

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY GRANT APPLICATION			
Project Name: Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North-Central Topanga Canyon Watershed	Amount of Request:	\$138,502.00	
Applicant Name: Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority	Total Project Cost:	\$405,000.00	
	Matching Funds:	\$266,498.00	
	Lat/Long:	34° 07'42.70" North / 118° 34'22.74" West	
Applicant Address: 570 West Avenue 26, Suite 100 Los Angeles, CA 90065	Project Address:		
	County	Senate District	Assembly District
	Unincorporated Los Angeles	27	50
Phone: 310-589-3230, ext. 124 Email: garrett.weinstein@mrca.ca.gov	Tax ID: 77-0112367		
Grantee's Authorized Representative:			
Cara Meyer, Deputy Executive Officer <i>Name and Title</i>		323-221-9944, ext. 117 <i>Phone</i>	
Overhead Allocation Notice: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Any overhead costs will be identified as a separate line item in the budget and invoices. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Conservancy encourages grantees to reduce overhead costs including vehicle and phone expenses. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The overhead allocation policy has been submitted prior to, or with, the grant application. Outreach and Advertising Requirement: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Applicant has read the staff report and board resolution regarding contract policies. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Applicant has adopted contract policies for the purpose of increasing outreach and advertising to disadvantaged businesses and individuals. <i>All check boxes must be checked</i>			
Brief Project Description: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) requests Proposition 68 grant funding to facilitate the acquisition of an approximately 15-acre ownership (two parcels) within the North-Central Topanga Canyon Connectivity Project area. Matching funds are provided by an existing Los Angeles County Proposition A grant to the MRCA. The ownership includes core habitat in the Garapito Canyon sub-watershed and a section of Los Angeles County designated trail that connects dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman-Summit Valley Park.			
Tasks / Milestones:	Budget:	Completion Date	
Purchase price	\$385,000.00	6/30/2019	
Staff time, Escrow and administrative expenses	\$20,000.00	6/30/2019	

For Acquisition **APN(s):** 4434-007-018, 019
Projects:

Acreage: 14.91

I certify that the information contained in this Grant Application form, including required attachments, is accurate.

Cara Meyer

11-28-2018

Signature of Authorized Representative

Date

STATE OF CALIFORNIA ♦ THE NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY

SMMC Proposition 68 Competitive Grant Application
Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North-Central Topanga Canyon Watershed

NARRATIVE

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) requests grant funding from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68) through the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's (Conservancy) Proposition 68 Grant Program to facilitate the proposed Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North-Central Topanga Canyon Watershed (Project). With matching funds provided by the County of Los Angeles (under an approved Proposition A grant), this Project will fund the MRCA's acquisition of an approximately 15-acre two-parcel property in the upper Topanga Canyon watershed. The ownership includes core habitat in the Garapito Canyon sub-watershed and a section of the Los Angeles County designated Santa Maria Canyon trail that connects dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park.

The property is a habitat linkage hub where Topanga State Park, Marvin Braude Mulholland Gateway Park, and Edmund D. Edelman-Summit Valley Park draw together. An attached map shows the protected lands in this portion of the watershed between Topanga State Park (east) and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park (west). Currently, the only permanently protected contiguous east-west habitat linkage across Topanga Canyon Boulevard and Old Topanga Canyon Road is the narrow, State Park-owned Backbone Trail corridor. As early as 1988 a report by Terry Lieberstein with Cal State Northridge addressed this protected-lands gap between Topanga State Park and an area described as the Central Habitat Hub. Acquisition of the subject 15 acres helps fill the gap between the State Park and the eastern portion of Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park.

This application requests \$138,502 of Proposition 68 funds to use for acquisition of the subject 15 acres. That funding is to be matched with \$XXXX from an existing (many year old) competitive Proposition A trails grant to the MRCA that must be used to acquire County-designated trails in the specific area described above. The MRCA has not been able to find a willing seller on the original grant identified properties, and recently the County modified the grant to allow acquisition of the subject key ownership. Supplemental funding is necessary to complete this acquisition from a willing seller at the appraised fair market value. The Regional Park and Open Space District gave the MRCA a two-month window to commit the funding. Without the requested supplement funding the grant would revert and the MRCA would be required to reimburse the District for over \$25,000 of invested costs.

Description of Property

The subject property is composed Assessor Parcel Numbers (APNs) 4434-007-018 and 4434-00-019. The parcels are located in the Garapito Creek watershed, which drains into the Topanga Canyon watershed. The subject property sits atop the junction of an east-

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west ridgeline and a north-south ridgeline. Most of the property is covered in mixed northern chaparral habitat, both north-slope and south-slope facing. California black walnut trees (*Juglans californica*) are found on the north-facing slope. The California Natural Biodiversity Database (CNDDDB), maintained by California Department of Fish and Wildlife, notes the presence of both California Walnut Woodland, and Southern Sycamore Alder Riparian Habitat on the subject property. Any non-aquatic wildlife species present in the Santa Monica Mountains could potentially use the subject property.

