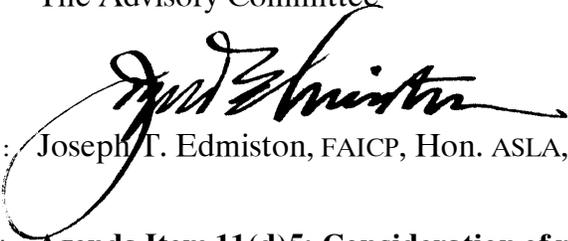


Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: July 9, 2007

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 11(d)5: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for preservation, protection and restoration to promote the continued safe use and enjoyment of parks along the Los Angeles River.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority for preservation, protection and restoration to promote the continued safe use and enjoyment of parks along the Los Angeles River, in the amount of \$350,000.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(c) and 75050(g)(2) of Public Resources Code.

Background: The Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84), allocated funds to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in Chapter 5, 75050(g)(2) of the Public Resources Code, for the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water and other natural resources and the implementation of watershed protection activities throughout the watershed of the Upper Los Angeles River pursuant to Section 79508 of the Water Code.

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.”

Stretching 51 miles from the confluence of Bell and Calabasas Creeks at the western end of the San Fernando Valley, to the Pacific Ocean in Long Beach, the Los Angeles River passes through thirteen cities and numerous jurisdictions.

Since the early 1990s, a broad coalition of cities, community groups, public agencies, private corporations and nonprofit organizations has been working to transform the Los Angeles River into a continuous 51-mile recreational greenway. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) has been one of the most active participants in the process to create a

greenway composed of trails, parks, and natural land. With the help of its partners, the MRCA was responsible for the creation of several small public parks adjacent to the river in Elysian Valley, including Elysian Valley Gateway Park, the Great Heron Gates at Rattlesnake Park, Oso Park, Steelhead Park, Egret Park, the River Garden Park and Marsh Park. The attached map details this area.

The MRCA remains responsible for the upkeep of all of these parks, in addition to many less-formal installations of native plants and visitor amenities along this stretch of the river, and remains committed to maintaining a high level of quality. However, the parks in Elysian Valley are subject to tougher conditions than many properties managed by the MRCA. Chronic graffiti, urban trash, windblown weeds and general vandalism make these parks difficult to maintain. Popular locations such as Marsh Park also experience above-average wear-and-tear.

An exciting event on the horizon is the extension of the Los Angeles River Bikeway south from its current terminus at Fletcher Drive to the Figueroa/Riverside bridge. When complete, the Elysian Valley parks will experience even more use, and keeping a high level of quality will be even more important.

To promote increased public use and the sense of safety in these parks, the MRCA requests funding to increase the level of service these parks receive. By putting increased levels of staff, in the form of both sworn rangers and field staff, in the parks, the MRCA seeks to get gain greater control of the state of the parks. A full-time ranger will be assigned specifically to patrol of the parks and the greenway along the Los Angeles River. Increased ranger patrol will deter much of the vandalism and graffiti, and reinforce the MRCA's commitment to quality.

The landscaping in these parks needs more hands-on attention than in wilderness parks. While all of the river plantings make use of native plants, these parks cannot be seen as simple restoration projects. The ultra-urban environment means that the plants require the same level of daily care that is found at a facility like the River Center, for the plants to stay in a healthy and attractive condition. The requested funding would also allow the MRCA to replace, upgrade and improve existing site furnishings and amenities in the existing parks. Hard use has given the existing facilities a shorter-than-normal life. Many of them could benefit from replacement. Consideration: The grant to the MRCA would be in the amount of \$350,000.