

# **Robin's Nest Acquisition Project**



## **Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Proposition 1 Competitive Grant Program Application**

Submitted by  
The Trust for Public Land

November 2016

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## Application Page

**SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY  
GRANT APPLICATION**

<b>Project Name: Robin's Nest Acquisition Project</b>	<b>Amount of Request:</b>	\$1,000,000
	<b>Total Project Cost:</b>	\$2,526,000
<b>Applicant Name: The Trust for Public Land</b>	<b>Matching Funds:</b>	\$1,526,000
	<b>Lat/Long: 34.438631, -118.278283</b>	
<b>Applicant Address:</b> 135 W. Green St. Suite 200 Pasadena, CA 91105	<b>Project Address: 82327 Soledad Canyon Road Acton, CA 93510</b>	
	<b>County</b>	<b>Senate District</b>
	Los Angeles	21
<b>Phone:</b> 323.223.0441 x19	<b>Tax ID: 23-</b>	<b>Assembly District</b> 36
<b>Email:</b> Paolo.perrone@tpl.org	<b>7222333</b>	

**Grantee's Authorized Representative:**  
*Name and Title* Dave Sutton, Acting State Director *Phone* 415.800.5288


**Overhead Allocation Notice:**  
 Any overhead costs will be identified as a separate line item in the budget and invoices.  
 The Conservancy encourages grantees to reduce overhead costs including vehicle & phone expenses.  
 The overhead allocation policy has been submitted prior to or with the grant application.  
*All check boxes must be checked*

**Project Description:** The Trust for Public Land aims to acquire the 51.41-acre Robin's Nest Property, located off of Soledad Canyon Road in Acton, CA. Desired for its hydrological features, the property contains 0.5 miles of the Santa Clara River, 6.13 acres of wetlands and 23.17 acres of permeable soils for groundwater recharge. In addition to these features, the property hosts 24.31 acres of critical habitat for the federally endangered arroyo toad. Equally as important from a recreational standpoint, a critical section of the Pacific Crest Trail passes through the property and protection of the land would close a critical gap between two blocks of public land.

<b>Tasks / Milestones:</b>	<b>Budget:</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
Complete Appraisal	\$8,000	February 2017
Complete Phase I ESA	\$8,000	May 2017
Close on Fee Title	\$2,510,000	December 2017

**For Acquisition**      **APN(s): 3209-008-012, -013, -016**  
**Projects:**  
                                  **Acreage: 51.41**

I certify that the information contained in this Grant Application form, including required attachments, is accurate.

 \_\_\_\_\_ 11/28/16  
*Signature of Authorized Representative* *Date*

## Project Narrative

**Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
Proposition 1 Competitive Grant Program  
Robin's Nest Acquisition Project**

**I Proposal Overview**

*Provide a short general overview, including applicant, location, general timeframe, amount asked, total Project budget, etc.*

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is pleased to submit a Proposition 1 grant proposal for the acquisition of the 51.4-acre Robin's Nest property in Acton, CA, in the San Gabriel Mountains. The protection of this property will achieve the purposes of Proposition 1 by protecting and allowing for the restoration of land which contains 0.5 miles of the Santa Clara River, one of the few remaining free-flowing riparian systems in southern California. The Project will also protect over six acres of wetlands and more than 23 acres of permeable soils for groundwater recharge. Protecting this property and the species that depend on its unique and functioning riparian and upland habitat will close a critical privately-owned gap between two sections of the Angeles National Forest. The Project will also prove transformative from a recreational standpoint, protecting and expanding a critical section of the Pacific Crest Trail, which crosses the property.

The Robin's Nest Acquisition Project is named after the RV Park and campground that previously operated on the property. The developed portion of the property was heavily damaged by the Sand Fire in July 2016. If it is not preserved, the owners will seek to rebuild the RV Resort or transform it into residential housing in one of the fastest growing regions in Los Angeles County.

The fair market value of the property (APNs 3209-008-12, -013, -16) is expected to be \$2,500,000, and TPL is requesting \$1,000,000 in SMMC Proposition 1 funds to be put towards this acquisition. The Project is expected to be completed by February 2018. Please see both "Scope of Work" and "Project Readiness/Feasibility" below for more detailed information on the timeframe and milestones.

**II Applicant and Partner Background**

*Provide applicant background and partner background. Show how applicant/partner has successfully completed multiple Projects of similar size and scope; talk about how the Project is a partnership between two or more organizations and each organization has committed to contributing toward Project implementation; show that applicant/partner has 1+ years experience maintaining and operating Projects of similar size and scope.*

The Trust for Public land is partnering with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to complete the Project, consisting of the purchase and conservation of 51.4 acres of land. Upon acquisition, TPL will transfer ownership to MRCA to be owned and managed as part of their significant open space reserve system.

Both TPL and MRCA have long histories of successful land conservation and stewardship and have partnered on fourteen projects in Los Angeles County alone, from pocket parks on the Los Angeles River to large open-space preserves. Since 1972, TPL has completed more than 5,000 conservation projects, and protected more than three million acres nationwide. Established in 1985 pursuant to the Joint Powers Act, the MRCA is a partnership between the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, a state agency established by the Legislature, and the Conejo Recreation and Park District and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, both of which are local park agencies established by the vote of the people in those communities. The MRCA works in cooperation with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and other local government partners for the preservation and management of local open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat. The MRCA has acquired fee title to over 10,000 acres for natural resource conservation and manages over 75,000 acres of parkland.

**III Scope of Work**

Provide a detailed scope of work, including a list of specific tasks, a detailed budget, and a timeline for Project implementation (including a completion date for each task).

Task	Completion Date	Applicant's Funding	SMMC Request	Other Funds (pending)	Other Funds (pending)	Total
Appraisal completion	January 2017	\$8,000				\$8,000
Phase I Environmental Assessment	August 2017	\$8,000				\$8,000
Fee title acquisition	Dec 15, 2017	\$10,000 – Closing Costs	\$1,000,000	\$500,000 LA County	\$1,000,000 WCB	\$2,510,000
<b>Total Project costs</b>	\$2,500,000(acquisition fair market value) \$26,000 (due diligence and closing costs)					

**IV Preliminary Project Plans**

As this is an acquisition Project, there are no preliminary Project plans.

**V Need/Urgency**

*What is the need for the Project? Why is immediate implementation of the Project necessary to reach near and long-term conservation, carbon reduction, and climate adaptation targets? Is the Project site subject to imminent threat of development that would preclude future implementation value? See page 3 of guidelines for examples. For acquisitions: Is the site available under extraordinary or opportunity sale conditions?*

The need to preserve the 51.4-acre Robin's Nest property is immediate. The owners are willing to sell due to the damage sustained in the Sand Fire, but are fully prepared to develop the property if a conservation purchase is not successful. As experienced real estate investors, we have every reason to believe they will be successful in redeveloping the land if not purchased and protected.

Beyond the need to act quickly, the property is also necessary for its range of conservation targets: riparian habitat along the regionally important Santa Clara River, critical habitat for the federally endangered arroyo toad (*Bufo microscaphus californicus*), its position in a critical wildlife corridor, soils conducive to groundwater recharge, and portions of the river itself. The Project is a priority in a litany of plans for wildlife and habitat protection as well as for organizations such as the Pacific Crest Trail Association. Its success would generate significant habitat and watershed benefits now and in the future, described in detail in Section VI below. If the Project cannot move forward, this critical gap in protected land in Soledad Canyon could be lost to development forever.

**VI Multi-Benefit Ecosystem, Water Quality, Water Supply, Water Protection and Other Public Benefits Provided by the Project**

Water

In 2005, the Santa Clara River, the largest natural river remaining in Southern California, was selected by American Rivers as one of the nation's ten most endangered rivers.<sup>1</sup> While subsequently removed from the list, threats to its ecological health, including urban development and stormwater runoff pollution, persist. Protection of the property will both maintain the largely unaltered hydrological features of the upper Santa

<sup>1</sup> Friends of the Santa Clara River: <http://www.fscr.org/>

Clara River Watershed, and allow for restoration and enhancement of the riparian corridor. Further, removal of any impervious surfaces will greatly increase the already significant groundwater recharge function on the land. Should the landowners redevelop the property, the opposite will likely take place.