The subject property is located adjacent to an MRCA property, Assessor Parcel Number (APN) 4434-007-900, to the north. The County of Los Angeles North Area Plan Trails map (Map 4, Ventura Freeway Corridor) shows the Santa Maria Canyon Trail alignment traverses the subject property in an overall east-west direction. The property owner has agreed to sell the property to the MRCA at its recent appraised value. The MRCA is currently trying to overcome a title issue to acquire the 38 acres to the immediate east (APN 4434-008-007) from a willing seller (Steers) also with an aging Proposition A grant. The existing equestrian trail on APN 4434-008-007 (Steers) feeds right into the Santa Maria Canyon Trail on the subject property. This trail provides a connection from dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park.

The subject property is entirely within the County-designated Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area (SEA).

BUDGET

The grant request to the Conservancy's Proposition 68 Grant Program is for a total of \$138,502, which includes a portion of the subject property's purchase price, appraisal review, escrow and closing costs, administrative expenses, and legal staff time necessary to complete the project.

Matching funds from the County of Los Angeles, provided through an existing Proposition A grant, will comprise the remaining \$266,498 required to meet the \$385,000 purchase price of the property. That value is based on a 2018 appraisal, and has been agreed to by the Seller.

TIMELINE

The proposed grant expenditures for this Project will begin immediately upon approval of a grant agreement. The land sale ideally will be completed no later February 2019 and the grant closed soon thereafter.

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RESPONSE TO EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Project achieves multiple purposes of Proposition 68 per Public Resource Code Section 80001(b) and several Strategic Goals and Common Ground principles of the Conservancy.

Prioritization Value

Project achieves 80001(b)(4) by providing urban recreation and protecting or restoring natural resources.

The proposed Project will ensure both the permanent protection of a critical east-west habitat linkage between Topanga State Park and Edmund D. Edelman-Summit Valley Park. The subject property also permanently secures a critical link in the County of Los Angeles's public trails system (as mapped in the County's North Area Plan). The aforementioned-trail linkage part is part of the Los Angeles County-designated Santa Maria Canyon Trail that connects dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park. The permanent protection of the aforementioned-habitat linkage will benefit wildlife by ensuring access to the habitat onsite, and on surrounding properties. The proposed Project will also permanently protect part of the Topanga Canyon watershed.

Project achieves 80001(b)(6) by having already obtained all required permits and entitlements.

No regulatory agency permits are required for the proposed acquisition Project.

Project achieves three or more actions listed in 80001(b)(8)(A through G).

Public relations are an integral part of any public park, recreation, and/or open space preservation agency. As part of regular employee duties, the MRCA has dedicated staff to promoting awareness of open spaces, parks, trail locations, and restoration activities including the use of social media and multilingual material.

Project achieves more than one of the Conservancy's Strategic Objectives.

The proposed Project furthers the Conservancy's efforts to implement the Santa Monica Mountains Comprehensive Plan by permanently protecting open space adjacent to existing public land, thereby enhancing the value of the existing open space and appropriately maximizing acquisition dollars by leveraging funds.

The proposed Project furthers the Conservancy's efforts to implement regional trails by permanently protecting a portion of a Los Angeles County designated trail (Santa Maria Canyon Trail) that connects to dirt Mulholland Drive, enhancing access to the Rim of the Valley Trail.

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The proposed Project will enable the completion of a Proposition A project agreement between MRCA and County of Los Angeles to acquire trail connection properties in the North-Central Topanga Canyon watershed which furthers the Conservancy's efforts to cooperate with local governments in the region to secure open space and parkland.

Project achieves more than one of the Conservancy's Common Ground guiding principles.

Among other objectives, the proposed Project seeks improve habitat quality, quantity and connectivity by permanently protecting approximately 15-acres of core habitat in a sub-watershed of the Topanga Canyon watershed. Additionally, the proposed Project seeks to connect open space with a network of trails by permanently protecting a critical segment of the Santa Maria Canyon Trail, which itself provides recreation trail users a connection between dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park.

Category Value

The project will provide benefits to multiple values including water, recreation, habitat, and interpretation of natural resources.

The proposed acquisition Project will improve habitat quality, quantity and connectivity by permanently protecting approximately 15-acres of core habitat in a sub-watershed of the Topanga Canyon watershed. Additionally, the proposed Project seeks to connect open space with a network of trails by permanently protecting a critical link in the Santa Maria Canyon Trail, which itself provides recreation trail users a connection between dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park.

