

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: June 5, 2007

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 15: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the development and improvement of land and water resources at Mentryville, Santa Clarita.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 40 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the development and improvement of land and water resources at Mentryville, in the amount of \$500,000.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(c) and 5096.650(b) of Public Resources Code.

Background: The California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2002 (Proposition 40), allocated funds to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in Article 5, 5096.650(b) of the Public Resources Code, for the acquisition, development, rehabilitation, restoration, and protection of land and water resources. The General Provisions in Article 1, 5096.605(c) describe development as including but not limited to improvement, rehabilitation, restoration, enhancement, preservation, protection, and interpretation. Article 1, 5096.605(j) describes preservation as identification, evaluation, recordation, documentation, interpretation, protection, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, development, and reconstruction, or any combination of those activities.

Public Resources Code Section 33204(c): "The Conservancy may, in accordance with the priorities of the plan . . . 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 public facilities."

Located at the base of Pico Canyon's chaparral dominated slopes, Mentryville was an 1880's oil boomtown built around its oil well, Pico No. 4. Named for Charles Alexander Mentry, the oil well's tenacious driller - and later superintendent of the company that would become Chevron - Mentryville was home to over 100 families until the early 1930's. Pico No. 4 went on to become the longest continually operating oil well in the world, closing in 1990. Historic

Agenda Item 15

June 5, 2007

Page 2

buildings still stand including Charles Mentry's grand thirteen-room mansion, a one-room schoolhouse, and a period barn.

The MRCA has already done significant construction to stabilize and protect the historic Superintendent's House, the barn and the schoolhouse. An architect and engineer, specializing in historic structures, prepared plans for new building foundations, which were installed by MRCA staff. Staff installed new fire-resistant roofs. Other exterior finishes were put in place.

Pico Canyon burned in the fires of October 2003. MRCA staff and outside fire departments saved all the structures in the town. The storms of winter 2004-2005 also took their toll. The stream washed out the roads in several places. Mud flowed down around and under the Superintendent's House. MRCA staff using FEMA funds has removed most of the debris left by the storms and has repaired the major stream crossings.

As Santa Clarita and Newhall continue to develop, more and more people will be coming to use this incredible resource. The MRCA currently has two grants from Los Angeles County Proposition A to create new trails in Pico Canyon. In conjunction with these trail projects, the MRCA would like to develop further public-serving amenities at Mentryville. Some of these elements include public restrooms, picnic areas, and interpretive signage. Accessible walkways through the historic town would create a more cohesive visitor experience. While the historic structures have been stabilized, they require further restoration particularly to their interiors. To provide superior site security, a new ranger residence should be re-sited and constructed. Additionally, the MRCA would like to build a replacement for the town's original recreation hall.

Clearly, Mentryville is a park full of possibilities. The MRCA has made some good progress in developing this unique facility. A program for development of structures and park amenities needs to be fully fleshed out. These Prop 40 grant funds would be used for project planning, design and some initial capital improvements.

Consideration: The grant to the MRCA would be in the amount of \$500,000.