Imbued with substantial natural resources significant to both watershed and habitat, the Robin's Nest property includes 0.5 miles of the Santa Clara River, over six acres of wetlands, and 23.17 acres of permeable soils for groundwater recharge. If this property is not conserved and its resources not protected, the land will likely be used, once again, as an upscale RV park, with appurtenant carbon emissions, leakages from heating and septic tanks, groundwater pumping and other adverse effects on the ecosystem. The other most likely alternative is residential development—with two houses on each of the three parcels—resulting in sedimentation from an increase in impervious surfaces associated with the building of homes, roads, and affiliated infrastructure.

### Ecosystem

The Robin's Nest property is located within the San Gabriel-Castaic Connection<sup>2</sup>, a critical linkage planning area that provides movement between two core habitat areas, the San Gabriel Mountains and the Castaic Ranges, and comprises an ecological transition zone between coastal and desert habitats. Much of the land in between these mountain ranges is privately owned. Currently, this land has not been developed and allows for wildlife movement. The Project would help to protect this linkage, one of the 15 priority linkages identified as critical for preserving ecosystem processes in the South Coast Ecoregion by the South Coast Missing Linkages Project<sup>3</sup>. A large portion of the Robin's Nest property is also part of the Santa Clara River Significant Ecological Area (SEA)<sup>4</sup>, designated by Los Angeles County as such for the assemblage of natural habitats including freshwater marsh, coastal sage scrub, oak woodland, and riparian woodlands.

Urban growth in the area has resulted in the diminution of sensitive species. In addition to the blunt loss of habitat, the byproducts of development such as pesticides, carbon emissions and urban runoff have diminished habit values. The San Gabriel-Castaic Connection will help preserve plant and animal populations in the area by safeguarding water quality and protecting food sources.

### Habitat

The Robin's Nest property furnishes habitat for a variety of federal (F) and state (S) threatened (T) and endangered (E) species and CA species of special concern (SSC), including 24 acres of critical habitat for the arroyo toad (FE) (recovery plan detailed in Section X). There is high quality riparian forest on the property, and water that flows through it benefits southern California steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) (FE) downstream. The Project will protect steelhead smolt from the Santa Clara River Estuary by impeding development that would have a negative impact the river's water quality. This property maintains the habitat necessary for additional threatened and endangered species including the unarmored three-spine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus williamsoni*) (FE), Santa Ana Sucker (*Catostomus santaanae*) (FT), arroyo chub (*Gila orcutti*) (SSC), California red-legged frog (*Rana aurora draytonii*) (FT), the western spadefoot toad (*Scaphiopus hammondi*) (SSC), southwestern pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*) (SSC), and the San Diego horned lizard (*Phrynosoma coronatum blainvillei*) (SSC).

Robin's Nest contains over six acres of wetlands, upon which three sensitive bird species—western least bittern (*Ixobrychus exilis*) (SSC), northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) (SSC), and merlin (*Falco columbarius*)—are reliant. Over 97% of the wetlands in Los Angeles have been destroyed, and at least 90% of the historic

<sup>2</sup> Santa Clara River Watershed Conservancy: [http://www.scvgreen.org/san\\_gabriel-castaic\\_linkage/](http://www.scvgreen.org/san_gabriel-castaic_linkage/)

<sup>3</sup> South Coast Missing Linkages: A Wildland Network for the South Coast Ecoregion: [http://www.scvgreen.org/san\\_gabriel-castaic\\_linkage/](http://www.scvgreen.org/san_gabriel-castaic_linkage/)

<sup>4</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, SEA Program: <http://planning.lacounty.gov/sea/proposed>



riparian habitat in southern California is now gone,<sup>5</sup> resulting in a significant loss of habitat for the species that depend on these riparian systems.

The property maintains habitat suitable for the southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*) (FE), which has been known to occur in the area. Coastal sage scrub on the property provides habitat for the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica*) (FT).

### Access

The Project will both preserve and expand accessible recreational opportunities in the area. The Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) traverses the Robin's Nest property and the segment is directly accessible to the public from Soledad Canyon Road. When through-hikers reach the Santa Clara River, they've completed nearly 20% of the PCT and this property serves as the only private property between two large blocks of public land, the Angeles National Forest to the south and BLM land to the north. There is currently a narrow easement allowing for this trail use, and the Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA) — primary protectors of the PCT, advocating for its sustenance on national, state and local levels—regards the Robin's Nest property as a priority for protection. If successful, the Project will help close a critical gap between two sections of public land, allow this portion of the trail to be made clear and robust and preserve its natural beauty, and it will broaden opportunities for recreational use by providing needed protection for the land surrounding the trail.

In addition to the access provided by the PCT easement, the protection of this property will protect the natural environment and views that draw thousands of hikers to the PCT each year. Additionally, there is an active KOA campsite directly adjacent to the Robin's Nest property on Soledad Canyon Road. The Project will provide a natural environment for campers without the encroaching threat of development. Open spaces and parks increase public health and provide alternatives to urban environments—both of which are particularly needed in Los Angeles County.

## **VII Proposition 1/Water Code Section 79732(a)**

*Provide a detailed description of how the Project achieves one or more of the purposes of Proposition 1 as stated in Water Code Section 79732(a).*

Protecting the Robin's Nest property would implement a part of a regional and statewide strategy to ensure that the free-flowing Santa Clara River is preserved and restored for maximum water supply, habitat, and water infrastructure benefits. The Project will achieve, at the very least, the following **six** purposes of Water Code Section 79732(a):

- (1) *Protect and increase the economic benefits arising from healthy watersheds, fishery resources, and instream flow.*

The Santa Clara River is the single most important source of water, for residential consumption and farming, in northern Los Angeles County and western Ventura County. The Project straddles a 0.5 mile stretch of the Santa Clara River. As it flows west, draining 1,200 square miles of the San Gabriel, Castaic, Santa Susana, and Sierra Madre mountains, the Santa Clara River becomes a critical source of water for the vast farmland in the Oxnard Plain, and the primary means for replenishing over-drafted groundwater supplies and reversing trends of seawater intrusion and land subsidence in the region.<sup>6</sup> Protecting the regional water resources from overdraft and saltwater intrusion into the aquifer provides multimillion dollar value year over year.

This property lies just six miles downstream of Acton, CA where the headwaters of the Santa Clara River form. Its location within Soledad Canyon, nestled between two significant portions of the Angeles National

<sup>5</sup> California Riparian Habitat Restoration Handbook: [http://www.water.ca.gov/urbanstreams/docs/ca\\_riparian\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.water.ca.gov/urbanstreams/docs/ca_riparian_handbook.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ventura County Watershed Protection District and Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Santa Clara River Enhancement & Management Plan (2005) p.18. Available at [https://dpw.lacounty.gov/wmd/watershed/sc/docs/SCREMP\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](https://dpw.lacounty.gov/wmd/watershed/sc/docs/SCREMP_Full_Report.pdf)

Forest makes this property an important piece of a larger tourist draw in the region. The PCT runs directly through the property, drawing increasing numbers of hikers each year. In 2015, the long-distance hikers received more than 4,453 permits to hike the PCT, and this number does not accurately reflect the thousands of people who hike or visit portions of the PCT on any given day. The economic benefits provided to the communities and campgrounds in the area are significant, and the health and wild beauty of the Santa Clara River is an important draw to those visitors. Protection of this property would allow for a more robust trail segment through the area and provide a draw for day-trippers looking for easy access from Soledad Canyon Road and California State Route 14.

- (3) *Restore river parkways throughout the state, including, but not limited to, Projects pursuant to the California River Parkway Act of 2004.*

This Project is consistent with the California River Parkway Act of 2004 in that it will provide recreational opportunities via a robust trail easement for walking and hiking along the Santa Clara River Trail and protect riverine and riparian habitat, including benefits to wildlife habitat and water quality. (See PRC section 5753(b)).