The site lies wholly within a large block of undisturbed core habitat.

The proposed Project site is located within the 20,000-acre Conservancy-designated Big Wild area, and it is a part of the Topanga State Park ecosystem. The onsite habitat consists of mixed northern chaparral habitat with scattered California Walnut Woodland habitat on north-facing slopes.

At least one-fourth of the site is located within a designated ecologically sensitive watershed or significant ecological area.

The entire subject property is located within the County-designated Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area.

The site contains largely undisturbed communities with species diversity.

The subject property contains primarily high quality mixed northern chaparral habitat with California black walnut (*Juglans californica*) on north-facing slopes and some coastal sage scrub elements on south-facing slopes. The California Natural Biodiversity Database (CNDDDB) notes the presence of California Walnut Woodland.

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

The proposed Project will permanently protect a significant amount of core habitat available for use by mountain lions (*Puma concolor*) within that species' documented range in the Santa Monica Mountains. Southern steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) occur in the Topanga Canyon watershed, and benefit from the permanent protection of habitat in the North-Central watershed.

The site contains an area of riparian or wetland habitat that integrates with upland habitat.
The site does not include riparian or wetland habitat.

The site supports substantial upland vegetative cover in a predominantly natural watershed.

The Project site is located in the Garapito Creek watershed, which drains into the Topanga Canyon Watershed. Most of the property is covered in mixed northern chaparral habitat with California black walnut trees (*Juglans californica*) on the north-facing slopes.

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

The proposed acquisition Project will permanently protect a segment of the Santa Maria Canyon Trail, thereby ensuring access for hiker, cyclists and equestrians to a trail that connects from dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park.

The project contains a link in a local trail system.

The subject property contains a critical link in the Santa Maria Canyon Trail. The County of Los Angeles North Area Plan Trails map (Map 4, Ventura Freeway Corridor) shows the Santa Maria Canyon Trail alignment traverses the subject property in an overall east-west direction. This trail provides a connection from dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park.

The project protects critical viewshed within a major trail corridor.

The subject property contains a high knoll that is visible both from within Topanga State Park (upper Temescal Fire Road) and multiple segments of dirt Mulholland Drive.

The project contains multi-modal accommodations that will benefit hikers, cyclists and equestrians.

The proposed acquisition Project will permanently protect a segment of the Santa Maria Canyon Trail, thereby ensuring access for hiker, cyclists and equestrians to a trail that connects from dirt Mulholland Drive to Santa Maria Road and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park. The Santa Maria Road area just west of the property has a high concentration of equestrian trail users that need a trail to the east.

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The project is designed to accommodate the needs of users from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds.

Thousands of people from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds visit the Santa Monica Mountains every year. The MRCA is committed to maintaining public parks, trails, signage, and open spaces for all. Public outreach is an integral part of any public park, recreation, and/or open space preservation agency. The proposed Project will permanently protect a segment of the Santa Maria Canyon Trail for potential use by trail users of any cultural or economic background. That trail is accessible both from the San Fernando Valley side of the range and the coastal side.

The site contains unique scenic elements: e.g. waterfalls; spectacular wildflower displays; geologic formations; vistas of scenic grandeur.

The subject property straddles a ridgeline with an existing trail that offers expansive panoramic views of the surrounding Topanga Canyon area, including views into portions of Topanga State Park.

The project provides a new vista point or overlook for a significant scenic viewshed.

The subject property straddles a ridgeline with an existing trail that offers panoramic views of the surrounding Topanga Canyon area, including views into portions of Topanga State Park. A high knoll location amplifies these views.

The site contributes to an existing or proposed corridor or greenway.

Because habitat fragmentation is the leading disrupter of wildlife movement, continued acquisition of open space in the Santa Monica Mountains is imperative to preserve multi-directional wildlife corridors between protected areas. Acquisition of the subject property would contribute to habitat linkages between existing parklands.

The majority of the site is part of a watershed draining directly into an ecologically sensitive protected area.

The entire Project Area is within the County-designated Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area (SEA) and Topanga Creek supports extensive populations of sensitive and listed native fish species. The Santa Monica Mountains are included in the North Santa Monica Bay Subregion of the *Greater Los Angeles County Region Integrated Regional Water Management Plan*. The permanent protection of properties within the subject area will contribute to four of the Subregion's five objectives:

- *Improve Water Supply* – through capturing storm water via infiltration and groundwater recharge of the long term;
- *Improve Water Quality* – the prevention of development within the Project Area would allow unpolluted surface water runoff to dilute downstream concentrations of pollutants found in all downstream portions of the subject watersheds;

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- *Enhance Habitat* – by preventing development (which also requires permanent brush clearance) and protecting natural resources in perpetuity contributes to water quality enhancement; and
- *Enhance Open Space and Recreation* – by converting lands to public ownership for construction of the Santa Maria Canyon Trail.

