

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 5, 2007

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 13: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 12 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to acquire property within the Soledad Canyon Conceptual Area Protection Plan approved by the California Department of Fish and Game, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 12 funds in an amount not to exceed \$124,000 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to acquire property within the Soledad Canyon Conceptual Area Protection Plan approved by the California Department of Fish and Game, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(c) of the Public Resources Code

Background: The Soledad Canyon Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) addresses a land acquisition program to provide an adequate habitat linkage between the two major portions of the Angeles National Forest. This habitat linkage was also addressed by the South Coast Wildlands Project in its Missing Linkages program via a report, entitled, "*South Coast Missing Linkages Project - A Linkage Design for the San Gabriel - Castaic Connection.*" The CAPP was prepared by a broad list of agency staff members including the Conservancy, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, State Coastal Conservancy, City of Santa Clarita, Los Angeles County Nature Centers, and California Department of Fish and Game. This group is still meeting under the auspices of the State Coastal Conservancy's watershed coordinator program and is known as the Upper Santa Clara River Biodiversity Working Group.

The MRCA is working jointly with most of the above agencies to implement acquisition of CAPP properties. Agency efforts are greatly focused on a key choke point at the intersection of State Route 14 and Agua Dulce Canyon. The Nature Conservancy is also spearheading the acquisition parcels along the main stem of Soledad Canyon both within and just outside the CAPP boundary. Because the CAPP is approved by the California Department of Fish and Game, the approximately two hundred parcels are eligible for funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). The WCB looks favorably upon projects that have other funding sources.

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The MRCA submitted the attached letter requesting grant funds to acquire properties within the several-thousand-acre CAPP boundary. There is an approaching deadline to apply for WCB funding at the agency's August 2007 meeting. In progress negotiations will determine which property the MRCA and/or the Santa Clarita Watershed Recreation and Conservation Authority (SCWRCA) will seek funding for from the WCB. It is important to have matching funding fully secured.

All of the proposed funding requested by the MRCA would be used for direct land acquisition costs including appraisals, title reports, and closing costs. The subject Proposition 12 funding must be encumbered by June 30, 2007. The proposed grant of an amount not to exceed \$124,000 is an excellent means of leveraging additional State funds through the WCB.