collaborate with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Conservation Corps, and the State Lands Commission to develop a river ranger program to provide a network of river rangers who assist the public at sites along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries, as prescribed. The legislation requires the Conservancies, no later than June 30, 2018, to develop a plan for the design and implementation of the program, containing specified components and information, and to provide a copy of the completed plan to certain legislative committees by that date.

In addition to the entities mentioned above, AB 1558 directs the Conservancies to develop the river ranger program in coordination with the Lower Los Angeles River Working Group, which is administered by RMC. AB 1558 will require extensive coordination between the Conservancies and are drafting an agreement that will establish how the Conservancies will work together on implementation, planning, design and delivery of the AB 1558 River Rangers program. The proposed grant is for \$500,000 split evenly between the two Conservancies for project planning and design of the ab 1558 River Rangers program in accordance with the agreement.

The goals of the River Ranger program are identified in ab 1558 as follows:

1. Establish an identity for the Los Angeles River as a place for its communities to enjoy recreational opportunities and learn about the river's history and environmental resources.
2. Improve public safety for visitors to the Los Angeles River.
3. Foster collaboration among state and local government entities and other public agencies with jurisdiction over the Los Angeles River, and coordinate the work of these entities and public agencies with regard to the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the river and its resources.
4. Protect the parks, open space, and other public places adjacent to the Los Angeles River.
5. Engage communities along the Los Angeles River in the protection and preservation of the Los Angeles River and its resources.
6. Promote equal access and equity among all communities along the Los Angeles River with regard to the development and placement of improvements along the river.
7. Monitor the physical conditions, environmental health, and development of green space along the Los Angeles River.

Proposition 1 Competitive Grant Application

River Ranger Program Planning

8. Provide a system for coordinating the work of river rangers with programs and services offered by local governments and conservation corps.
9. Incorporate the findings and principles expressed in the "Presidential Memorandum--Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks, National Forests, and Other Public Lands and Waters," dated January 12, 2017.

BUDGET

Earlier this year, the State of California appropriated Proposition 1's Urban Creeks funding to the Conservancies. Of the ninety-eight million dollars (\$98,000,000) appropriated to the Conservancies, thirteen million dollars (\$13,000,000) is for planning and implementation of projects approved jointly by both Conservancies. The proposed grant is for \$500,000 split evenly between the two Conservancies from these joint funds.

TIMELINE

No later than June 30, 2018, the Conservancies are required to submit a copy of the plan to the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code. With such a short timeline, the Conservancy is establishing the agreements and funding necessary as soon as possible.

RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

The proposed grant achieves the following Prop 1 purposes:

1) Protect and increase the economic benefits arising from healthy watersheds, fishery resources, and instream flow. The project accomplishes this through its focus on the impacts of river revitalization projects, especially in disadvantaged communities. These projects are critical to improving watershed health in urban areas, yet cannot succeed without input and the support of the residents.

2) Implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on California's communities and ecosystems. The project accomplishes this by identifying solutions to making urban park and water conservation projects more likely to succeed. These are inherently watershed adaptation projects and will reduce impacts of climate change, but such projects cannot succeed, or be replicated, if there are negative social and economic impacts to the residents.

3) Restore river parkways throughout the state. The project accomplishes this by focusing on community input, especially from disadvantaged neighborhoods, along the Los Angeles River and tributaries. Proposition 1 projects along the River will be connected to the bike paths and multi-use trails that are (or will be) adjacent to the river. Ensuring that new development projects promote public access to the trails will contribute to the long term success of the parkway.

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. The project will have a direct beneficial impact to the watershed health of urban Los Angeles, through its focus on the economic impacts of conservation and park projects on the communities surrounding the Los Angeles River and tributaries. These projects are critical to improving watershed health in urban areas, yet cannot succeed if there are negative social and economic impacts to the residents. The health benefits of park and open space projects are magnified in disadvantaged communities, and ensuring that projects can succeed there is critical to improving public health.

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

Multiple-benefit projects are the core issue, with a specific focus on defining how projects can benefit both conservation and community interests. Proposition 1 projects will already have water quality, water supply, and watershed protection as primary components and the proposed grant will help define how those can be augmented with benefits to recreation, habitat, housing, economic, and environmental justice.