- (4) *Protect and restore aquatic, wetland, and migratory bird ecosystems, including fish and wildlife corridors and the acquisition of water rights for instream flow:*

Located in a small gap of unprotected land between two swaths of the Angeles National Forest, this property will protect an important fish and wildlife corridor and preserve instream flows in the Santa Clara River. As previously mentioned, the South Coast Linkages Project identified the property as part of the San Gabriel-Castaic linkage. The Santa Clara River is the focal element of this linkage, providing breeding sites and traveling routes for a variety of wildlife, and supporting other critical natural processes such as natural flood control, recharge of groundwater basins, and nutrient cycling. The Project area is identified as providing "stepping-stone" habitat for semi-aquatic species, such as the western pond turtle, two-striped garter snake, and mountain kingsnake; and also serves a suite of aquatic and riparian-dependent species (e.g., unarmored three-spine stickleback, Santa Ana sucker, arroyo chub, California red-legged frog, arroyo toad).<sup>7</sup> Water protected by the Project will also go toward managed releases for southern California steelhead habitat in the Santa Clara River. Protection of the property will also ensure that the six acres of wetlands on the land remain unspoiled by development.

- (9) *Protect and restore rural and urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, protection of life and property, stormwater resource management, and greenhouse gas reduction:*

The Project lands will be managed to protect and restore the health of the Santa Clara River as it traverses the property and will benefit watershed resources. Retention and restoration of the natural features of the landscape, including coastal sage scrub, riparian forest, and wetland habitat, will ultimately improve watershed storage capacity, forest health, and reduce greenhouse gases. Maintaining natural cover on the landscape will allow for ecosystem services such as water filtration and retention to occur to capture runoff that flows directly into the Santa Clara River. The Project will protect existing flows into the river, prevent loss of capacity due to sedimentation, and allow for substantial restoration by MRCA and partners in the future. It will also support regeneration of important native vegetative cover on slopes adjacent to the Santa Clara River.

- (11) *Reduce pollution or contamination of rivers, lakes, streams, or coastal waters, prevent and remediate mercury contamination from legacy mines, and protect or restore natural system functions that contribute to water supply, water quality, or flood management:*

The Project will prevent the development of a RV resort and campground and associated infrastructure that would result in water quality degradation in the Santa Clara River through the possible release of effluent, contaminated runoff, and sediment from grading, construction, and RVs and other vehicles.

<sup>7</sup> South Coast Wetlands, South Coast Missing Linkages: A Wildland Network for the South Coast Ecoregion (2008), p.14 <http://www.scwildlands.org/reports/SCMLRegionalReport.pdf>

- (12) *Assist in the recovery of endangered, threatened, or migratory species by improving watershed health, instream flows, fish passage, coastal or inland wetland restoration, or other means, such as natural community conservation plan and habitat conservation plan implementation:*

The City and County of Los Angeles have designated the area encompassing the Project as the Santa Clara River SEA due to the great diversity of habitat types present within this designated area and plentiful wildlife. The Santa Clara River provides breeding sites, traveling routes and other essential resources for wildlife. Within the upper Santa Clara River watershed, this property maintains the habitat necessary for threatened and endangered species (see VI above). In particular, the unarmored three-spine stickleback and arroyo toad are considered species clinging to existence in Soledad Canyon.<sup>8</sup> This Project will assist in the recovery of these endangered, threatened and migratory species by protecting and ultimately restoring the riparian and aquatic habitats that support them.

### **VIII California Water Action Plan**

*Provide a detailed description of how the Project promotes and implements one or more of the objectives of the California Water Action Plan. Specifically, (1) Does the Project result in more reliable water supplies? (2) Does the Project result in restoration or protection of important species and habitat? (3) Does the Project result in more resilient and sustainably managed water infrastructure?*

The Project implements all three objectives of the California Water Action Plan, as outlined below:

1) *More Reliable Water Supplies:* The Santa Clara River is the single most important source of water in northern Los Angeles County and in western Ventura County.<sup>9</sup> The Project directly protects Santa Clara River and its flows which ultimately provide groundwater recharge for agricultural operations in the nearby Oxnard Plain. The Project lies within the Acton Valley Groundwater Basin which is drained by the Santa Clara River and recharged primarily by the percolation of rainfall and rainfall runoff. The protection of this property, which straddles the Santa Clara River, can enhance beneficial uses of water within the floodplain, improve quality of groundwater, and restore diminished groundwater supplies. The property currently has three operable wells that will undoubtedly be put to use in a development scenario; simply retiring their use will have immediate groundwater supply benefits.

2) *Protection of Important Species and Habitat:* Protection of the Project is particularly important as it occupies the critical area between the biologically-rich riparian areas along the Santa Clara River and the protected uplands of the Angeles National Forest. These linkages between water sources and areas of higher elevation are among the most critical to protect for species facing habitat loss and degradation from climate change. Furthermore, this Project will protect Southern Willow Riparian woodland which forms mature overstory areas along the Santa Clara River. A comprehensive list of species found in the habitat provided by the property likely includes the unarmored three-spine stickleback, arroyo chub, and arroyo toad. Additionally, waters from the Project lands will go towards managed releases for southern California steelhead habitat in the Santa Clara River.

3) *More Resilient and Sustainably Managed Water Infrastructure:* The topography, natural features, and intact riparian communities of the Robin's Nest property facilitate infiltration, groundwater recharge, and the measured release of storm water. Watershed services provided by the Project include water purification, storage, and erosion control. These watershed services are vital to the state and the region as they mitigate the impacts of drought and water quality degradation associated with climate change.

### **IX Climate Change**

<sup>8</sup> CAPP p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan (2005)

*Provide a detailed description of how the Project helps meet the State's greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets, including a quantification of the metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> or CO<sub>2e</sub> removed or avoided, and an explanation of the methodology used to quantify this figure. As applicable, address the following: How (1) the Project demonstrates a reduction in baseline greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration or other innovative techniques or Project designs, such as diverting organic material from landfills; (2) the Project acquires, preserves, or restores natural areas at risk of development and quantifiably avoids emissions associated with development; (3) the Project implements water saving technologies and techniques to yield quantifiable water and energy savings. Such techniques may include the use of drought-efficient landscaping, storm water filtration, impervious surfaces and other forms of water capture and storage; (4) the Project contributes to tree canopy cover and/or greenways in urban areas to mitigate heat island effects and promote public health and recreation; (5) the Project acquires and/or maintains wildlife corridors and linkages to provide connections between areas of undeveloped lands, particularly significant public lands and key habitat ecosystems; (6) the Project develops or maintains (or the acquisition provides an opportunity to develop or maintain) multi-use trails that connect communities, provides access to public resources and reduced vehicle miles traveled; (7) the Project engages local communities through outreach, education, and interpretation regarding long-term stewardship and climate change awareness.*

*The Project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions through carbon sequestration:*

The Project will help meet California's greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets by protecting this property, and its rich in riparian vegetation which is particularly effective in carbon sequestration.<sup>10</sup> The Project's 6.13 acres of wetlands also store carbon. A successful acquisition would result in management of the property's vegetation by MRCA, encouraging regeneration and decreasing the risk of wildfires and invasive species.

*The Project acquires, preserves, and will restore natural areas at risk of development and quantifiably avoids emissions associated with development:*

The Project preserves, and allows for the restoration of this important natural area at risk of development. Anticipated emissions related to the development of six homes or operation of an RV resort are significant. For example, the nearest amenities (gas station, groceries, etc.) are seven miles from the Robin's Nest Property, in the town of Acton. Emissions associated with travel to and from even these closest amenities by residents or visitors would be significant over time. As mentioned below, the Project is accordant to the Southern California Association of Governments' 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan by preventing increased vehicular activity and associated emissions in the area.

If the property is not conserved, it will likely become an RV and camping resort. Its zoning would also allow for up to six new homes (two homes on each of the three legal parcels). The development of these new homes would result in approximately 2,010,283 pounds (912 metric tons) of carbon emissions annually, which is equivalent to carbon that can be sequestered by 863 acres of United States forests in one year (see Appendix A). The proposed acquisition would help meet the State's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets by preventing this level of emissions from ever occurring, as the property would be preserved in its natural condition.

Finally, any development on the property will likely utilize existing wells onsite, which will require significant amounts of electricity to pump groundwater for residential uses. Like the well documented water-energy nexus at the state level, reduced groundwater pumping on the property will also avoid emissions.

