

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: October 28, 2019

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 14: Consideration of resolution authorizing an augmentation to grant 3810-P01-1775 for the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries Revitalization Plan, County of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing an augmentation to grant 3810-P01-1775 for the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries Revitalization Plan, County of Los Angeles, in the amount of \$1,500,000 of Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 funds.

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

Background: On December 11, 2017, the Conservancy authorized a grant of Proposition 1 and Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for Upper Los Angeles River Project Planning and Design, to achieve a Revitalization Plan as mandated by Assembly Bill 466 (AB 466), Chapter 347 of the Statutes of 2017. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has submitted the attached application for additional funds in the amount of \$1,500,000. The proposed augmentation is to cover additions to the Plan and its process, as directed by the Working Group. As a result, additional project management and technical expertise is needed to incorporate additional elements to the Plan.

The Working Group is tasked with the development of a Plan, supported by staff and a team of consultants. Working Group members include representatives from Los Angeles County, the Cities of Los Angeles, Burbank and Glendale, California State Parks, and several community members (see complete list at www.upperlariver.org). MRCA was granted funds to assist the Conservancy to administer the Working Group and develop the Plan, but is not a Working Group member.

The Conservancy's Working Group has met on a monthly basis since August 2018, in full session and as committees. In addition to the parameters established by the various pieces of legislation and as the Plan has progressed, the Working Group has made other decisions which dramatically expanded the scope of work, and consequently the cost, of the Plan. These include the geographic extent of study - how far away from the waterways should the analysis be conducted; the amount, complexity and scope of the community outreach effort, including dual

language and Plan commenting service; the number of site-specific designs and their level of detail; studying additional tributaries, such as the Sepulveda Basin drainages; additional analysis of study areas and increasing the amount and complexity of hydrologic engineering conducted. In addition, added meetings for the Working Group and its committees, thus requiring additional preparation and staff time.

During the Working Group's committee meetings in August 2019, it was noted that there are still elements that could be more robustly envisioned, or added to the scope, to better achieve the project's goals. These include exploration of channel modifications, potential diversions, and creation of new open space for habitat and recreation. Furthermore, if the region's critical needs for housing were incorporated into analysis, it could make the final Plan more relevant and applicable. At the September 26, 2019 meeting, the Working Group supported the resolution recommending the following components to the Plan to make it more visionary, relevant, and comprehensive:

- **Deeper Analysis of Opportunity Areas:** In opportunity areas where conceptual design has already begun, the designs shall explore more options for habitat enhancement, feasibility of river restoration, channel expansion, infrastructure modifications, water infiltration and storm water capture. The concepts should also consider community needs for housing and open space, and benefits for optimal results. Illustrations shall be added if needed to communicate design ideas. The cost for this item is expected to range between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

- **Project Area Expansion, Revisions and Additional Renderings:** As the project has progressed, requirements to develop the Plan in accordance with the Working Group have become more defined. The extended time frame accounts for the consultant team, including additional project coordination, materials development, production, additional meeting support for two (2) Working Group meetings, and one (1) set of committee meetings to further develop and refine the Upper Los Angeles River and Tributaries (ULART) Revitalization Plan (the Plan). This task also includes additional project area expansions and revisions to initial project areas; renderings of selected design area locations; draft Plan online commenting service; additional typology analyses; added opportunity area analyses; extended coordination with the Los Angeles River Master Plan update process and additional tasks to support and coordinate the Plan development process. This also include additional revisions of documents, presentations, attendance/coordination for community engagement meetings, discussion and research regarding previous and existing site conditions, feasibility for enhancement, as well as modifications and analyses for the Working Group adopted screening/scoring methodology.