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

The types of projects studied will include water conservation measures, leading to more reliable water supplies for the State. Developing open space in conjunction with other developments, such as affordable housing, could create new opportunities to use stormwater and gray water from the developments to support the parklands.

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

The types of projects studied will include use of native plants and habitat creation in urban areas. The development of open space and river projects in conjunction with other developments, such as affordable housing, could create new opportunities to use native plants in traditional developments, as well as to use a coordinated plant/habitat palette across a larger geographic area where ornamental species are typically used.

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

The types of projects studied will include use of publicly owned but underutilized land along waterways, as well as ways to reduce the amount of untreated stormwater that enters the Los Angeles River. Coordinating a multi-benefit park project along with a more traditional development, such as affordable housing, allows new opportunities to better manage stormwater, dry weather runoff, and gray water from the developments to support the parkland.

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 primary innovation for the proposed project is the acknowledgement of the social and

economic impacts under study, as well as the diverse group of stakeholders that is already involved. In addition, new practices will need to be developed to monitor the physical conditions, environmental health, and development of green space along the Los Angeles River.

Applicant has proven that implementation of the project is feasible.

The project partners have already committed to its implementation and logistics are already underway.

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

The project partners have already committed to its implementation. The Conservancies have been implementing projects like this for many years.

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

The project partners have already committed to its implementation. The Conservancies have been implementing projects like this for many years.

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

Project partners include the following:

- Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy
- San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers Conservancy
- Additional partners will be identified.

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 implementation of several regional plans will be influenced by the outcome of the proposed planning effort. Both Los Angeles County and City of Los Angeles have plans for the Los Angeles River, and the issues identified are necessary to address during implementation.

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

The proposed project will enhance cooperation between the Conservancies.

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

All of the project partners have been in existence for over one year, and have relevant experience.

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 proposed work itself does not implement such a component, although the Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan does call for economic analysis of future developments. As noted, the results of the proposed grant will influence future projects to implement such plans.

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

No physical improvements are included in the subject grant. The outcome of the research will assist in future development of new access points.

Applicant has conducted outreach to the affected communities.

The wide diversity of partners ensures that members of the affected communities will be included.

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

The project itself does not provide programming or personal interpretation, but the discussions are intended to reach a wide community audience, and will introduce the goals of conservation and restoration of the Los Angeles River's resources to them.

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

No physical improvements or amenities are planned.

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

No physical improvements are included.

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

While the project will not create a new physical venue, the planning process itself will promote these values, and the goals of conservation and restoration of the Los Angeles River's resources will be introduced to a new, diverse audience.

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

The information generated by the planning process will be available to the public. While this does not create a new physical access point, it will contribute to educating a wider audience about the issues.

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

The project is not expected to benefit such species, as the type of project under discussion is not expected to occur in that habitat type.

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

The proposed project does not develop or maintain trails. Many of the potential projects that would be studied would be located near a river parkway, bike path, or multi-use trail. These projects could increase use of such trails and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

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

Yes, local communities will be engaged during the project. Key project partners are community-based organizations that represent a variety of disadvantaged populations, and the topics of stewardship and climate change awareness will be included.

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

Yes, the results of project will assist implementation of any projects to fulfill the Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Plan. These issues will need to be addressed in order for the projects identified in the plan to go forward.

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

Several of the project partners conduct programs specifically designed to increase employment opportunities for disadvantaged communities.

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

Yes, both Conservancies are contributing.

Project is within 1 mile of public transportation.

The many meetings will be held with a variety of public transportation options nearby.

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

The proposed work would not result in any additional uses of public land.

Assembly Bill No. 1558

CHAPTER 452

An act relating to rivers.

[Approved by Governor October 3, 2017. Filed with
Secretary of State October 3, 2017.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1558, Cristina Garcia. Los Angeles River: river ranger program.

Existing law establishes the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (the conservancies) and prescribes the membership and functions and duties of the conservancies with regard to the protection, preservation, and development of certain lands along the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers and surrounding areas.

This bill would require the conservancies to collaborate with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Conservation Corps, and the State Lands Commission to develop a river ranger program to provide a network of river rangers who assist the public at sites along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries, as prescribed. The bill would require the conservancies, no later than June 30, 2018, to develop a plan for the design and implementation of the program, containing specified components and information, and to provide a copy of the completed plan to certain legislative committees by that date.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares as follows:

(a) Since the 1940s, the County of Los Angeles has managed the Los Angeles River as a concrete flood channel. The communities through which the river passes have had limited contact with or responsibility for the river.