*The Project acquires and/or maintains wildlife corridors and linkages to provide connections between areas of undeveloped lands, particularly significant public lands and key habitat ecosystems:*

This Project will provide a vital wildlife linkage between two protected swaths of the Angeles National Forest and other public, protected lands. The linkage spans a distance of roughly six miles and the Project site is located at the southern edge of this gap, adjacent to the Mojave Rivers Ranger District. The essential habitats in the upper Santa Clara watershed, where this property is located, are largely intact, providing breeding sites,

<sup>10</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, "GHG and Carbon Sequestration Ranking Tool." <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/air/?cid=stelprdb1044982>

traveling routes, and other resources for wildlife.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the species described in earlier sections, focal species identified within this larger linkage include mammals such as the Mountain lion (*puma concolor*), American badger (*Taxidea taxa*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), Pacific kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys agilis*); birds such as the California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*), California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*), Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*); amphibians including the Monterey salamander (*Ensatina eschscholtzii eschscholtzii*), California mountain kingsnake (*Lampropeltis zonata*), Two-striped gartersnake (*Thamnophis hammondi*), and Western pond turtle (*Clemmys marmorata*).<sup>12</sup> Preservation of this property, in conjunction with nearby conservation efforts such as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Stickleback Ranch Project, will preserve essential open space and viable connections for wildlife movement between the two core habitat areas of the San Gabriel Mountains and the Sierra Pelona.

## **X Relationship to Other Plans and Policies**

*Provide a detailed description of how the Project promotes and implements other relevant regional and state plans and policies. Will completion of the Project assist a government agency in fulfilling a water resources protection, water ecosystem restoration, or multi-benefit river parkway plan?*

***For acquisition Projects:*** *Does the Project implement a major component of an existing relevant plan related to a major recreational public use facility or watershed ecosystem restoration plan? Would completion of the Project assist in fulfilling a Federal water resources protection or watershed ecosystem restoration plan?*

The Robin's Nest acquisition Project would implement the following recreational, ecosystem restoration, and watershed protection plans:

- **Common Ground Plan.** The Project is consistent with the SMMC and the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy's (RMC) joint Watershed and Open Space Plan for the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers and will directly implement each of the Guiding Principles outlined in the Plan:
  - **Land:** By protecting 51.4 acres of open space, riparian forest, and wetlands between the two units of the Angeles National Forest, this Project will *create, expand, and improve public open space* and the ecosystem and public access linkages that the natural resources on this property can provide. By protecting the PCT trail easement on the eastern portion of this property and expanding the trail buffers around that easement, this Project will *improve access to open space and recreation and connect open space with a network of trails* on the PCT segment between the Angeles National Forest and BLM land. This Project will protect *high-quality habitat within an ecologically significant area by preserving* coastal sage scrub on the hillside, high quality riparian woodlands along the Santa Clara River, and unique wetland resources within a SEA. After protecting this property, MRCA plans to *improve habitat quality, quantity, and connectivity* by undertaking restoration activities on the property.<sup>13</sup> In particular, restoration may be undertaken on the more than six acres of wetland habitat on-site.
  - **Water:** By protecting this property from development, this Project will *improve the quality of surface water and groundwater* by reducing dry weather runoff discharge into the Santa Clara River. It will *optimize water resources to reduce dependence on imported water* by enhancing groundwater recharge through protection of instream flows. A portion of the property is located within a FEMA Special Flood Hazard Zone and its protection will allow this property to accept and *hold floodwaters*, and *improve flood safety* for storm events.
  - **Planning:** This Project is the result of *coordinated watershed planning efforts across jurisdictions and boundaries* and will implement a coordinated regional approach to land protection between the Antelope and Santa Clarita Valleys (see CAPP partners described below).

<sup>11</sup> San Gabriel-Castaic Connection Conceptual Area Protection Plan (Draft), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (2004), available at [http://www.smmc.ca.gov/Agendas\\_Minutes/2005/7-25/Item12/Item12\\_Attech.pdf](http://www.smmc.ca.gov/Agendas_Minutes/2005/7-25/Item12/Item12_Attech.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Watershed and Open Space Plan for the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers, SMMC and RMC, p. 48.

- The Project implements the **Santa Clara River Enhancement and Management Plan** (May 2005), completed by the Ventura County Watershed Protection District and the Los Angeles Department of Public Works, by ensuring the preservation of a continuous riparian corridor on the Santa Clara River through the protection of 0.5 miles of the river and enhancing the connections to adjacent native habitats, restoration of degraded resources, and management of the river to maintain the existing and restored resource values.
- The property is identified as a high priority acquisition in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's **San Gabriel-Castaic Connection Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) (2004)**. The CAPP was developed through an extensive partnership effort including partners including CDFW, US FWS, US Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, Caltrans, Los Angeles RWQCB, RMC, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, Friends of the Santa Clara River, South Coast Wildlands, and others. The Project implements the primary goal of the CAPP to protect essential open space and viable connections for wildlife movement between two core habitat areas, the San Gabriel Mountains and the Castaic Ranges (including the Sierra Pelona), both part of the Angeles National Forest. A main feature of the proposed CAPP is the Santa Clara River as it acts as a natural linkage. The CAPP is intended to secure a functional landscape level connection between the San Gabriel and Castaic core areas and help to ensure the ecological integrity of areas already protected in the linkage. This Project will implement the CAPP and add to a linkage of protected land along San Gabriel Mountains and Castaic Ranges.
- Protecting the Robin's Nest property will implement the Watershed Management strategy (7.2.5.8) outlined in the **Upper Santa Clara River Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (Los Angeles Department of Public Works, 2014)** The Project will also implement the **Los Angeles County General Plan (2015)** by protecting natural resources within the Santa Clara River Significant Ecological Area within the Antelope Valley Planning Area, preserving open space in one of the fastest growing areas in Los Angeles County and preserving biological resources through the acquisition of a conservation area (pp.52 and 136). It will implement strategies outlined in the **California State Wildlife Action Plan (CDFW 2015)** to conserve high-functioning riparian areas in the Santa Clara watershed and protect and restore unarmored threespine stickleback habitat within the Santa Clara River mainstem and Soledad Canyon. Finally, it will implement the **Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan** (California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2015) and its related study entitled **California Recreational Trails System** which describes the PCTA's goal of expanding the permanently protected corridor and improve trail tread in identified trouble spots.<sup>14</sup>
- Project would be consistent with the **Recovery Plan for the Arroyo Southwestern Toad (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1999)** which outlines a recovery strategy to protect arroyo toads and their habitats through land acquisition.

#### **XI Project Readiness/Feasibility**

*Indicate whether the Project will have matching funds from private, local, or federal sources, and if so, to what extent. Projects that secure matching funds of at least 25% of the total Project cost will get extra points. Describe how the Project will be implemented (will get points for proving that the Project is feasible). Describe how the applicant has the financial capacity to complete Project on a reimbursement basis.*

The following table illustrates TPL and MRCA's commitment to the Project and due diligence. As noted below, TPL intends to acquire the property by December 2017, immediately conveying title to the MRCA as part of their significant open space reserve.

<sup>14</sup> 2013 California Recreational Trails System (CRTS): Collaborative lessons from the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, California Coastal Trail, and Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, p.5 available at [http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/1008/files/california\\_recreational\\_trails\\_system\\_collaborative\\_lessons\\_3.27.15\\_redu.pdf](http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/1008/files/california_recreational_trails_system_collaborative_lessons_3.27.15_redu.pdf).

