

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)7: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 84 funds to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority the preservation, protection and restoration of King Gillette Ranch, Calabasas.**

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 preservation, protection and restoration of King Gillette Ranch, in the amount of \$500,000.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204(c) and 75060(d)(1) of the 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 7, 75060(d)(1) of the Public Resources Code, for the protection of beaches, bays and coastal waters and watersheds, including projects to prevent the contamination and degradation of coastal waters and watersheds, projects to protect and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters and lands, and projects and expenditures to promote the access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state.

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.”

One of the most stunning locales in the Santa Monica Mountains, 588-acre King Gillette Ranch is situated in the heart of the Malibu Creek Watershed (Santa Monica Bay watershed), by the confluence of five major tributaries, and adjacent to Malibu Creek State Park. This scenic parkland at the lower end of the Las Virgenes Valley is a haven for larger mammals of the Santa Monica Mountains. At the same time, it offers a rare unspoiled view of California’s rich archaeological, cultural, and historic resources, including a Chumash settlement, and nationally significant structures designed for razor magnate King C. Gillette in the 1920’s by Wallace Neff, architect of California’s Golden Age. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) manages the park in cooperation with the Santa Monica Mountains

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Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area unit of the National Park Service, and California State Parks.

King Gillette Ranch opened to the public on June 30, 2007, mere hours after the previous tenant, Soka University, vacated the property. The extended presence of the previous tenant meant that MRCA staff was unable to fully assess the condition of all resources, or complete any visitor-serving improvements prior to the park opening. The MRCA is undertaking the management of King Gillette Ranch knowing that improvements to the existing facilities are necessary to provide safe and enjoyable public use.

The MRCA has secured funding from other sources for initial efforts to provide necessary signage, fencing and basic furnishing for the public programs. However, there is much more work to do on the property to make it available for all manner of public programs and special uses. An ongoing facilities assessment already indicates that many of the buildings need repairs including roofing, plumbing, electrical and structural. Flooring, lighting, painting and other interior and exterior finishes need to be refurbished and replaced. Upgrades need to be made to provide adequate restroom facilities in multiple locations throughout the property and to provide improved ADA accessibility. It is anticipated that many small and simple fixes will be undertaken in all of the buildings. Several buildings are in a state of extreme disrepair. These buildings need to be stabilized to prevent further degradation.

The grounds need improvements as well. Roads and parking areas need to be resealed and striped. Ideal vehicular and pedestrian circulation plans for the property need to be identified and marked. Water and irrigation lines are old and in a state of disrepair, and plantings need to be refurbished. Courtyards around the Gillette Mansion need to be restored.

Some improvements also need to be completed at the Holiday Camp portion of the property and to the DeCinces House. MRCA staff needs to finish the renovation of the building to be used as a fire-training center at Holiday Camp. The roofing needs to be completed. Interior and exterior finishes need to be put in place. Paving around DeCinces house needs to be repaired. Some fencing may need to be installed adjacent to the building.

MRCA staff will do much of the planning work in house. Some outside consultants will need to be hired to fulfill some of the work. For example, licensed architects will be required to design some of the restroom improvements. While consultants have prepared an initial facility assessment for the property, more specific studies will surely be necessary as plans for repairs and upgrades are prioritized.

The described project will allow for the continued use and enjoyment of property and natural resources and improve the physical structures, facilities, and natural systems and landscape at King Gillette Ranch.

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