(b) In the last several decades, the Los Angeles River has received greater public attention and support for its restoration and availability as an environmental and recreational resource for the communities through which the river passes, and Congress recently approved a restoration plan for an 11-mile segment of the river near Dodger Stadium in the City of Los Angeles. The Legislature has appropriated funds to pay some of the costs of the Los Angeles River restoration, including an amount of one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000), which has been authorized under a recently enacted bond measure to benefit the river.

(c) Some communities have parks along the Los Angeles River, and bicyclists traverse the bike paths on the river's levees every day. The City

of South Gate has shifted its policy to direct community attention to the benefits of the Los Angeles River.

(d) The Lower Los Angeles River Working Group is currently developing a plan for revitalizing the river downstream from the City of Los Angeles, and is considering ways to encourage communities to engage with the river and make the river a welcoming place for the communities through which it passes. The working group has also considered the possibility of placing “river rangers,” similar to National Park Service Rangers, to increase public safety and provide resource interpretation services for visitors to the river.

SEC. 2. (a) For purposes of this section, “conservancies” means the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

(b) The conservancies shall collaborate with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Conservation Corps, and the State Lands Commission to develop a river ranger program to provide a network of river rangers who provide assistance to the public at sites along the Los Angeles River and its tributaries. The conservancies shall solicit the participation of representatives of local governments that have jurisdiction over segments of the river, including the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles. The conservancies, in cooperation with the Lower Los Angeles River Working Group, no later than June 30, 2018, shall prepare a plan for the design and implementation of the program, including recommendations regarding ways to finance the establishment and ongoing implementation of the program, and shall ensure that the plan is developed to accomplish all of the following objectives:

(1) Establish an identity for the Los Angeles River as a place for its communities to enjoy recreational opportunities and learn about the river’s history and environmental resources.

(2) Improve public safety for visitors to the Los Angeles River.

(3) Foster collaboration among state and local government entities and other public agencies with jurisdiction over the Los Angeles River, and coordinate the work of these entities and public agencies with regard to the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the river and its resources.

(4) Protect the parks, open space, and other public places adjacent to the Los Angeles River.

(5) Engage communities along the Los Angeles River in the protection and preservation of the Los Angeles River and its resources.

(6) Promote equal access and equity among all communities along the Los Angeles River with regard to the development and placement of improvements along the river.

(7) Monitor the physical conditions, environmental health, and development of green space along the Los Angeles River.

(8) Provide a system for coordinating the work of river rangers with programs and services offered by local governments and conservation corps.

(9) Incorporate the findings and principles expressed in the “Presidential Memorandum--Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks,

National Forests, and Other Public Lands and Waters,” dated January 12, 2017.

(c) No later than June 30, 2018, the conservancies shall submit a copy of the plan required to be prepared pursuant to subdivision (b) to the Assembly Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water, in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

(d) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2019, and as of that date is repealed.

**Budget for Grant Application
River Rangers Program Planning**

Grant Request: \$ 250,000

| Budget Item | | Amount |
|---|--|-------------------|
| A. MRCA Staff | | |
| various | Direct Salaries, Payroll Tax, Benefits & Allocations | \$ 190,000 |
| 9998, 9999 | Administrative Cost | \$ 40,000 |
| SUBTOTAL A, MRCA Staff: | | \$ 230,000 |
| B. Materials and Supplies | | |
| 5115 | Land & Building Improvement - Pre-Construction | \$ - |
| 5116 | Land & Building Improvement - Other | \$ 2,000 |
| 7777 | Equipment Allocation | \$ 1,000 |
| SUBTOTAL B, Materials and Supplies: | | \$ 3,000 |
| C. Consultants and Contractors | | |
| 5115 | Land & Building Improvement - Pre-Construction | \$ 15,000 |
| 5116 | Land & Building Improvement - Other | \$ 2,000 |
| SUBTOTAL C, Consultants and Contractors: | | \$ 17,000 |
| Grand Total (A+B+C): | | \$ 250,000 |