TPL is a national nonprofit organization with a staff of nearly 350 and an annual budget of over \$86 million. Since 1973, TPL has worked with local government agencies, stakeholders and community leaders to complete 372 park Projects across the U.S. Many of the grants received to do this work are on a reimbursement basis; TPL has the fiscal capacity to implement Projects for which we are later reimbursed. \$500,000 in matching funds has already been committed to the Project by Los Angeles County from their Proposition A competitive grant program. WCB has indicated, through initial conversations, that the Santa Clara River (and this project specifically) is a high priority for its Prop 1E floodplain protection program funding. Based on these conversations, we plan to request \$1,000,000 in matching funds from WCB.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Estimated Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Obtain Willing Seller Letter	Nov-16	Complete
Obtain Willing Owner/Manager Letter (MRCA)	Nov - 16	Complete
Sign Option Agreement	Dec-16	
Receive Restricted Use Appraisal	Jan-17	
Complete USPAP Appraisal	Feb - 17	
Continue Due Diligence (ESA, Site Tours, Etc.)	Dec-16 to May-17	
Request Advance to Escrow	Nov - 17	Needed to move forward with closing
Close Escrow	Dec - 17	Acquisition complete
Close Project	Feb - 18	All documentation submitted

## **XII Disadvantaged Community**

*Indicate whether the Project will benefit a disadvantaged community. Projects located in or adjacent to communities defined as no less than 81 percent disadvantaged will receive 5 points. Does the Project add a new trail or recreational resources not available within a 0.5 mile radius?*

While the Robin's Nest property is not located in or adjacent to a disadvantaged community, disadvantaged communities will still benefit from public ownership of the land. There are several disadvantaged communities within the Santa Clara River Watershed, and negative impacts on the upper Santa Clara River (wherein the Project is located) will adversely affect the entire system, including drinking water supplies, and thus those communities. Protection of the property, which encompasses 0.5 miles of the Santa Clara River and high quality riparian forest will help to ensure watershed health.

A successful acquisition will also help to preserve the region as a natural area for outdoor recreation and a respite from the urban constitution of much of Los Angeles County. The MRCA has vast experience in developing public outreach programs to Economically Distressed Areas, and the Project will further their capacity to promote community engagement. Various entities serving low-income populations utilize the PCT for environmental education. For example the Environmental Charter High School and Middle School, with 80% of the student body considered financially disadvantaged, teaches students to repair and restore the trail.<sup>15</sup> The portion of the PCT that traverses the Robin's Nest property is narrow and does not have a dedicated steward. However, the Project will ensure that it is always accessible, and it will provide opportunities for learning environmental stewardship.

## **XIII Conservation Corps**

*Indicate whether the Project will use the services of local or state conservation corps or other job training entity for a portion of the Project work.*

<sup>15</sup> Pacific Crest Trail Association website available at <http://www.pcta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/PCTA-Appropriations>.

Not applicable. The Project is exempt from the requirement to consult with the conservation corps because it consists of acquisition only.

#### **XIV Use of New or Innovative Technology**

*Provide a detailed description of any new or innovative technology or practices that will be applied to the Project, including decision support tools that support the integration of multiple jurisdictions, including but not limited, water supply, flood control, land use, and sanitation.*

New and innovative Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technologies have been instrumental in planning and designing wildlife corridors such as the San Gabriel-Castaic Connection, as well as determining the parameters of the Santa Clara River SEA, both of which Robin's Nest is an important part. Further, The Trust for Public Land's new Sustainable San Gabriels Planning Project, a web-based GIS analysis tool, helped to identify the exact ecological and climate change components of the Robin's Nest Property, drawing on dozens of data sources to create parcel-specific reports. From acres of wetlands and permeable soils to critical habitat and canopy cover, the tool provides twenty different metrics for precise analysis.

#### **XV Monitoring//Reporting**

*Provide a detailed method for monitoring and reporting on the progress and effectiveness of the Project during and after Project implementation.*

MRCA will own and operate Robin's Nest as part of their extensive land holdings in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. MRCA is a local government entity and receives continuous appropriations from the State for ongoing management and stewardship. MRCA owns thousands of acres of open space across the region and has many years of experience in managing similar properties. Once the Project has been acquired, MRCA will create a stewardship plan for the property. The primary management objectives will be to protect and enhance existing natural communities, water resources, and the multiple species of plants and animals these habitats support.



## California Conservation Corps Consultation

**California Conservation Corps and Certified Community Conservation Corps  
Proposition 1 - Water Bond  
Corps Consultation Review Document  
June 2015**

Unless an exempted project, this Corps Consultation Review Document must be completed by California Conservation Corps and Community Conservation Corps staff and accompany applications for projects or grants seeking funds through Proposition 1, Chapter 6, Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams, Coastal Waters and Watersheds. Non-exempt applications that do not include this document demonstrating that the Corps have been consulted will be deemed “noncompliant” and will not be considered for funding.

1. Name of Applicant: The Trust for Public Land                      Project Title: Robin's Nest Acquisition Project

Department/Conservancy to which you are applying for funding: Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy

**To be completed by Applicant:**

Is this application solely for planning or acquisition?

- YES** (application is exempt from the requirement to consult with Corps)  
No (proceed to #2)

**To be completed by Corps:**

This Consultation Review Document is being prepared by:

- The California Conservation Corps (CCC)
- California Association of Local Conservation Corps (CALCC)

2. Applicant has submitted the required information by email to the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and California Association of Local Conservation Corps (CALCC):

- Yes (applicant has submitted all necessary information to CCC and CALCC)
- No (applicant has not submitted all information or did not submit information to both Corps – application is deemed non-compliant)

3. After consulting with the project applicant, the CCC and CALCC has determined the following:

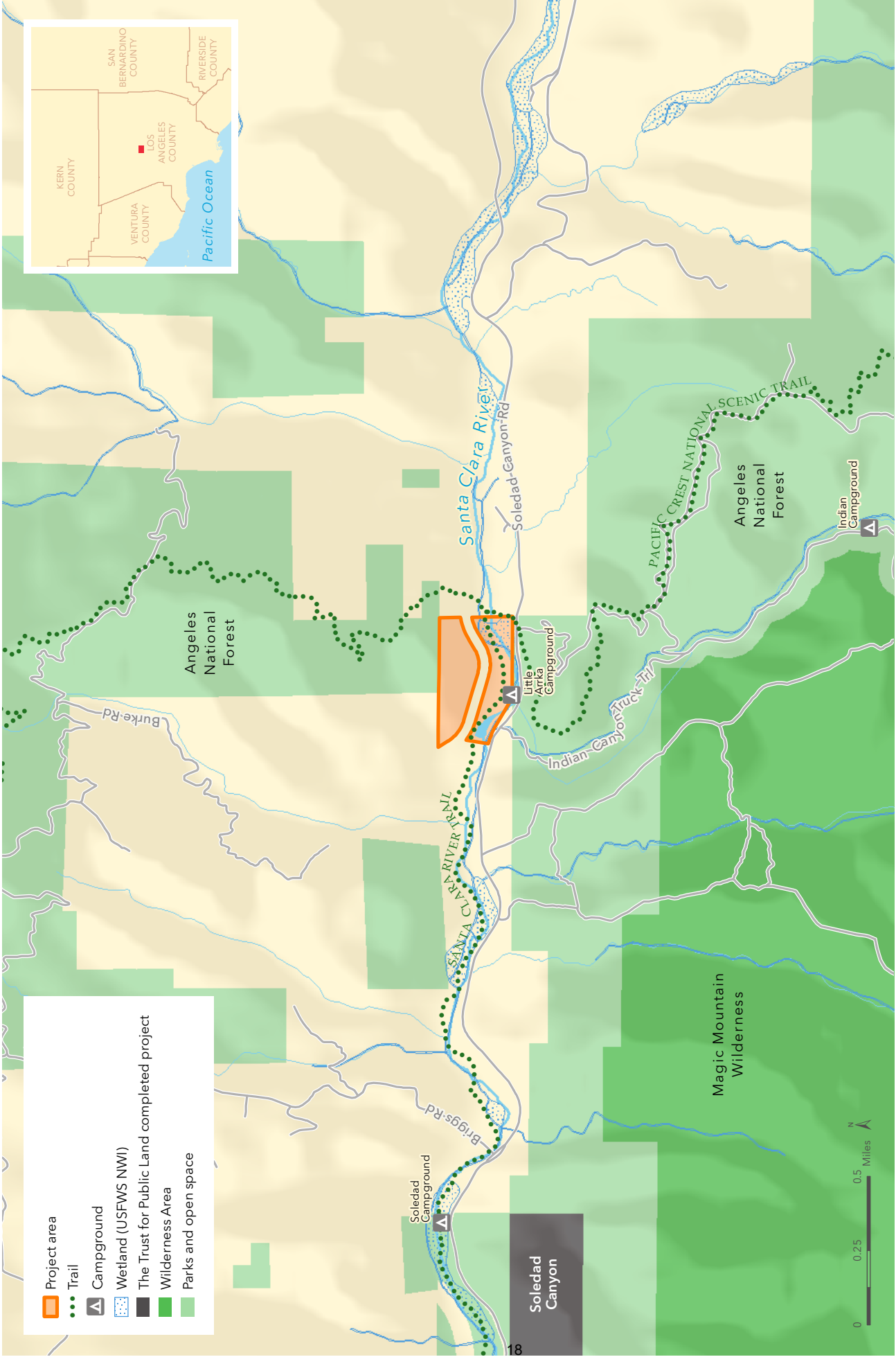
- It is NOT feasible for CCC and/or certified community conservation corps services to be used on the project (deemed compliant)
- It is feasible for the CCC and/or certified community conservation corps services to be used on the project and the following aspects of the project can be accomplished with Corps services (deemed compliant).

