

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: September 23, 2019

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 15: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 68 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for Fire Resilience Improvements to Park Infrastructure, Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 68 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for Fire Resilience Improvements to Park Infrastructure on properties located outside of the Coastal Zone in the amount of approximately \$325,000, Counties of Los Angeles and Ventura.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33204.2(a) and 33204.27(a) of the Public Resources Code.

Background: In 2018, the voters passed the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018, also known as Proposition 68. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) received various allocations of Proposition 68. Proposition 68 found that California's state, local, and regional park system infrastructure and national park system infrastructure are aging, and a significant infusion of capital is required to protect this investment.

Conservancy and MRCA staff continue to evaluate potential opportunities to address fire concerns for both Conservancy and MRCA properties. Embers dispersed by high winds may cause a fire to "hopscotch" around, leaving buildings vulnerable in any park setting. Capital improvements are needed to protect park infrastructure that is critical to daily park operations.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has submitted a grant application for fire resilience improvements to park infrastructure at various locations. The proposed capital improvements include both building hardening activities to reduce the potential of ignition and installation of semi-automatic suppression systems that would protect a structure as a final line of defense. The same approach may not be suitable for each park property, and so improvements may also include new water pumps, distribution lines, and storage; modifications to emergency routes and parking; and fuel modification near vulnerable structures. While fire may still occur on any property after the work is completed, the proposed improvements will improve firefighters' ability to defend structures and other resources. Please see the attached Proposition 68 grant application for a detailed description and analysis.

The grant request is for \$750,000 to plan and implement the proposed improvements that will protect public access to programs, services, and activities. The proposed improvements are targeted to park infrastructure buildings located in the Wildland-Urban Interface. While not separated out in the grant application budget, MRCA staff have confirmed that approximately \$325,000 of the request is for properties that are not within the Coastal Zone, including East Canyon (Santa Clarita Woodlands), Ed Davis Park at Towsley Canyon, Mentryville, Sage Canyon Park and San Vicente Mountain Park. See related item 14 on this agenda for properties that are located in the Coastal Zone.

Analysis—Proposition 68

Section 80110(b)(8) of the Water Code allocated funding to the Conservancy for the Conservancy's specified purposes. The Conservancy's Proposition 68 Guidelines require that applicants submit a complete application with detailed descriptions of the project and meet a variety of requirements. The MRCA's application packet is attached, and the project meets all the requirements. The Guidelines also require analysis of greenhouse gas emissions avoidance. The proposed project would result in avoidance of up to 2.7 metric tons of carbon dioxide over a forty-year timeframe.

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, and Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor Master Plan.

Scoring - Competitive Grant Program

Under the Conservancy's Proposition 68 grant guidelines for Visitor Serving Development and Improvement Projects, this grant request received sufficient scoring under values for Prioritization, Category, Implementation, Climate Change, and Additional Consideration.

Scoring under the Conservancy's Proposition 68 Guidelines results in the Fire Resilience Improvements to Park Infrastructure project receiving the following:

Prioritization Value:	15 (out of 21)
Category Value:	61 (out of 70)
Implementation Value:	16 (out of 16)
Climate Change Value:	16 (out of 16)
Additional Criteria:	15 (out of 25)

Total points: 123 (101 minimum required).

Consideration: The application from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is for \$750,000 of Proposition 68 funds. MRCA staff have confirmed that approximately \$325,000 of the request is for properties that are not within the Coastal Zone. There is no requirement to separately track expenditures based on whether a property is within the Coastal Zone. If both this item and the related item 14 on the agenda are approved, staff is recommending that one grant be awarded to MRCA to simplify record-keeping and project management.