

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 4, 2005

From : 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item No. 19: Consideration of resolution authorizing adding the following projects in Los Angeles and Ventura counties to the Conservancy Improvement Project Workprogram: Conejo Creek-North Fork-Wildflower Park De-channelization; Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration; Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration; Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration; Plummer-Variel Restoration; Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration; Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration; Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration; Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration; Canoga Avenue-MTA right of way; Vista Hermosa Park Restoration, and Pacoima Wash Greenway.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing adding the following projects to the Conservancy Park Development and Improvements Workprogram: Conejo Creek-North Fork-Wildflower Park De-channelization; Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration; Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration; Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration; Plummer-Variel Restoration; Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration; Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration; Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration; Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration; Canoga Avenue-MTA right of way; Vista Hermosa Park Restoration, and Pacoima Wash Greenway

Legislative Authority: Sections 33203 of the Public Resources Code.

Background: The current Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Development and Improvements Workprogram was adopted in 2001. Subsequent to that adoption, the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor was expanded a third time to include all lands south of the Antelope Valley (SR14) Freeway in the Santa Clara River watershed. In addition, the passage of Proposition 50 modified the boundary of the Santa Monica Mountains Zone to include all portions of the Los Angeles River watershed from the northernmost point of the City of Vernon. During the last four years, projects have been periodically added. All projects in the adopted 2001 Park Development and Improvements Workprogram were prioritized based on extensive, quantified evaluation criteria. However, subsequent projects have not been evaluated with these criteria.

The proposed action would add twelve projects to the Park Development and Improvements Workprogram. A brief project description, and the rationale for adding each project follows. Maps for all of the projects except Conejo Creek-North Fork-Wildflower Park De-

channelization, Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration, and Vista Hermosa Park Restoration are included in the staff report for agenda item 18. In order for the Conservancy to authorize a grant to another entity to acquire a property, it should be on the Park Development and Improvements Workprogram. Furthermore, in Los Angeles County, in order for either the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds on a project, the project must be on the Workprogram submitted annually to the Conservancy as part of its annual report.

Conejo Creek-North Fork-Wildflower Park De-channelization

This approximately 12.5-acre project is designed to daylight and restore a significant reach of an urbanized Conejo Creek tributary that is connected to a larger habitat block to the south. Improvements are proposed on Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency property, Conejo Recreation and Park District property, and Ventura County Flood Control District property. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. This project should be added to Conservancy Workprogram because it elevates the project as being important to a State agency. State bond funds cannot be used as project match.

Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration

This 10.4-acre project area extends along a section of Las Lajas Creek from Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District's (RSRPD) Simi Hills golf course to south of the 118 Freeway. It involves both the acquisition of private parcels and modifications to the Las Lajas Creek channel on both RSRPD and Ventura County Flood Control District properties. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Much of the proposed grant budget includes stream bed improvements. This project should be added to Conservancy Workprogram because it elevates the project as being important to a State agency. State bond funds cannot be used as project match.

Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration

This project site consists of a combination of 44.5 acres of public (school district) and private land located south of Cochran and east of Madera, just north of the Arroyo Simi. The project would capture and treat stormwater runoff in a natural setting with high quality restored habitat. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Much of the proposed grant budget includes stream bed improvements. This project should be added to Conservancy Workprogram because it elevates the project as being important to a State agency. State bond

funds cannot be used as project match.

Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration

This 10-acre project would capture and treat stormwater runoff in a natural setting with high quality restored habitat. All improvements are proposed on lands owned by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and Los Angeles County Watershed Management Division. The site already supports extensive recreational use and has strong potential for creating wetlands with stormwater runoff. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase One Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. In order for either the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for the matching portion of a grant, the project must be on the Workprogram submitted annually to the Conservancy as part of its annual report.

Plummer-Variel Restoration

This unique, 18-acre project is located just east of the Santa Susana Wash in Chatsworth. All of the land is privately owned (90 percent in a single ownership). This large, flat open area would make an unparalleled urban park and natural area. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at the end of the above Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration paragraph.

Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration

This 13.5-acre project proposes to use a combination of unused street rights-of way and private land to create urban green space and habitat. The probable project size is closer to 1.7 acres because of land costs. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase One Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at the end of the above Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration paragraph.

Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration

This 4.3-acre project would convert surplus Caltrans parcels and 101-Freeway rights-of-ways

into urban green space and habitat. Funding may be necessary to acquire less than two acres of Caltrans surplus property. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase One Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at the end of the above Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration paragraph.

Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration

This 2.75-acre project would enhance an existing green space currently heavily used by surrounding residents. Most of the subject property is publicly-owned but there are a few small private parcels with gardens and electronic equipment. The project's strong recreation value, by itself, warrants inclusion on the Workprogram. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. This project could be funded with Proposition A Big Five River Parkway Excess Funds.

Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration

This 6.29-acre project offers an opportunity to provide urban green space and habitat in the southwest San Fernando Valley. Small portions of the project area are publicly-owned and the remainder is private with at least four separate ownerships. It has good characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at the end of the above Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration paragraph.

Canoga Avenue-MTA Right of Way

This 16-acre project is proposed entirely on land owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at the end of the above Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration paragraph.

Vista Hermosa Park Restoration

This eight-acre project in downtown Los Angeles will create a natural park with numerous

visitor serving amenities and watershed features. The Conservancy has made several grants to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the planning and development of the park. In order for either the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), or the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for the matching portion of a grant, the project must be on the Workprogram submitted annually to the Conservancy as part of its annual report.

Pacoima Wash Greenway

This 180-acre project includes numerous, mainly privately-owned, parcels along both sides of Pacoima Wash in the City of San Fernando and northwards towards the San Gabriel Mountains. The project is designed to form a greenway and bikeway that extends a minimum of three miles from the edge of the mountains to the core of the San Fernando Valley. The MRCA submitted two prospective grant applications to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. One grant is to improve property recently acquired by the MRCA with a Conservancy grant. Please see the description regarding matching funds requirements at the end of the above Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration paragraph.