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CCC AND CALCC REPRESENTATIVES WILL RETURN THIS FORM AS DOCUMENTATION OF CONSULTATION BY EMAIL TO APPLICANT WITHIN FIVE (5) BUSINESS OF RECEIPT AS VERIFICATION OF CONSULTATION. APPLICANT WILL INCLUDE COPY OF THIS DOCUMENT AS PART OF THE PROJECT APPLICATION.

## Location Map



# Robin's Nest

LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

November 15, 2016. Copyright © The Trust for Public Land. The Trust for Public Land and The Trust for Public Land logo are federally registered marks of The Trust for Public Land. Information on this map is provided for purposes of discussion and visualization only. [www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)



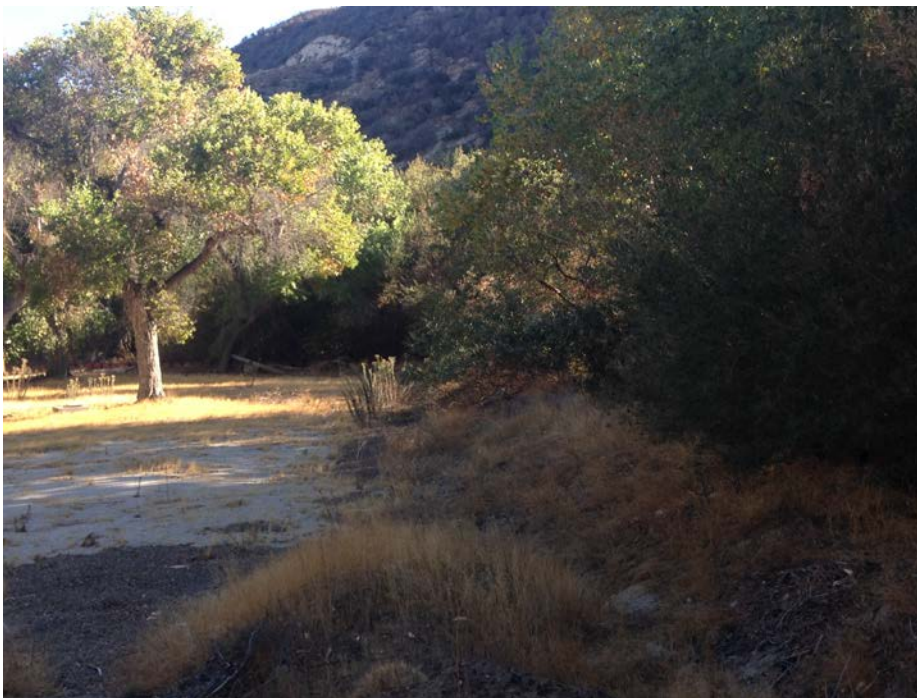
## Parcel Map



## Photographs



The Santa Clara River as it flows through the Property in late fall, before the winter rains.



Riparian forest of willow, oak and sycamore line the Santa Clara River as it snakes through the property.





Oaks dominate the central portion of the Property before it turns to a mixture of scrub on the hillsides. The remnants of the former Robin's Nest RV Campground inhabit the site.



Looking northeast one sees the scrubland on the hillsides as well as the charred remains of various trees that burned during the July 2017 Sand Fire.



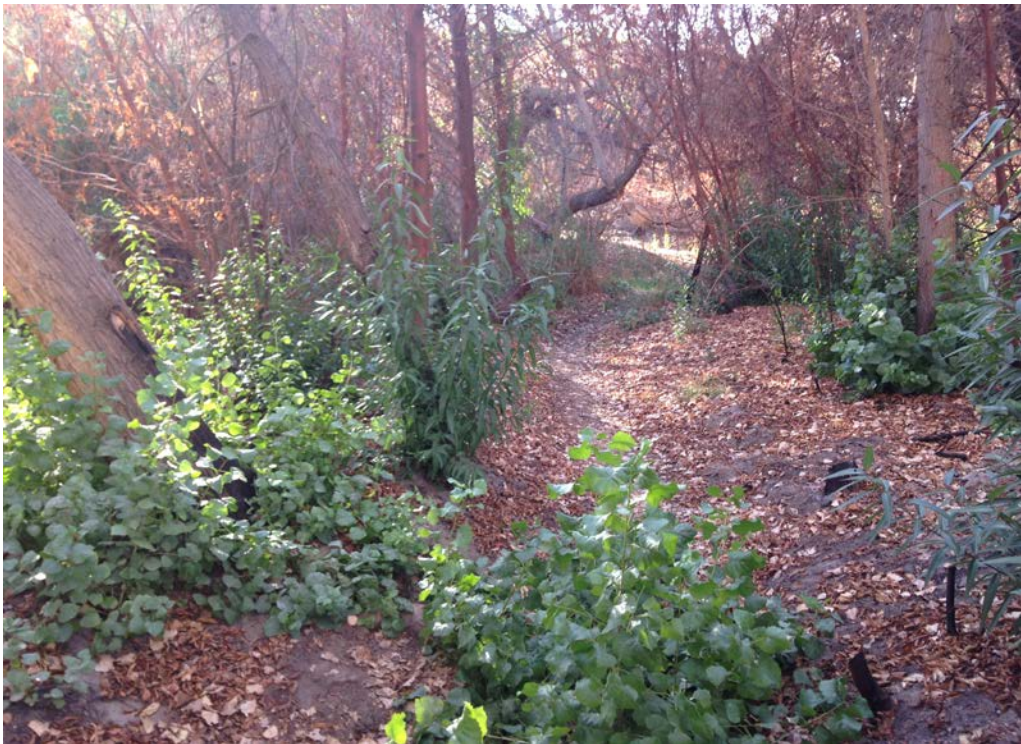
Despite the span of only three months, willows sprout from the base of the burned riparian forest.



Willows and other trees regrow from the charred remains of the Sand Fire.



The Pacific Crest Trail runs through the eastern portion of the property, across the Metrolink train tracks.



Plants regrow in the burned forest along the Pacific Crest Trail.



Oak woodlands dominate the southern portion of the Property as the elevation rises from the banks of the Santa Clara River towards the San Gabriel Mountains.



The riparian forest snakes through the southern portion of the Property.

## Willing Seller Letter

**WILLING SELLER LETTER**

Date: November 15, 2016

To: Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
Proposition 1 Grant Program

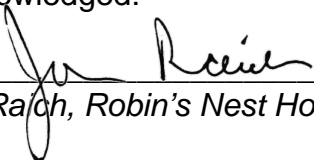
From: Robin's Nest Holdings, LLC  
C/O Jon Raich  
26149 Shadow Road Lane  
Valencia, California 91381

Re: Parcel number(s): 3209-008-012, -013, -016  
County: Los Angeles  
Property Address: 8237 Soledad Canyon Road, Acton, CA 93510

To Whom It May Concern:

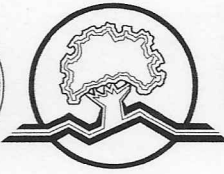
This letter is provided to confirm that I, Jon Raich, (Member) of Robin's Nest Holdings, LLC is a willing participant in the proposed real property transaction. Should grant funds be awarded to the grant Applicant (*The Trust for Public Land*), then I, as Seller, am willing to enter into negotiations for the sale of the real property for a purchase price not to exceed fair market value.