The site directly abuts and increases the ecosystem function of a protected habitat area.
The subject property directly abuts existing MRCA opens space, and another pending MRCA acquisition. The habitat onsite and on surrounding properties supports use by a variety of wildlife species including mountain lions (*Puma concolor*), bobcats (*Lynx rufus*), gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), coyotes (*Canis latrans*), and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) that inhabit and travel within the Santa Monica Mountains range.

The site directly contributes to the connection of two core habitat areas by serving as a habitat linkage or movement corridor for wildlife.

The subject property is one of multiple undeveloped private ownerships that currently separates Topanga State Park from Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park. The acquisition and resulting permanent protection of the subject property by the MRCA will ensure that another portion of the habitat linkage between these two core habitat areas will be available for use by wildlife in perpetuity.

The habitat is partially degraded but conditions are suitable for natural regeneration or restoration.

The subject property contains an existing, partially disturbed pad from private land clearing activity. This disturbed area of less than 1,200 square-feet is believed by MRCA staff to be suitable for natural regeneration by the surrounding vegetation.

Current appraisal has been done or is under review by Department of General Services.
The MRCA commissioned an appraisal of the subject property and received the report in September of 2018.

The owner of the site is a known willing seller.

The property owner is a willing seller at the September 2018 appraised value.

Implementation Value

Applicant has proven that implementation of the project is feasible.

The MRCA has acquired fee title to over 100,000 acres for natural resources conservation and manages over 75,000 acres of parkland. The MRCA has a full time legal staff. The MRCA is in negotiations with the owner of the subject property, who has indicated that he is willing to sell the property at its September 2018 appraised value.

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Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North-Central Topanga Canyon Watershed

Applicant has financial and technical capacity to perform project.

MRCA planning, legal, construction, restoration, and operations staffs have the expertise to acquire all land interests, design and permit trail construction, build trails, provide park and trail signage, and manage parklands. The MRCA has an operations budget of more than \$9.5 million that allows it to provide services in advance of payment.

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

The MRCA has already acquired fee title to over 100,000 acres for natural resources conservation and manages over 75,000 acres of parkland. The MRCA owns and manages hundreds of acres in the immediate vicinity.

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

Matching funds for the proposed Project are being provided by the County of Los Angeles via an existing Proposition A grant. However, the proposed project is entirely an MRCA project.

Applicant has conducted outreach to the affected communities.

The MRCA has not conducted specific community outreach for the subject project.

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

The MRCA, founded in 1985, is a local public agency exercising joint powers of the Conservancy, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District. The agency's mission is to complement the work of these and other agencies in protecting land and public access in Los Angeles County and Ventura County mountains.

Applicant has identified maintenance funding for at least 2 years after completion.

The MRCA has an annual operations budget greater than \$9.5 million. The sum resources available to the agency are great enough to ensure long-term maintenance of agency property.

Project has approval from all landowners to complete the project, or Applicant is the landowner.

The owner is willing to sell the property to the MRCA at its September 2018 appraised value. The MRCA's legal staff is currently preparing a written offer.

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Climate Change Value

The project acquires, preserves, or restores natural areas at risk of development and quantifiably avoids emissions associated with development.

Based on the County zoning, up to one Single-Family Residence may be allowable on each of the two parcels without existing residential development that comprise the subject property. Presuming a minimum of 5,000 square feet per residential unit, preservation of the two parcels would result in an annual savings of at least 106 metric tons of carbon dioxide, equivalent to the amount of carbon sequestered by 90.1 acres of U.S. forests per year.

The project acquires and/or maintains wildlife corridors and linkages to provide connections between area of undeveloped lands, particularly significant public lands and key habitat ecosystems.

The subject property is central to a large core habitat area between Topanga Canyon State Park and Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park. Acquisition of the subject property would contribute significantly to habitat linkages between existing parklands between these two larger parks.

The project acquires and/or maintains wildlife corridors and linkages to provide connections between areas of undeveloped lands, particularly significant public lands and key habitat ecosystems.

The subject property is one of multiple undeveloped private ownerships that currently separates Topanga State Park from Edmund D. Edelman – Summit Valley Park. The acquisition and resulting permanent protection of the subject property by the MRCA will ensure that another portion of the habitat linkage between these two core habitat areas will be available for use by wildlife in perpetuity. Wildlife species that would potentially benefit include (but are not limited to) mountain lions (*Puma concolor*), bobcats (*Lynx rufus*), gray foxes (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), coyotes (*Canis latrans*), and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and others that inhabit and travel within the Santa Monica Mountains range.

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

The project does not involve such an engagement.

