



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM: 
Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: March 1, 2006

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing the exchange of a floodwater and debris inundation easement in exchange for a conservation easement on 3423 N. Standish Drive and acceptance of a brushing-maintenance endowment and security payment, adjacent to the northern portion of Westridge - Canyonback Park, Encino.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing the exchange of a floodwater and debris inundation easement in exchange for a conservation easement on 3423 N. Standish Drive and acceptance of a brushing-maintenance endowment and security payment, adjacent to the northern portion of Westridge -Canyonback Park.

Background: The owners of a recently created lot at the terminus of Standish Drive in Encino are required to provide a debris wall or dam behind their proposed house. If that unlined, natural debris basin were to fill to the top, some of the inundation area would fall on Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority parkland. Debris and mud could also deposit on parkland. The City of Los Angeles is requiring an easement from the MRCA as a condition to the development. The MRCA has no obligation to provide an easement. The applicants could move their house farther south to eliminate the need. However, there are permanent benefits to cooperating with applicants.

No matter what, a house will one day be built on the subject lot. That house will no matter what require a substantial amount of brush clearance on MRCA property. The proposed action would provide a \$20,000 endowment to the MRCA to fund brush clearance on the surrounding parkland. That endowment should generate approximately \$900 a year in perpetuity for that work.

The proposed transfer of an easement on MRCA parkland to the owners has no potential for substantial ecological or environmental damage. Staff is confident that the odds of the debris area ever filling to a level that inundates any MRCA property

are very low. The City has required a greatly over-capacity system on the private land. If the worst case inundation occurred the chaparral would just be temporarily covered with mud and small debris. The next rain would remedy that condition quite rapidly. The easement would be a maximum of approximately 10,000 square feet. No brush clearance would be allowed in the easement. The homeowner would maintain the debris area and thus the need for periodic County or City clean outs would not exist. No clean out could occur on MRCA property without written authorization and no clean out could occur with any mechanized equipment.

The applicant has also agreed to plant the area behind the debris wall (on private land) with native trees and shrubs as specified by staff. The applicant has agreed to provide staff with a \$3,000 security deposit to ensure that those materials are planted and surviving after three years. Those plant materials will create woodland habitat not present on the site.

Lastly the applicant will give the MRCA a conservation easement over all ungraded, unlandscaped portions of the property. The easement would only allow brushing. This easement will permanently protect habitat and prevent further encroachment that might result in additional brushing responsibility on MRCA property. That transfer will be at no public cost.

The net result of this proposed exchange of land and money puts the MRCA in a better financial position and produces a sound ecological solution to a problem lot surrounded on three sides by MRCA parkland.