Acknowledged:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jon Raich, Robin's Nest Holdings, LLC

11/22/16  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

## **MRC A Takeout Letter**



**MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens  
570 West Avenue Twenty-Six, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, California 90065  
Phone (323) 221-9944 Fax (323) 221-9934

November 29, 2016

Paolo Perrone  
Project Manager, The Trust for Public Land  
135 W. Green Street, Second Floor  
Pasadena, California 91105

**Conditional Property Take-out of  
Robin's Nest Property**

Dear Mr. Perrone:

The Mountains Recreation Conservation Authority (MRCA) understands that The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is pursuing Proposition 1 grant funding from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and possibly other agencies to acquire the Robin's Nest Property on the upper Santa Clara River and is seeking a take-out agency to own and manage the land once acquired. It is possible that the MRCA can accept the offer from The Trust for Public Land (TPL) to own and manage the property. However, before acceptance of the property, the MRCA Governing Board has to officially authorize conditional acceptance for this letter to have full validity. Also, the MRCA must be assured that the land is free and clear of any tenants, debris, trash, damaged structures, environmental contamination, or other unsightly elements. While MRCA recognizes the property's recreational and ecological value, including portions of the Pacific Crest Trail and the Santa Clara River, we must receive the property free and clear of any title issues, clean-up or remediation responsibilities. The MRCA is a land conservation and recreation-oriented local government agency that manages approximately 72,000 acres of open space and parkland in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. Our agency has the the appropriate experience to manage the approximately 51.41-acre Robin's Nest property.

Please feel free to contact Jessica Nguyen with any questions you may have at (310) 589-3200, extension 125, or via email at [jessica.nguyen@mrca.ca.gov](mailto:jessica.nguyen@mrca.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

Amy V. Lethbridge  
Deputy Executive Officer



## **CEQA Notice of Exemption**

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County Clerk
County of: Los Angeles

From: (Public Agency): Mountains Recreation and
Conservation Authority

570 W. Avenue 26 Suite 100 Los Angeles, CA 90065
(Address)

Project Title: Robin's Nest Acquisition Project

Project Applicant: The Trust for Public Land

Project Location - Specific:
8237 Soledad Canyon Road Acton, CA 93510

Project Location - City: Acton Project Location - County: Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Trust for Public Land proposes to purchase the 51.40-acre Robin's Nest property for preservation and restoration of the natural resources on the property. These include a half-mile section of the Santa Clara River, over six acres of wetlands, over twenty acres of permeable soils and significant critical habitat for arroyo toad.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: The Trust for Public Land

Exempt Status: (check one):

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number:
Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

As an acquisition of open space that will preserve ecological and hydrological features, this project falls under Class 25, Section 15325(a).

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Chris Trumpy Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 310-589-3200, ext. 263

If filed by applicant:

- 1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? [X] Yes [ ] No

Signature: [Signature] Date: 11/29/10 Title: Project Analyst

[X] Signed by Lead Agency [ ] Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR:

**Letters of Support**

*Assemblyman Tom Lackey, 36<sup>th</sup> District*

*Senator-elect Scott Wilk, 21<sup>st</sup> District (to follow by mail, December 2016)*

*Pacific Crest Trail Association*

*The Nature Conservancy*

STATE CAPITOL  
P.O. BOX 942849  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0036  
(916) 319-2036  
FAX (916) 319-2136

DISTRICT OFFICE  
41319 12TH STREET WEST, SUITE 105  
PALMDALE, CA 93551  
(661) 267-7636  
FAX (661) 267-7736

EMAIL  
Assemblymember.Lackey@assembly.ca.gov

# Assembly California Legislature



**TOM LACKEY**  
ASSEMBLYMAN, THIRTY-SIXTH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES  
VICE CHAIR: ACCOUNTABILITY AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW  
BUDGET  
HEALTH  
PUBLIC SAFETY  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

November 23, 2016

Rorie Skei  
Chief Deputy Executive Director  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
5750 Ramirez Canyon Road  
Malibu, California 90265

Re: Robin's Nest Acquisition

Dear Ms. Skei,

It is my pleasure to offer my strong support for The Trust for Public Land's grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Proposition 1 Competitive Grant Program which seeks funding for the acquisition of the 51.41-acre Robin's Nest property in Acton, CA. The Trust for Public Land is working with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to acquire this property from a willing seller so that it may be conserved for its significant natural and recreational values.

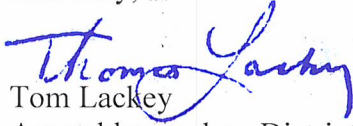
The Robin's Nest property, located between the Antelope and Santa Clarita Valley in the San Gabriel Mountains, straddles the upper Santa Clara River, the largest river system in southern California that remains in a relatively natural state. The watershed benefits of this project are great. In addition to containing .5 miles of the Santa Clara River and 6.13 acres of wetlands, the preservation of this property would ensure the protection of 23.17 acres of permeable soils for groundwater recharge. The habitat and ecosystem services provided by the wetlands located on this property are particularly significant given the fact that over 97% of Los Angeles County wetlands have disappeared.

The high quality riparian forest and coastal sage scrub on this property provide habitat for threatened and endangered species including 24 acres of critical habitat for the federally endangered arroyo toad. The water flowing through this property benefits the federally endangered Southern California Steelhead.

The project would also result in exceptional recreational benefits for Californians. A portion of the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail runs directly through the Robin's Nest property and this acquisition will expand and permanently protect access for thousands of hikers each year.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project. If my office can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 319-2036.

Sincerely,



Tom Lackey  
Assemblymember, District 36



November 15, 2016

Rorie Skei  
Chief Deputy Executive Director  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
5750 Ramirez Canyon Road  
Malibu, California 90265

Re: Robin's Nest Acquisition

Dear Ms. Skei,

On behalf of Pacific Crest Trail Association (PCTA), thank you for the opportunity to enthusiastically express our support for The Trust for Public Land's grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Proposition 1 Competitive Grant Program which seeks funding for the acquisition of the 51.41-acre Robin's Nest property in Acton, CA. The Trust for Public Land is working with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to acquire this property from a willing seller so that it may be conserved for its significant natural and recreational values.

This type of project is important to our organization because it supports our mission to protect preserve, and promote the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT) as a world-class experience for hikers and equestrians, and for all of the values provided by wild and scenic lands. PCTA has worked collaboratively with the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and state partners to assist with acquisitions and maintenance of the Pacific Crest Trail. The PCTA leverages limited federal dollars through the use of volunteers and private donations to protect this public resource. Over the past 10 years, the PCTA has raised \$10,950,000 of private funds to help maintain and enhance access on the PCT. We have also coordinated 918,000 volunteer hours valued at \$19,700,000. This public-private partnership exemplifies the collaborative nature of the national trails system.

The United States Forest Service, the federal agency in charge of administering the PCT, and the PCTA have identified the Robin's Nest property as a critical acquisition for the trail in the Soledad Canyon Optimal Location Review for the PCT and the PCT Land Acquisition Inventory. In addition to the benefits to the PCT, this project will achieve important watershed benefits to the Santa Clara River watershed. Its preservation will ensure the protection of .5 miles of the Santa Clara River, 6.13 acres of wetlands, and 23.17 acres of permeable soils for groundwater recharge. The habitat and ecosystem services provided by the wetlands located on this property are particularly significant given the fact that over 97% of Los Angeles County wetlands have disappeared.



The property provides habitat for a diverse assemblage of threatened and endangered species including 24 acres of critical habitat for the federally endangered arroyo toad. The water flowing through this property benefits the federally endangered Southern California Steelhead. The project would also result in exceptional recreational benefits for Californians. A portion of the 2,650- mile Pacific Crest Trail runs directly through the Robin's Nest property and this acquisition will expand and permanently protect access for thousands of hikers each year, closing a critical gap between two blocks of public, protected land.

We strongly support The Trust for Public Land's Robin's Nest Acquisition project and urge your favorable consideration of this application for funding.