While the design areas and rendered perspectives were developed based upon community input and experience, the Working Group directed the team to push the envelope and develop further, what is known as, "Blue Sky" concepts. The Blue Sky Concept development and

analysis seeks to enhance design area concepts to be as multipurpose and comprehensive as possible, add new opportunities- design areas identified as Blue Sky Design Areas, paired with high level feasibility studies and recommended next steps. The cost for this item is expected to range between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

- **New Assessment of Publicly Owned Properties:** The Plan shall assess publicly owned lands which are underutilized and potentially could be converted to new uses for public benefit and to achieve the Plan's goals. Revising or consolidating current uses among said lands shall also be studied to maximize land potential for both industry and public needs, while incorporating anti-displacement recommendations and best practices for responsible development paired with open space. Costs for this item is expected to range between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

- **New Assessment of Privately Owned Properties:** The Plan shall evaluate large parcels of privately-owned land which are proximate to waterways and in the immediate vicinity of opportunity areas. These lands shall be assessed for their potential for restoration or conversion to and depending on their current uses, proximity to waterways and potential for restoration propose revitalization enhancements. The cost for this item is expected to range between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

- **Add Climate Change Analysis for Open Space Benefits:** The Plan shall quantify and apply greenhouse gas reduction impacts to the acreage of open space created, and study habitat and biodiversity metrics for land under public land ownership. The cost for this item is expected to range between \$50,000 and \$80,000.

- **Public Engagement for Plan Release:** A comprehensive public information strategy shall be developed to distribute the final Plan to a wider audience about the Plan's goals and recommendations. This shall include additional outreach methods and development of an easily accessible document for mass distribution (Reader's Guide). Once the Plan is finalized, staff shall explore options for community advisory stewards and focus groups to advocate for individual projects, moving them forward for implementation and wide public support. This may entail extended efforts related to incorporation into other ongoing planning efforts. The cost for this item is expected to range between \$75,000 and \$125,000.

- **Multilingual Communication:** In addition to a Spanish version of the summary document, all chapters of the Plan and all new content contained in its appendices shall also be translated. Simultaneous translation shall be provided for the draft Plan listening session, and any additional meetings that are a product of ongoing engagement. The comprehensive public information strategy shall incorporate multilingual materials and targeted materials for linguistically isolated populations. The cost for this item is expected to range between \$100,000 and \$150,000.

- **Project Management:** Any added analysis, scope, meetings, and/or work products will also increase the project management needs for the project. Previously added Plan elements, meetings, extended time-lines, online services, and illustrations have already maximized the available resources. The cost for this item which anticipates approximately nine additional months of MRCA staff time is expected to range between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

To meet the mandated legislative deadline, it has been necessary for this project to proceed on an accelerated schedule as compared to a typical planning process. An effect of the accelerated schedule has been that while added scope is identified early on, the project team is not always able to negotiate scope and budget specifics right away. Augmentation needs have been separated into multiple increments in order to keep the project moving forward. All requests have been, and will continue to be, supported by the budget and scope data available at the time of the request.

Due to these changes and additions to the Plan, the current funding will be exhausted by approximately mid-November 2019. Additional efforts include: extended plan development, further refine project concepts, Plan release, extended community engagement and outreach (listening session for final draft Plan), and the additional public communication support.

The final amount will be determined per the Working Group's direction and negotiations with the consultant team on specifics. Funding sources include Propositions 1 and 68. Staff will consult with the Conservancy's grants analyst to determine the most appropriate breakdown.

Fiscal Impact: If awarded, the grant augmentation will be added to the fiscal year 19/20 budget. There is no expected impact on the general fund.

The existing grant was determined to be consistent with the General Obligation Bond Law, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1), and the Drought, Water, Parks Climate Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68). The original application met all requirements of the Conservancy's Proposition 1 Competitive Grant Program Guidelines and scored a total of 86 points (out of possible 115). The proposed grant augmentation is for additional work under the same project description. Using the Conservancy's Proposition 68 guidelines, the application scores total points of 141 out of 145 (Prioritization value of 21 out of 21; Category value of 66 out of 70; Implementation value of 16 out of 16; Climate Change value of 13 out of 13; and Additional Consideration value of 25 out of 25).

Consideration: The augmentation request from the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is for \$1,500,000 of Proposition 1 and Proposition 68 funds. The existing grant from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is \$1,700,000. The Working Group approved all of

the elements listed above; staff estimates that the full project cost could reach \$3,200,000, if all the variables were to come in at the highest cost. As a comparison, a similar process for the Lower Los Angeles river was approximately \$2.4 million, and studied a much shorter length of river, did not include any tributaries, and did not extend away from the waterway into the larger the watershed.