Additional Consideration

The site is subject to an imminent threat that would preclude future implementation value. The consortium of private ownerships on the east side of Santa Maria Road just south of Marvin Braude Mulholland Gateway Park is always angling to put together a combined project that shares access. Because the subject property has an access easement that

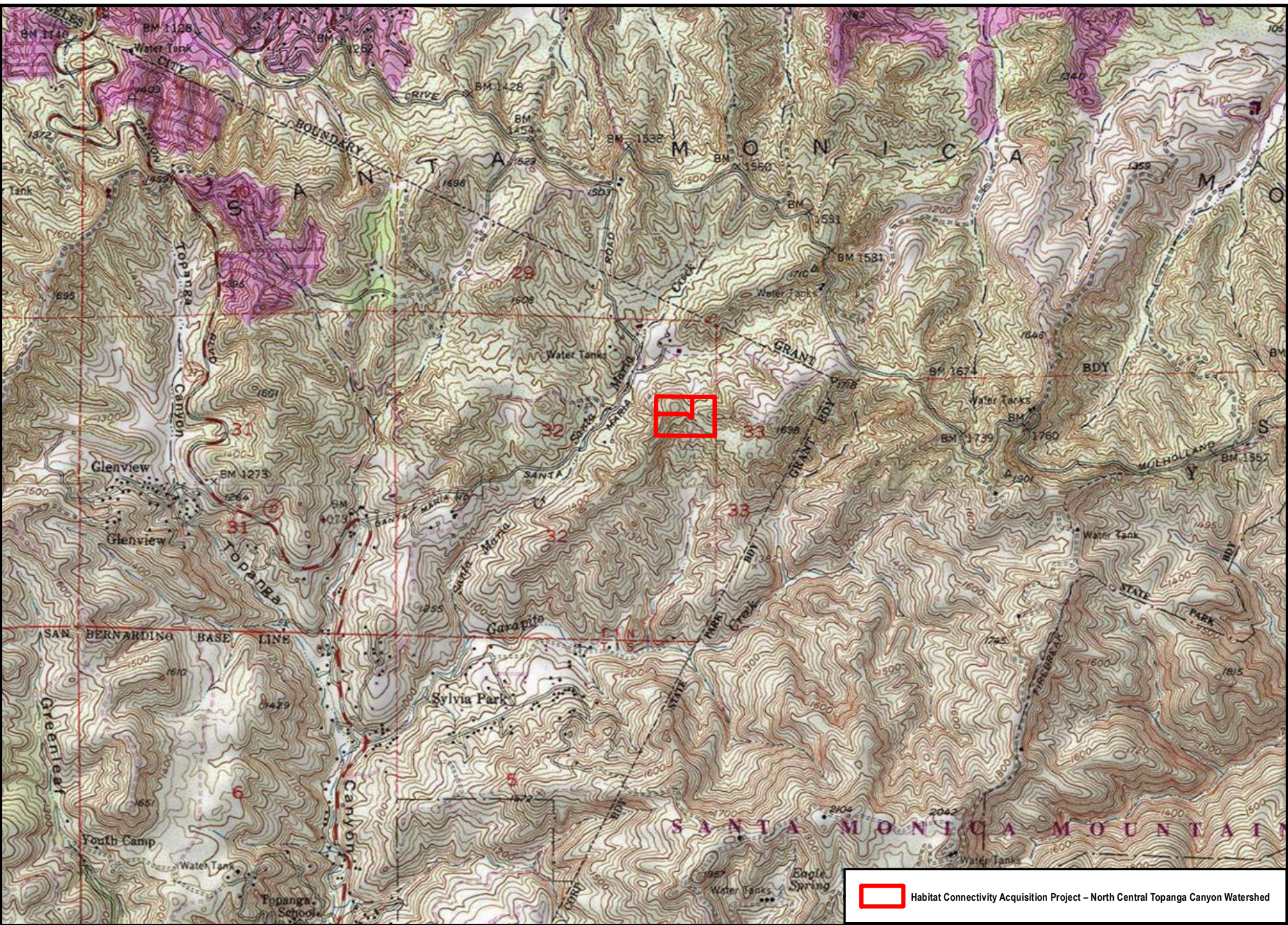
SMMC Proposition 68 Competitive Grant Application
Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North-Central Topanga Canyon Watershed

connects to Santa Maria Road it is a critical component of such a multi-parcel development. As a standalone ownership it has a high threat of development.

MATCHING FUNDS WEIGHTING

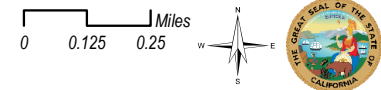
Matching funds from an existing MRCA Proposition A grant will provide \$266,498 of funding.

