

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 1, 2020

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 14: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 68 funds to the Conejo Recreation and Park District for Rancho Potrero Visitor Serving Improvements, City of Thousand Oaks.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy authorize a grant not to exceed \$600,000 in Proposition 68 funds to the Conejo Recreation and Park District for development of improvements and recreational amenities to the Rancho Potrero Open Space, a joint project with the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency and the City of Thousand Oaks.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(a) of the Public Resources Code; and Proposition 68, Section 80000 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: Please see the attached Proposition 68 grant application from the Conejo Recreation and Park District for a detailed description and analysis, and support letters. The grant request is for \$600,000 to improve an accessible visitor-serving gathering area for recreation programs, including picnic facilities, hitching posts, benches, tree planting, drinking water, and educational interpretation signage.

The Conservancy, Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) have a long history with what is now the 315-acre Rancho Potrero Open Space. Formerly part of the Broome Ranch, it was called the Huck Property (aka Olympia Farms), and was subject of a complicated 636 acre acquisition by MRCA from the George Paterias Huck estate, including a storied land auction held on the property near the subject of this grant project. The property was a high priority for preservation by the Conservancy, National Park Service, the park district, city, Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency, and State Parks as it is a key piece of the larger open space complex of Point Mugu State Park, Rancho Sierra Vista, and Conejo open space parklands, with interior trails connecting to the larger trail systems. The property was finally acquired in late 1993 by MRCA, with funding from Conejo Recreation and Park District, the City of Thousand Oaks, National Park Service, and the Conservancy. NPS took ownership of the roughly southern half of the property. MRCA eventually transferred its portion to the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency, which continues to hold title.

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The proposed improvements for outdoor recreation and environmental programming will be located on the former Olympia Farms barn site which is already modified with a large concrete pad. Re-purposing the site will provide a location for summer camps, naturalist programs, picnicking, therapeutic horseback riding with the nonprofit Ride On organization, and daily visitors. Planting specimen Coast Live Oaks, Valley Oaks, and California Walnut will provide shade and enhance restoration of the site. Located at the western edge of the Conejo Valley on Potrero Road, the site is accessible to other communities including Cal State Channel Islands, Oxnard, and Camarillo.

Proposition 68 grant guidelines for Visitor Serving Development and Improvement Projects received more than sufficient scoring under values for Prioritization, Category, Implementation, Climate Change, and Additional Consideration (totaling 128 out of a max of 145), plus points for matching contributions.