



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Officer

DATE: June 2, 2010

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XI: Consideration of resolution authorizing acceptance of a conservation easement, or fee simple title if maintenance issues are addressed, over APN 5565-025-001 in Laurel Canyon north of Willow Glen Road and acceptance of maintenance funding, City of Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing acceptance of a conservation easement, or fee simple title if maintenance issues are addressed, over APN 5565-025-001 in Laurel Canyon north of Willow Glen Road and acceptance of maintenance funding.

The multi-decade owner of APN 5565-025-001 in the upper Laurel Canyon watershed of the eastern Santa Monica Mountains contacted staff offering to donate the property. The 0.23-acre parcel is located in the primary wildlife corridor that connects the Laurel Canyon and Nichols Canyon watersheds. It supports common mixed northern chaparral vegetation. To the south it abuts a City of Los Angeles paper road right-of-way and a slightly larger parcel owned by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA). To the north it abuts one lone house with access from mostly unpaved Bulwer Drive.

The subject parcel is clearly within the brush clearance limits of this house. Typically staff has been avoiding acceptance of fee simple title to parcels that are fully within a brush clearance zone if possible. Staff has been in contact with the homeowner to work on creative ways to permanently protect the majority of the property but not be subject to annual brush clearance costs. The MRCA is doing brush clearance on parcels within the Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation Assessment District No. 1 because those property owners will be contributing \$4.50 per parcel for the next 24 years for the MRCA to clear MRCA and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy parkland within the District.

At a minimum staff recommends accepting the donation of a conservation easement if it is offered on the property not subordinate to any back taxes. The taxes are current.

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In the alternative, if an adequate one time financial contribution is made to cover brushing costs for a couple of decades, acceptance of a fee simple donation is recommended. A third alternative is to accept the parcel with the brushing current in fee simple and in one year quit claim the parcel to the adjacent homeowner and reserve a conservation easement over 90 percent of the parcel. All the parties benefit greatly under this scenario and it increases the likelihood that the land will be permanently protected with no public maintenance costs.