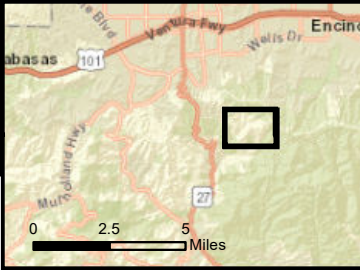
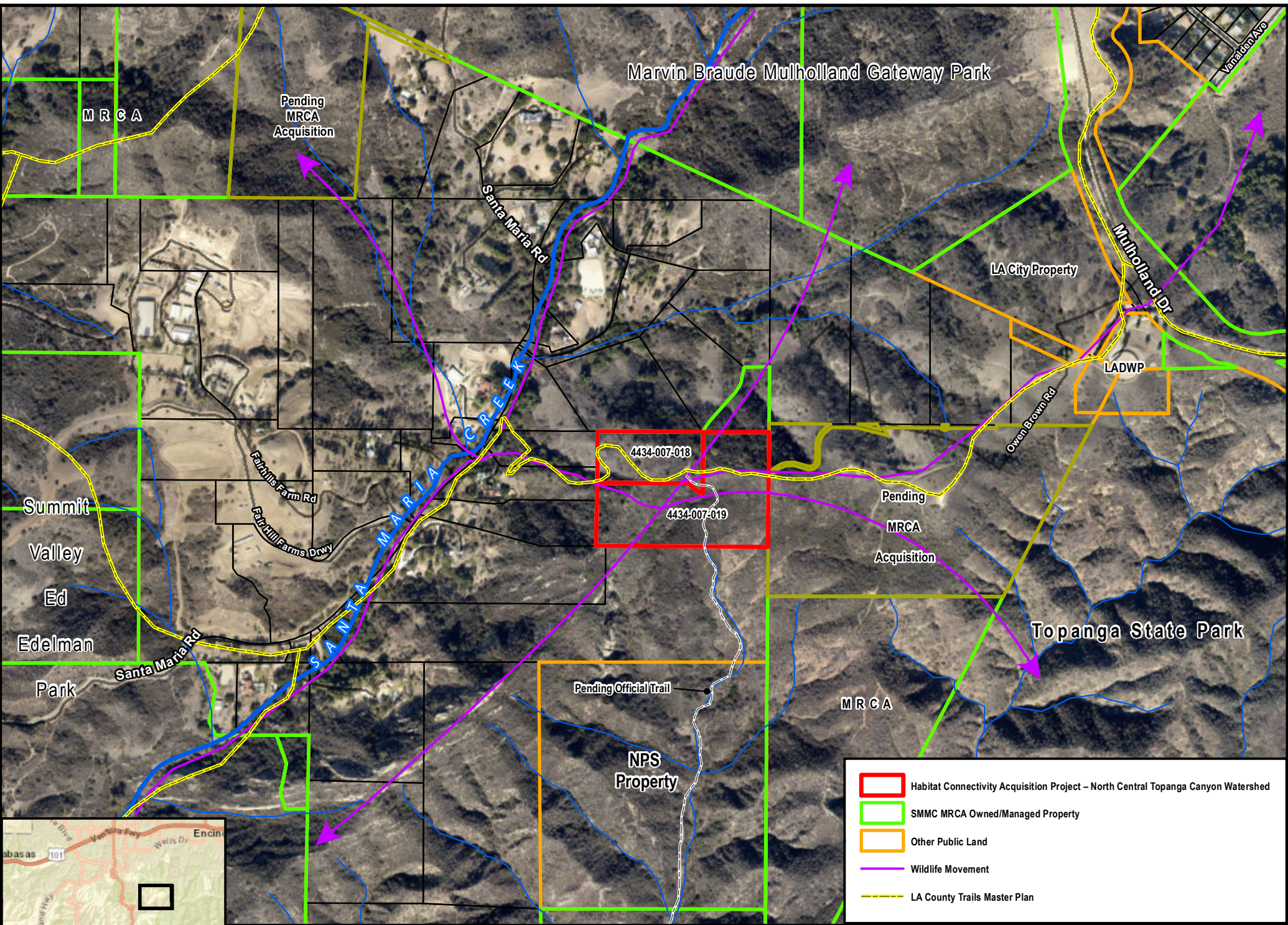
Combined, the total budget for the proposed Project is \$405,000. Matching funds represent approximately 66-percent of the total budget.



