

DESERT AND MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: June 15, 2016

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item X: Consideration of resolution authorizing: 1) acceptance of APN 2840-009-900 an approximately one acre parcel along the Santa Clara River; 2) sale of said parcel to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA); and 3) reimbursement of MRCA for advanced funds.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing 1) acceptance of APN 2840-009-900 from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; 2) sale of said parcel to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA); and 3) reimbursement of MRCA for advanced funds.

Background: The Los Angeles County Flood Control District (FCD) has declared APN 2840-009-900 at the Oak Springs Canyon and Santa Clara River confluence as surplus property. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) has exercised its first right of refusal on the parcel via its authority in the Public Resources Code. A map of the approximately one-acre property that also abuts a main railroad corridor is attached. The sale authorization is expected to go to the Board of Supervisors in August.

The unfortunate need to involve three agencies in the acquisition is as follows. The FCD will only sell the property to the Conservancy and will not do a double escrow. However the funding source to acquire the parcel is a Proposition A agreement through the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA).

The proposed order of title would be for the Conservancy to acquire the property with money advanced by the MRCA. The Conservancy would then quit claim the property to the Desert and Mountain Conservation Authority (DMCA). The DMCA would then sell the property to MRCA using the subject Proposition A funding. The DMCA would then use the sale proceeds to reimburse MRCA for its funds advanced to the Conservancy. The reason for the Conservancy not to sell the property directly to the MRCA is that substantial time and administrative cost savings are realized.

The Conservancy should acquire the property in September and immediately transfer the property to the DMCA. The DMCA hopefully can complete a sale of the property to the MRCA in October.

There are corral and shade structure encroachments on the property erected by the adjoining owner. The MRCA will work with the owner on resolving those encroachments. For the following reasons, the long-term value of the property is sufficient enough to accept it in spite of the encroachments. The railroad tracks that run along the south side of the Santa Clara River from the Sand Canyon and SR 14 overcrossing area to a location many miles up Soledad Canyon, provide just one of two railroad track under-crossings for wildlife over a distance of approximately five miles. One of those two under-crossings is at Oak Springs Canyon including the subject parcel. The protection of such under-crossings is paramount to maintain wildlife movement between the Santa Clara River and regional upland habitats.

Pure alluvial habitat and one Arizona crossing remain between the subject parcel and City of Santa Clarita open space in the Santa Clara River. To the south beyond the elevated railroad tracks, Oak Springs Creek filters through horse properties, private open space, and then Sand Canyon golf course for a total of 1.25 miles to reach the Angeles National Forest. The property is regionally significant for habitat connectivity.

Multiple vehicles do prescriptively use the property for access to go up unpaved Oak Springs Canyon Road; however that use does not negate the ecological importance of the parcel. It currently supports limited alluvial scrub vegetation at the margins of the active channel where vehicles do not drive.