

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: September 24, 2018

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 14: Consideration of resolution authorizing a Proposition 1 grant to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the acquisition of Lyons Canyon property, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of \$100,000 in funding from Proposition 1 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to initiate the process of acquiring approximately 235 acres of Lyons Canyon in the Santa Clarita area west of I-5 (APN's 2826-022-026; -027; -035; 2826-023-014; and 2826-041-039).

Legislative Authority: Public Resources Code Sections 33204.2 and 33204.27; Water Code Section 79731(h).

Background: Please see the attached grant application. The 235-acre former Warner Brothers Ranch property is in the Santa Susana Mountains, adjacent to the MRCA's Ed Davis Park in Towsley Canyon, another smaller parcel, and open space owned by the City of Santa Clarita. The landowner, DR Horton Company, holds Los Angeles County-approved Tentative Tract map #53653 on the property for 92 single family homes and 93 condominium units, but is a willing seller if sufficient funding is secured pursuant to an approved appraisal. The City of Santa Clarita, the Wildlife Conservation Board, Los Angeles County, and additional grant funding from the Conservancy if Proposition 3 is successful, are proposed for funding the major acquisition cost. The subject proposed \$100,000 grant would fund an option on the property.

The development project were it to proceed would remove over 150 oak trees. The City of Santa Clarita recently bought approximately 110 acres just south of the mouth of Lyons Canyon. The wide, gentle bottom of Lyons Canyon provides excellent habitat and recreation value with superb access from the Old Road paralleling Interstate 5. Acquisition of the property would extend the contiguous Santa Clarita Woodlands park complex to the Pico Canyon watershed and to other Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority properties. The current appearance of the property is degraded by a recent wildfire but its inherent resources are intact.

The property is wholly within an approved Conceptual Area Protection Plan to make it eligible for Wildlife Conservation Board funding.

Analysis - Proposition 1

Section 79731(h) of the Water Code allocated funding to the Conservancy for capital outlay and local assistance multi-benefit grants for ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects. which scored well under the Conservancy's Proposition 1 Guidelines for Land Acquisition, including analysis of greenhouse gas emissions avoidance of up to 11,571 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year. This land acquisition project scored 112 points out of a possible 137, with 96 minimum required; 15 out of 18 climate change points; 23 out of 33 additional points; for a total of 150 out of a possible 188.

Analysis - General Obligation Bond Law

The General Obligation Bond Law provides that bond funds may be used for the construction and acquisition of "capital assets." Capital assets include major maintenance, reconstruction, demolition for purposes of reconstruction of facilities, and retrofitting work that is ordinarily done no more often than once every 5 to 15 years or expenditures that continue or enhance the useful life of the capital asset (Government code Section 16727 (a)). Capital assets also includes equipment with an expected useful life of two years or more, and tangible physical property with an expected useful life of 10 to 15 years. Section 16727 (a) also allows bond funds to be used for costs that are incidentally but directly related to construction or acquisition including costs for planning, engineering and other design work.

Analysis–Consistency with Plans

The proposed grant is consistent with all applicable plans, including the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan, Strategic Plan, Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan and Common Ground.