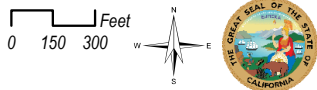
 Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North Central Topanga Canyon Watershed

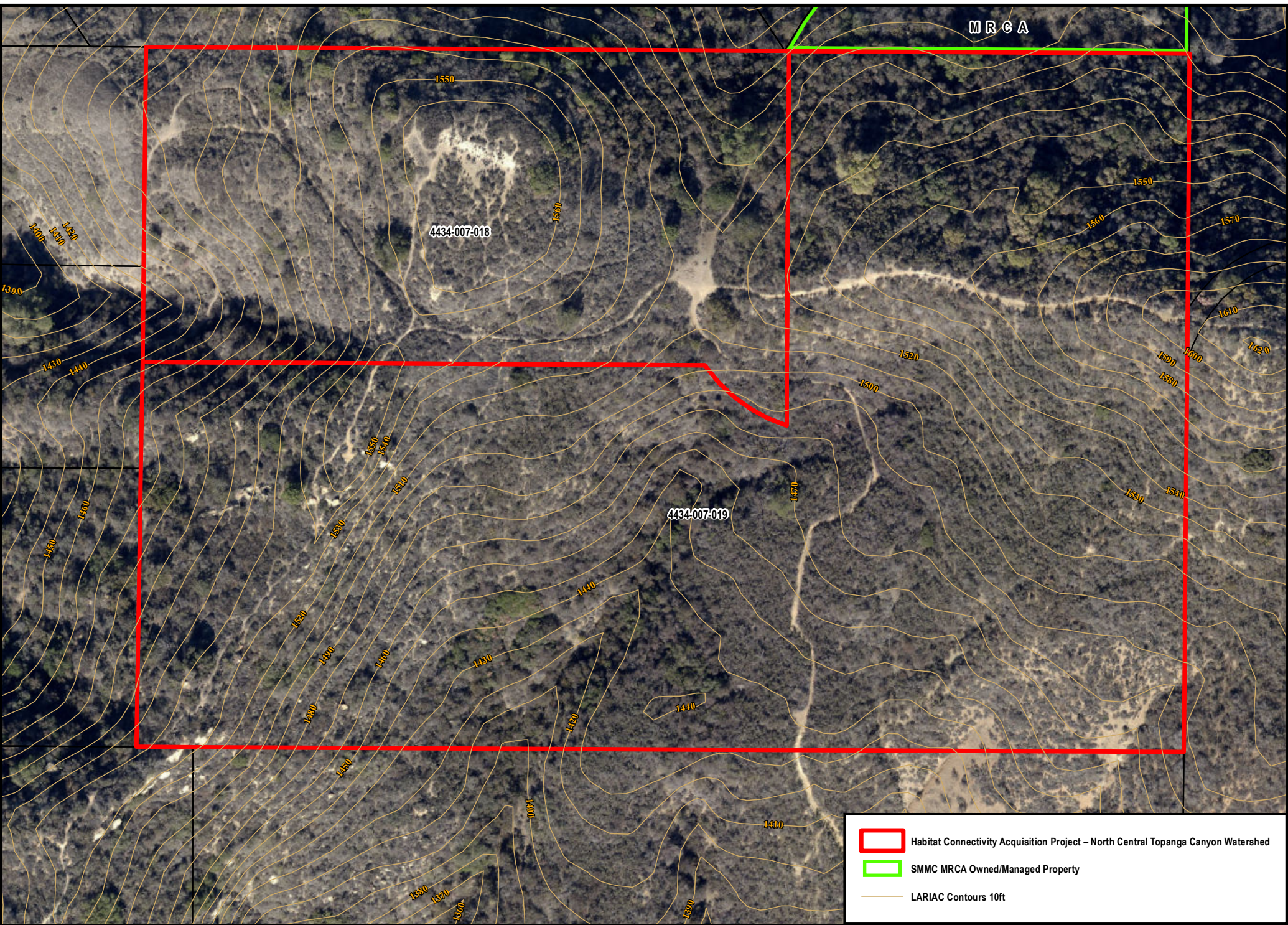
Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North Central Topanga Canyon Watershed USGS Map








Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North Central Topanga Canyon Watershed Aerial Map







 Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North Central Topanga Canyon Watershed

