

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: March 22, 2018

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 5: Consideration of resolution (a) amending Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Work Program to expand Significant Ecological Area No. 6, Las Virgenes SW Ridge to include Medea Creek riparian area and (b) adopting a project plan for the Triangle Ranch property (APNs 2061-031-019, 2063-005-013, 2063-006-022, 023, and 2063-036-001), unincorporated Los Angeles County and City of Agoura Hills.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution (a) amending Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Work Program to expand Significant Ecological Area No. 6 - Las Virgenes South West Ridge project boundary to include the adjacent Medea Creek riparian area and (b) adopting a project plan for the Triangle Ranch property (APNs 2061-031-019, 2063-005-013, 2063-006-022, 023, and 2063-036-001), unincorporated Los Angeles County and City of Agoura Hills.

Legislative Authority: Sections 33208 and 33209 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The Conservancy submits an updated Workprogram figure as part of its Annual Report to the Governor. As property is protected by the Conservancy or any other agency or non-profit organization, it is removed from the Workprogram. The same is true when properties are developed and no longer can be saved. The Workprogram is a document easily amended to adjust to changing conditions including having not included high priority parcels for any reason. Since the last major effort to revise the Acquisition Workprogram, the Conservancy has taken approximately a dozen actions involving scores of parcels to amend the document with added properties throughout its jurisdiction.

The Workprogram project, entitled, “ Significant Ecological Area No. 6 - Las Virgenes South West Ridge” includes the majority portion of the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority’s (MRCA) approximately 60-acre phase one acquisition of the Triangle Ranch property in the unincorporated portion of Agoura Hills. To synch the Workprogram with both the MRCA’s proposed phase one acquisition and the Conservancy’s approved Proposition 1 grant to the MRCA, the first part of this proposed action adds a 24-acre area to the Significant Ecological Area No. 6 - Las Virgenes South West Ridge project boundary. As referenced in the agenda language, the added 24-acre area includes over 2,300 linear feet of the Medea Creek riparian area between Kanan Dume Road and Cornell Road. An attached figure shows

the whole of that Workprogram project boundary and the recommended part to add. Protection of this perennial section of Medea Creek is a high priority acquisition. The absence of this 24-acre area from the Workprogram is an oversight. Given the tight timing of the MRCA's acquisition schedule, only this focused area is recommended to be added at this juncture for expediency. Significant Ecological Area Number 6 was designated by Los Angeles County in the late 1980s. It encompasses an east-west trending ridge system that spans between the Liberty Canyon inter-mountain range habitat linkage and Cornell Road. The Triangle Ranch property is critical to connect the Liberty Canyon area westward into the Ladyface Mountain core habitat area. The subject Medea Creek section is vital because as a contiguous north-south habitat block it provides for multiple habitat connection points towards both Kanan Dume Road and Cornell Road.

Other phases of the MRCA's proposed total acquisition of the 320.6-acre Triangle Ranch project located on the west side of Kanan Dume Road were also missed in the most recent Workprogram. Staff's intent is to recommend further revision of the Workprogram at an upcoming meeting to include these high priority areas along the eastern end of Ladyface Mountain. These areas include populations of two Federally-listed plant species.

The second part of this proposed action is to adopt a Project Plan pursuant to Section 33209 in the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Act. Given both the complexity and tight timing of the MRCA's proposed Triangle Ranch acquisition project, it probable that the MRCA will seek additional funding from the Conservancy for subsequent project phases, including phase two. Adoption of a Project Plan sets a firm foundation for the Conservancy's further involvement in the Triangle Ranch project. A draft *Santa Monica Mountains - Triangle Ranch Project Plan* is attached. The plan addresses all five parcels that make up the 320.6-acre Triangle Ranch ownership.