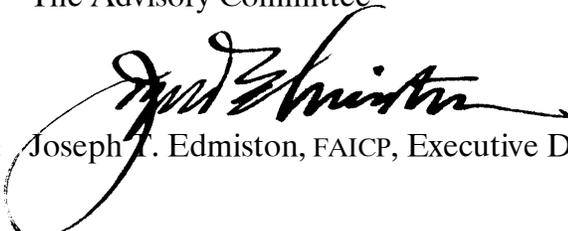


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: February 27, 2006

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 50 funds to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for acquisition of Tapo Canyon/Marr Ranch property, approximately 158.36 acres, portion of APN 620-0-320-075, Simi Valley area, unincorporated Ventura County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of \$975,000 in Proposition 50 funds to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for acquisition of Tapo Canyon/Marr Ranch property, approximately 158.36 acres, portion of APN 620-0-320-075, Simi Valley area, unincorporated Ventura County.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(c) of the Public Resources Codes states, in part:

The conservancy may, in accordance with the priorities of the plan, do the following: . . . (c) Award grants to state agencies, cities, counties, resource conservation districts, and park and recreation districts for the purpose of acquiring sites identified as necessary for park, recreation, or conservation purposes and for development of essential related facilities.

Background: Please see the attached grant application and materials from the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District.

The Tapo Canyon parcel is a remainder 158.36- acre portion of the much larger Marr Ranch, which was subject of a City of Simi Valley approved development some years ago. (Please note that the District and seller recently added an additional five acres to the 152.79 acres figure noted in the District's attached grant application, hence the new number is 158.36 acres).

A large Marr Ranch open space dedication of 1740 acres was previously deeded to the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District for open space protection and passive recreation. This smaller 158+-acre adjacent portion is still developable, but the Park District has been successful in pursuing a sale from the owners in order to preserve the land for its natural resources, watershed protection, and trail access to the other Santa Susana Mountains parklands owned by the Park District and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, including Rocky Peak Park (formerly owned by Bob Hope). The subject property is located just east of Tapo Canyon Road and south of Lost Canyons Road. Tapo Canyon is

one of the headwaters of the Arroyo Simi in the Calleguas Creek Watershed, and is a major tributary of Calleguas Creek, which flows to Mugu Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean at Point Mugu. Section 79570 (c) of the Water Code provides that half of Proposition 50 funds allocated to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy “. . . shall be expended for protection of the Santa Monica Bay and Ventura County coastal watersheds, pursuant to Division 23 (commencing with Section 33000) of the Public Resources Code.” The Conservancy has long been a participant in the multi-agency/multi-stakeholder Calleguas Creek Watershed Management cooperative planning effort. The protection of upland habitat and watersheds such as areas in Tapo Canyon is just one of the recommended actions in the draft Creek Watershed Management Plan to ameliorate issues of water quality, habitat and recreation, flooding, and sediment loading in Calleguas Creek and Mugu Lagoon.

The requested grant of \$975,000 from the Conservancy’s Proposition 50 funds is to be matched with \$300,000 authorized by Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District Board of Directors. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority previously commissioned an appraisal for the property in anticipation of the potential to directly purchase the land. The seller is willing to accept the District’s purchase offer which is consistent with the appraisal value. The Conservancy’s grant funds would be deposited directly into escrow, and the Park District would take title and be responsible for the management and preservation of the property consistent with the provisions of Prop 50 and the Conservancy’s grant.