Sincerely,

*Megan Wargo*

Director of Land Protection  
Pacific Crest Trail Association



Ventura Office  
532 E. Main Street, Suite 200  
Ventura, CA 93001

tel 805-642-0345  
fax 805-642-3421  
nature.org

Sender's Direct Line 626-403-9755

November 15, 2016

Rorie Skei  
Chief Deputy Executive Director  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
5750 Ramirez Canyon Road  
Malibu, California 90265

Re: Robin's Nest Acquisition Grant - Support

Dear Ms. Skei,

On behalf of The Nature Conservancy I want to enthusiastically express our support for The Trust for Public Land's grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Proposition 1 Competitive Grant Program which seeks funding for the acquisition of the 51.41-acre Robin's Nest property in Acton, CA. I understand The Trust for Public Land is working with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to acquire this property from a willing seller so that it may be conserved for its significant natural values.

This project is important to our organization because it supports protection of the Santa Clara River which is the last large river system still in a relatively natural state in Southern California. Furthermore, it helps implement the Upper Santa Clara River Conservation Action Plan prepared by The Nature Conservancy and other conservation partners.

Located in Soledad Canyon of the San Gabriel Mountains the Robin's Nest property straddles the upper Santa Clara River. The watershed benefits of this project are great. In addition to containing 0.5 miles of the Santa Clara River and 6.13 acres of wetlands, the preservation of this property would ensure the protection of 23.17 acres of permeable soils for groundwater recharge. The habitat and ecosystem services provided by the wetlands located on this property are particularly significant given the fact that over 97% of Los Angeles County wetlands have disappeared.

The property provides habitat for a diverse assemblage of threatened and endangered species including 24 acres of critical habitat for the federally endangered arroyo toad. The water flowing through this property benefits the federally endangered Southern California Steelhead. The project would also result in exceptional recreational benefits for Californians. A portion of the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail runs directly through the Robin's Nest property and this acquisition will expand and permanently protect access for thousands of hikers each year, closing a critical gap between two blocks of public, protected land.

We strongly support The Trust for Public Land's Robin's Nest Acquisition project and urge your favorable consideration of this application for funding.

Sincerely,

E.J. Remson  
Senior Program Manager



# Memorandum

To : The Conservancy  
The Advisory Committee

Date: December 12, 2016

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

Subject: **Agenda Item 10: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant of Proposition 1 funds to the Trust for Public Land to acquire the Robin's Nest property, approximately 51 acres (APNs 3209-008-012, -013, -016), Upper Santa Clara River.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy authorize a grant not to exceed \$1,000,000 in Proposition 1 funds to the Trust for Public Land (TPL) for acquisition of the 51.41 acre Robin's Nest property (APN's 3209-008-012; -013; -016), located on the Upper Santa Clara River near Acton, off Soledad Canyon Road.

Legislative Authority: Section 33204.2(a) of the Public Resources Code; and Section 79731(h) of the Water Code.

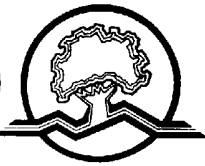
Background: Please see the attached Proposition 1 grant application from the Trust for Public Land. The grant request is for funding a portion of the fee acquisition of the Robin's Nest property, totaling 51.41 acres in three parcels in the Acton area along the upper Santa Clara River. The property significantly contains a half mile of river, plus over six acres of wetland, and over twenty-three acres of groundwater recharge area. The property is part of a Conceptual Area Protection Plan (CAPP) approved by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. TPL expects to match the Conservancy grant with an additional \$1,526,000 in funds from other sources.

The property is a key connection in the Pacific Crest Trail, and its acquisition would bridge a gap between two portions of Angeles National Forest. Over twenty-four acres of critical habitat for the federally-listed arroyo toad would be permanently protected in public ownership; along with other federally- and state-listed species. The recent Sand Fire last summer burned through the property and severely damaged the recreational vehicle resort and campground that previously operated there. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority has tentatively agreed to assume ownership once the property is acquired by TPL, but contingent upon the property being free and clear of damaged structures, environmental contamination, and other conditions. Assuming the redevelopment potential of the resort and/or six potential dwelling units, preservation of the property would avoid up to 2,010,283 pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>, or 911.8 metric tons.

Agenda Item 10  
December 12, 2016  
Page 2

Scoring under the Conservancy's adopted Proposition 1 Grant Project Land Acquisition Guidelines results in the Robin's Nest project receiving 117 points (out of a possible 137; 96 minimum required), plus 16 out of 18 climate change value points, plus 18 out of 33 possible points under Additional Criteria. **Total points: 151** (out of possible 188)

Staff recommends award of \$1,000,000 for this project.



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens  
570 West Avenue Twenty-six, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, California 90065  
Phone (323) 221-9944

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: November 7, 2018

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item XI: Consideration of resolution authorizing a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for habitat and site restoration of the Robins Nest property, Soledad Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing a grant application in an amount not to exceed \$225,000 to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for habitat and site restoration of the Robins Nest property, Soledad Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) acquired the 51-acre Robins Nest former RV park on the Santa Clara River this year. The property contains the extensive infrastructure of an abandoned recreational facility with over 100 RV campsites, a home, a pool and pool house, and assorted other small facilities. It also contains perhaps the most significant section of year-round natural flow on the entire river. The site has remarkable potential for both public recreation and habitat restoration. The Pacific Crest Trail abuts the upstream property boundary. It is a rare property with an extant bridge over the river to reach many flat acres of land between the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks and the river proper. Fortunately the MRCA was recently awarded a restoration grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to focus on a subset of the upper portion of the river. In addition the Audubon Society is considering a grant to MRCA for restoration of a lower reach of the river on the property. Staff needs funding to further clean up the property, fix wells to be able to water restored vegetation, and define and development a first phase of public use areas that do not conflict with restoration activities. The amount of \$225,000 should enable such work to allow public access and set the stage for future restoration grant applications.



# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Los Angeles River Center & Gardens  
570 West Avenue Twenty-six, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, California 90065  
Phone (323) 221-9944

## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

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

DATE: January 9, 2019

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item IX: Consideration of resolution authorizing accepting the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Proposition 1 grant award and entering into an agreement with CDFW to implement the Robin's Nest Fire Recovery and Habitat Restoration Project in Soledad Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution accepting the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Proposition 1 grant award and entering into an agreement with CDFW to implement the Robin's Nest Fire Recovery and Habitat Restoration Project in Soledad Canyon, unincorporated Los Angeles County.

Background: In 2018, the Mountains Restoration and Conservation Authority (MRCA) acquired the 51.4-acre Robin's Nest property in Soledad Canyon. The property contains an abandoned RV park with deteriorating structures built upon artificial fill within the floodplain of the Santa Clara River. The Briggs Fire (2010) and Sand Fire (2016) combined to burn the majority of the property and left behind fire-damaged debris that threatens water quality and habitat of the Santa Clara River.

MRCA's Robin's Nest Fire Recovery and Habitat Restoration Project (Project) is a 3-acre shovel-ready implementation project located on the eastern portion of the property designed to promote the recovery of unarmored threespine stickleback, arroyo chub, Santa Ana sucker, least Bell's vireo, southwestern flycatcher, arroyo toad, coast horned lizard and other native species onsite and nearby.

The proposed action would authorize MRCA to execute a grant agreement with CDFW in order to remove fire-damaged debris, construction waste and imported fill, and improve onsite riparian woodland, riparian scrub, and upland buffer habitat value through non-native plant eradication and establishment of native plant species.

The Project Area is also visible from both the Pacific Crest Trail and the Scenic Drive (Antelope Valley) designated Soledad Canyon Road. Successful completion of the Project will improve regional scenic resources adjacent to the Angeles National Forest. Long-term maintenance by MRCA staff will ensure that non-natives do not reestablish and that planted natives become firmly established.

A component of the grant application and grant agreement is to utilize the services of the California Conservation Corps (CCC) where possible. CCC staff has indicated the CCC can assist with this Project, and future staff consultation will determine the timing and extent of CCC participation.

Consideration: The amount of the grant would be \$298,150 and would cover Project activities, staff time, and expenses. The funding source for this grant is the CDFW's Proposition 1 Watershed and Delta Ecosystem Restoration Grant Program.

Fiscal Impact: The Project is expected to result in minimal additional maintenance costs to the MRCA as the grant allocates \$10,500 for long-term maintenance through the term of the grant period anticipated to end March 15, 2022. Successful completion of the Project will result in three acres of land requiring little to no additional maintenance.