



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: November 3, 2010

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item V(e): Consideration of resolution authorizing entering into a contract with ICF International for California Environmental Quality Act environmental review and documentation services and California Coastal Act planning for the Ballona Wetlands Access Improvements project, Los Angeles.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing entering into a professional services contract with ICF International in an amount not to exceed \$79,820 for California Environmental Quality Act environmental review and documentation services and California Coastal Act planning for the Ballona Wetlands Access Improvements project, Los Angeles.

Background: The Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve is a 600-acre area of protected land that is the largest and most promising opportunity for coastal wetland restoration in Los Angeles County. Acquired by the State of California in 2004, the property is owned by the Department of Fish and Game and the State Lands Commission. The State Coastal Conservancy granted \$175,000 to MRCA to manage the design, public outreach, environmental review and permit applications necessary for improvements. The restoration and public access planning process is underway.

A few small-scale public access improvement projects that could be implemented prior to full restoration have been identified. Based on the scale and scope of these projects, it is expected that a mitigated negative declaration (MND) will be the appropriate form of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation for the project. Since the property is located within the Coastal Zone, a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) will be necessary to implement the projects. Staff now seeks to hire a qualified professional firm to prepare CEQA and CDP documents.

ICF International has extensive experience working with complex habitat restoration projects and was hired by the Coastal Conservancy to prepare the EIR and oversee associated data collection and analyses for the full restoration project of the Ballona

Wetland Ecological Reserve. Through their on-going work on the EIR project they have gained an intimate knowledge of the natural resources of the Ballona Wetland, a deep understanding of the surrounding community, and familiarity with stakeholder concerns. Because of this prior and specialized knowledge of the project site, ICF International was identified as an appropriate firm to provide the necessary professional services. In addition to evaluating the demonstrated competence and professional qualifications of the firm relative to the project, the following items were reviewed per the MRCA's Purchasing and Contracting Procedures, Section 3.3, Professional Services:

- List of names and contact information for clients for which services were performed in the last five years
- Samples of the services performed including the scope and cost
- Disclosure of any actions taken against the professional
- A statement of change order(s) to plans or specifications or projects for which services were provided and the reason for the change order(s)

Scope of Work: The scope of work is divided into two phases. The first phase includes preparation of the project description, preparation of the initial study and administrative draft MND. The second phase includes finalization and circulation of the draft MND for public review, response to comments on the MND, finalization of the MND and preparation of the mitigation monitoring and reporting program, and the Coastal Development Permit assistance.

Consideration: The cost of the first phase is \$39,950 and will be funded through the existing grant from the State Coastal Conservancy. The cost for the second phase is \$39,920 and will only be authorized if and when the State Coastal Conservancy augments the MRCA's grant for this project. The proposal from ICF International is attached.