

# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 26, 2019

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 17: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the development and implementation of the Community Training Institute for the Protection and Interpretation of our parks and watersheds.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the development and implementation of the Community Training Institute for the Protection and Interpretation of our Parks and Watersheds.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204.27 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: Research demonstrates that interpretation is an effective management tool leading to protection of resources. Educating visitors and inspiring the emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the visitor and the meanings inherent in the resources leads to greater understanding of and commitment to protection of those resources. People care for what they value and value comes from the “interpretive continuum” that starts with awareness and understanding and ends with stewardship. In the case of Proposition 84, “protection” is defined as “those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources” and includes interpretation as a means of doing so. Section 75005(m).

Interpretation, as defined in the measure, includes but is not limited to, “a visitor serving amenity that educates and communicates the significance and value of natural, historical, and cultural resources in a way that increases the understanding and enjoyment of these resources and that may utilize the expertise of a naturalist or other specialist skilled at educational interpretation.” (Public Resources Code Section 75005(i)) The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has a long history of providing relevant and meaningful interpretation and education programs that not only enhance the visitor experience but promote stewardship and protection of the resources. Such programs require staff, volunteers and program participant who have access to robust professional development and on going interpretive training.

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The MRCA and its partner non-profit, Community Nature Connection (CNC), have a history of providing a variety of professional development and training programs for staff members, volunteers and program participants. These programs run the gamut from half day skill-based naturalist training (ornithology, ethnobotany, tracking), day long or weekend sessions (survival skills, restoration, first aid/CPR) to week long certifications such as Certified Interpretive Guide (CIG) training and California Naturalists. This professional level of training enhances the quality of visitor services and programs and, for participants, provides knowledge, skills and abilities that carry with them long after a course and create eligibility for a career pipeline in the parks as well as an enhanced visitor experience in the parks. Community Nature Connection will operate this program.

The Community Training Institute for the Protection and Interpretation of our Parks and Watersheds will be a comprehensive interpretive and leadership development program for staff, volunteers, program participants and members of the public. Consolidating training offerings into one comprehensive program is not only more efficient and cost effective but allows for more diversity of offering to a wider audience. Matching funds will support non interpretive training content and the development of a business model that leverages, grant funds, private dollars and participant fees to ensure long term sustainable funding.

In addition to addressing internal training needs, the courses offered by the training program will be offered, when possible, as part of the CNC Community Partnership program. This will be an added benefit to groups and organization from under served communities who currently participate in CNC programs. These courses will grow the capacity of these partners to lead excursions to the mountains on their own with new knowledge, skills and abilities, increasing the amount of access and exposure to our public lands for these community members and increasing the number of people benefitting from these interpretive programs. Where outside expertise is required external providers will be brought into lead training. Indigenous community leaders will be consulted and contracted to ensure indigenous perspective and knowledge is incorporated where deemed appropriate by indigenous leaders.

Further, a robust training program supports MRCA/CNC workforce development efforts. The Training Institute will create a task list of training and experience that articulates the combined training and experience required for a variety of entry level jobs with local, state and national park agencies and strive to offer that training and experience to participants

Community Nature Connection will create a comprehensive program and marketing for all of our combined training programs to benefit MRCA and CNC volunteers, program participants and community members.

Training will be provided by both MRCA and CNC staff with the appropriate certifications and training and outside contractors. In some cases, seats in a class will be set aside for fee-based

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participants to offset costs. Seats may also be set aside for volunteers at a free or reduced rate as a recruitment and reward for their services.

This grant would fund a training coordinator to schedule, facilitate logistics, recruit and enroll training participants; training for CNC staff to become trainers where required, supplies and operations costs. July through the end of the year staff will be scheduling, setting up the program and marketing so that there is a catalogue of programs released in January 2020 in print and via the CNC website. Non interpretive training sessions will be supported by matching funds.

Increased access to training will further the ability of representatives from community-based organizations their organization to operate programs that access the outdoors without having to rely on external program sources.

Consideration: \$300,000 from Proposition 84 for a 2 year pilot program.