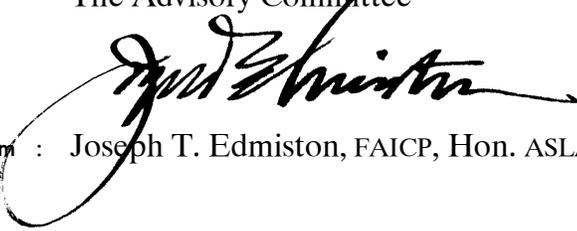


# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: July 9, 2007

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 11(d) 2: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the protection of the Upper Los Angeles River and the Santa Monica Bay watersheds, including those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources and those actions necessary to allow continued use and enjoyment of property and natural resources.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for the protection of the Upper Los Angeles River and the Santa Monica Bay watersheds, including those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources and those actions necessary to allow continued use and enjoyment of property and natural resources in the amount of \$520,000.

## Legislative Authority:

Section 33204.27 of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Act authorizes grants to local agencies for the purposes of Section 33204.2(a), viz.,

to carry out improvements, maintenance, acquisitions, . . . that directly relate to a project that the conservancy is otherwise authorized to undertake pursuant to this division.

With Respect to Proposition 84:

Pursuant to Section 75005(i) of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, “Interpretation” includes, but is not limited to, a visitor serving amenity that educates and communicates the significance and value of natural, historical, and cultural resources in a way that increases the understanding and enjoyment of these resources and that may utilize the expertise of a naturalist or other specialist skilled at educational interpretation.

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Pursuant to Section 75005(m) of the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, "Protection" means those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, development, restoration, preservation and interpretation.

Background: Last year California voters authorized \$56,000,000 from Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for capital outlay and grants for protection and restoration of land and water resources in the watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River and the Santa Monica Bay and its watersheds.

Resource Protection Grant: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has applied for a resource protection and interpretation grant utilizing its park ranger force. MRCA rangers are California peace officers and are trained to the standards established by the Park Rangers Association of California (PRAC) in the following disciplines: Law enforcement, wildland fire fighting, resource management, park maintenance, and educational interpretation. The Authority follows the "generalist" ranger philosophy endeared to the park visitor by the classic example of National Park and California State Park rangers.

Resource Protection in Proposition 84: Unlike previous bond measures, Prop. 84 has specific definitions of what constitutes "resource protection" and these definitions guide the purposes and permissible uses of Prop. 84 expenditures.

"Protection" means those actions necessary to [1] prevent harm or damage to persons, property or natural resources or those actions necessary to [2] allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, development, restoration, preservation and interpretation. (Pub. Res. Code § 75005(m).)

Wildfire as the primary threat to persons, property or natural resources: We are entering into a unique situation with respect to the Santa Monica Mountains Zone. Wildfire has assumed a position as the principal threat to persons, property and natural resources. No longer confined to a narrow "Santa Ana" wind condition, major wildfires have occurred this year as early as February (Malibu Bluffs) and May (Griffith Park). Record-breaking drought leaves the fire-dependent chaparral habitat community especially vulnerable. With this vulnerability is the threat to park resources and the ability of the public to use and enjoy the parks free of this threat. Other portions of the state have experienced out-of-season fire events of historic

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proportions (Lake Tahoe).

The Authority has proposed a \$150,000 protection program consisting of specialized fire prevention activities, including staffing of specific equipment, prescribed burns, and suppression efforts. The proposed grant would allow the funding of just under one person-year (2000 hours) for the staffing of Type VI fire prevention/suppression engines (the equipment is already in the MRCA inventory) as well as the other prevention activities.

Protection of Los Angeles River and Mulholland Corridor: While the Conservancy has long subscribed to the maxim that: “Good use drives out bad,” the converse appears to be happening, *i.e.*, “bad use” is driving out good. We are seeing within critically important areas a dramatic up surge of destructive activity. This is indicative of a national trend whereby vandalism and graffiti are taking over parks. Reports from across the country show an “exponential” explosion of graffiti vandalism, (*New York Post*, March 23, 2007); the “worst rash in almost 10 years” (*Middletown Press*, June 29, 2007). The same is true within our areas of responsibility to the point that it threatens the “continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources” within the meaning of Prop. 84 (Pub. Res. Code §75005(m)).

The Project for Public Spaces recently summed up the impact on parks:

When graffiti is not removed it affects public perceptions of safety. The presence of graffiti tells the public that no one is caring for the facility, adding to the perception that the authorities are disorganized and lack social control. Disorganized areas evoke fear and eventually avoidance, because people feel the area is unsafe. Then, with a lack of legitimate users in an area, a cycle of decline begins as unpopulated areas become sites for illegitimate activities. Thus it is essential that park managers maintain clean and orderly parks to facilitate perceptions of community stability and control.

([Www.pps.org/parks\\_plazas\\_squares/info/management/m&o/graffitiprimer](http://www.pps.org/parks_plazas_squares/info/management/m&o/graffitiprimer).)

There is virtual unanimity among experts that

Rapid identification and removal of graffiti has been shown to reduce its occurrence. This approach directly addresses the motives of many offenders by reducing the notoriety associated with graffiti’s visibility. The two-step process involves routine monitoring to quickly spot graffiti, and rapid removal of the graffiti. U.S. Dept of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, Problem-Oriented Guide for Police No. 9, “Graffiti,” 2004.

The City of Santa Clarita goes even further. It has found that “[r]apid removal is an effective prevention tool. Data shows that removal within 24 to 48 hours result in a nearly zero rate of recurrence.” ([www.santa-clarita.com/cityhall/parks/graffiti.asp](http://www.santa-clarita.com/cityhall/parks/graffiti.asp).)

The MRCA is proposing \$230,000 for this program of park protection along the Los Angeles River and Mulholland Corridor. This includes about 1.3 person-years and the purchase of two Hydro-tech pressure washers. This system is ideally suited to be used in tandem with the standard ranger truck equipped with a “slip-on” unit and 500 gal. tank.

Park protection through increased ranger interpretation and visitor interaction: MRCA park rangers patrol thousands of acres each day and make hundreds of visitor contacts. They are the ambassadors in parkland where there are no formal facilities or programs. The interpretive component of the ranger program is an important element in educating park visitors and promoting stewardship. While the interpretive division focuses on formal programming for the public and youth, ranger interpretation is primarily focuses on one on one personal interaction with the public.

The Authority proposes to enhance the ranger program by scheduling interpretive patrols whereby rangers will distribute regionally specific materials that contain natural and cultural history, area trails and recreation opportunities, regulatory information and safety guidelines. These interpretive contacts, and the materials left with the visitor, will both enhance the visitor experience and assist in the protection and future stewardship of lands owned and operated by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in both the Los Angeles River and Santa Monica Bay watersheds.

The Division of Interpretation will design and produce the regional brochures and rangers will distribute them. The regional breakdown will include materials for the Los Angeles River, the Mulholland Corridor, the Coastal Mountains and the Western Valley. More specific materials may be developed as the program matures.

Ranger time – interpretive contacts	\$100,000
Interp staff – design and production of materials	\$ 20,000
Printing	\$ 20,000