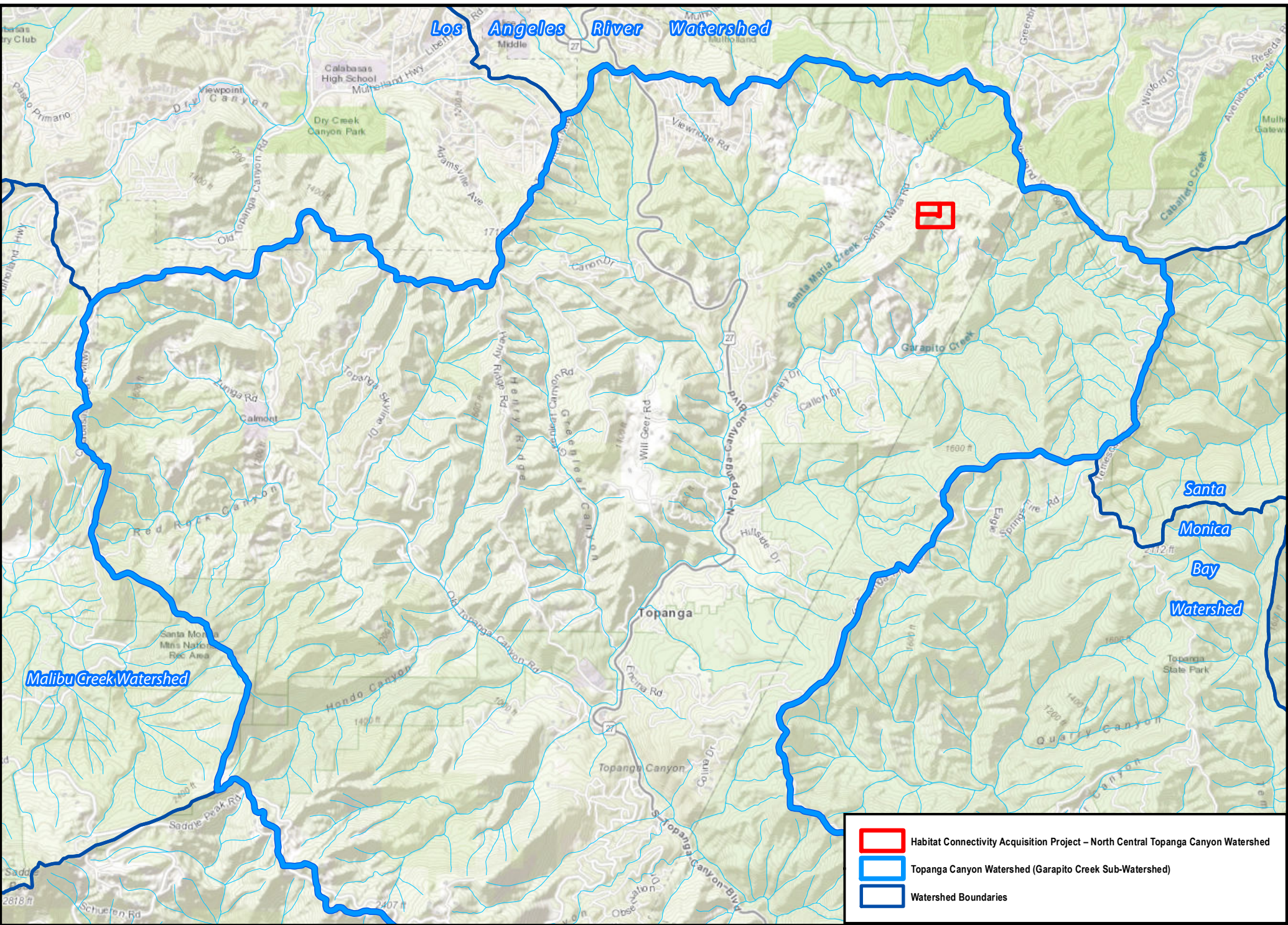
 SMMC MRCA Owned/Managed Property

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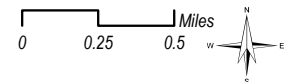
Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North Central Topanga Canyon Watershed Site Map

0 25 50 Feet





Habitat Connectivity Acquisition Project – North Central Topopanga Canyon Watershed Map



MOUNTAINS RECREATION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

November 7, 2018— Agenda Item IX

Resolution No. 18-190

**RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE MOUNTAINS RECREATION
AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY AUTHORIZING A GRANT APPLICATION
TO THE SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY FOR THE
ACQUISITION OF HABITAT CONNECTION PARCELS
IN THE NORTH-CENTRAL TOPANGA CANYON
WATERSHED, UNINCORPORATED
LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

Resolved, That the Governing Board of the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority hereby:

1. FINDS that major protected land gaps exist in the north and central portions of the Topanga Canyon watershed west of Topanga State Park; and
2. FINDS that the staff report dated November 7, 2018 further describes the project; and
3. FINDS that the proposed action is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and
4. ADOPTS the staff report dated November 7, 2018; and
5. AUTHORIZES an application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for a grant to fund the acquisition of habitat linkage parcels in the north-central portion of the Topanga Canyon watershed; and
6. AUTHORIZES any budget amendments as necessary; and
7. AUTHORIZES the Executive Officer to do any and all acts necessary to carry out this resolution and any recommendations made by the Governing Board.


Chair

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AYES: Paranick, Daniel, Hasenauer, Lange

NOS: none

ABSTAIN: none

ABSENT: none

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing resolution was adopted at a regular meeting of the Governing Board of the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, duly noticed and held according to law, on the 7th day of November, 2018.

Date: 11/7/18



Executive Officer