

ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park at Joughin Ranch



The 1,733-acre Joughin Ranch has been a high priority on Conservancy Workprograms for over a decade. The stunning property is located in Los Angeles County on the south slopes of the Santa Susana Mountains between Chatsworth and Simi Valley, and encompasses the headwaters of both the Los Angeles River and Calleguas Creek Watersheds. The long-sought acquisition was finally negotiated and funded during fiscal year 2002-2003, with escrow closing July 18, 2003. The purchase by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority was made possible with grants from the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Los Angeles County Open Space District (Proposition A), and The Nature Conservancy.

Two major drainages on the ranch, Devil Canyon and Browns Canyon, contain dense oak woodlands and riparian corridors with year-round surface water. Approximately 5 miles of blue-line streams are present on the Joughin Ranch parkland. The site also supports coastal sage scrub, California walnut woodlands, big-cone Douglas fir, native and non-native grasslands, and chaparral. Joughin Ranch is an important hub for wildlife movement and includes recreational trail opportunities and protection of a regionally significant scenic viewshed.

ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

Verdugo Mountains Open Space Preserve

Located in the northern portion of the City of Glendale, twenty minutes from downtown Los Angeles, the 244-acre Verdugo Mountains Open Space Preserve (formerly known as the Oakmont V property), is in the lushly vegetated north-facing flank of the Verdugo Mountains in the Upper Los Angeles River Watershed. Entirely within a region designated by Los Angeles County as a Significant Ecological Area, the stunningly beautiful preserve contains more than 2,300 mature coast live oaks, sycamores, big leaf maples, bay laurels, and other indigenous trees. Numerous springs and blueline streams provide for a rich diversity of habitat.

The purchase was a joint effort by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and the City of Glendale. The property was purchased on March 21, 2003 by the Conservancy for \$12,000,000. Funding was provided by State funds including recent bond measures, Proposition 13 (Water Bond 2000) and Proposition 40 (Resources Bond 2002) as well as a General Fund appropriation from a prior fiscal year. Assemblymember Dario Frommer and Congressman Adam Schiff were instrumental in the purchase, which was actively pursued by the Conservancy since 1997. The citizens' group Volunteers Organized in Conserving the Environment (VOICE) actively supported preservation of the property.

The Verdugo Mountains are a unique urban mountain range comprised of 14-square miles of habitat that remain tenuously connected to the Angeles National Forest via the Big Tujunga Wash. The acquisition bolsters a contiguous 4,000-acre block of open space including parkland owned by the cities of Glendale, the City of Burbank, Los Angeles, the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. The property contains several prominent ridgelines and is highly visible from within the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor, the 210 Freeway, and the Angeles National Forest. Equally dramatic are the vistas from the upper slopes of the property. An extensive network of existing trails on the property highlight its immediate recreational value for more than one million people.



ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

Confluence Park

In March 2003, the Conservancy and MRCA celebrated the first acquisition of Confluence Park. Confluence Park Phase One was acquired by the MRCA. The first phase of park development will occur on this half-acre vacant parcel, at the intersection of Figueroa Street and San Fernando Road in Cypress Park. Planned improvements include picnic facilities, native landscaping, a water feature, and amenities for bicyclers and pedestrians. These improvements will complement changes to roads and transportation in the vicinity, potentially including retrofitting the San Fernando Road/Figueroa Street/Riverside Drive intersection with a vehicular roundabout.

When complete, Confluence Park will connect potential and existing open space surrounding the 5 Freeway/Arroyo Seco Parkway interchange at the confluence of the Los Angeles River and the Arroyo Seco. The Conservancy's goal is to provide regional and community attractions and to create multi-modal links between the Los Angeles River, Taylor Yard, and Arroyo Seco Bikeways. Project partners include the California Department of Transportation, the County of Los Angeles, the City of Los Angeles and the United States Geological Survey.

The Conservancy contracted with Community Development by Design and the University of California, Berkeley to research several neighborhoods adjacent to the river, focusing on the residents' impressions and attitudes toward the river and its parks. The Los Angeles Conservation Corps and the California Trust for Public Schools conducted additional research.



ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

Browns Canyon



Browns Canyon located in the central Santa Susana Mountains offers more wilderness elements than any other Los Angeles River tributary outside of the Angeles National Forest. In the fall of 2002, the Conservancy granted Proposition 40 funds to the MRCA to acquire 404 acres in lower Browns Canyon. The parkland includes a scenic, old gravel quarry that will soon make an ideal parking and staging area for access to open space in the numerous tributaries of the canyon. This property is the foundation for the 2,000-plus-acre Michael D. Antonovich Regional Park which was dedicated in late summer 2003. An oak lined road leads up to the quarry and a network of trails lead in all directions but east. The property contains a spring-fed pond and surrounding mountain slopes support purple-sage dominated coastal sage scrub. Acquisition of this property was the key to providing easy public access to Browns Canyon. The northern portion of the property provides sweeping vistas of the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and the San Fernando Valley to the south. Near term plans include construction of a campground, amphitheater, ranger residence, restored stream and equestrian amenities.

ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

Heidelberg Park

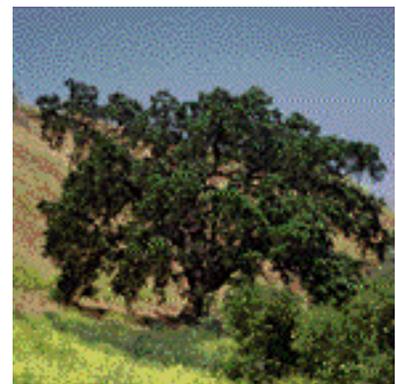
Located in the Mount Washington community near downtown Los Angeles, 18-acre Heidelberg Park provides a rare glimpse of the natural appearance of Mount Washington prior to European settlement of the Los Angeles basin. The park's steep slopes have harbored one of the best remaining examples of California black walnut woodland in all of Southern California. The walnut woodland here provides food and excellent cover for wildlife, and critical roosting and nesting sites for numerous songbirds and birds of prey.

Purchased in November 2002, Heidelberg Park is the second largest natural park permanently protected by the Conservancy in the Mount Washington area, known for its twisting streets, city views and rural character. The Conservancy purchased nearby Elyria Canyon Park in 1994, with the energetic support of the Mount Washington community.



Oak Forest Canyon Natural Area

After more than thirty years of effort by the local community, in November 2002, Oak Forest Canyon Natural Area in Sherman Oaks was purchased by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. The acquisition was funded with a Proposition 12 grant from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy. Oak Forest Canyon is a small but significant oak woodland with a perennial stream, adjacent to the Conservancy's 110-acre Fossil Ridge Park.



ACQUISITION HIGHLIGHTS

Laurel Canyon-Briar Summit

The 52-acre Laurel Canyon-Briar Summit property, in the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan area, is part of an approximately 110-acre habitat block in the eastern Santa Monica Mountains that has been a high priority since 1993. Acquired in December 2002, the property provides both a critical core habitat area and a hub for wildlife movement in the only habitat network that can replenish wildlife to the 5,000-acre Griffith Park habitat block. The leadership of State Senator Sheila Kuehl and Assemblymember Paul Koretz, who secured funding for the project, as well as grassroots efforts by local residents was key to the success of this important acquisition. Working with the nonprofit Mountains Restoration Trust, more than \$100,000 in private funding was also raised to acquire this significant hillside property, which is highly visible from both the coastal and valley sides of the Santa Monica Mountains.

