

DATE: September 26, 2016

TO: RMC Governing Board

FROM: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 9: Consideration of a resolution authorizing a grant amendment to the Watershed Conservation Authority to extend the timeline for the San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project (RMC09105).

PROGRAM AREA: Mountains, Hills, Foothills

PROJECT TYPE: Planning and Interpretation

JURISDICTION: County of Los Angeles / Angeles National Forest

PROJECT MANAGER: Luz Quinnell

RECOMMENDATION: That the RMC authorizes a grant amendment to the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) to extend the timeline for the San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project (RMC09105) through October 31, 2017.

PROJECT'S DESCRIPTION: The San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project (Project) was developed as a pilot project between the WCA and the Angeles National Forest (ANF) in order to better manage recreation use and balance the needs for resource protection along a 2.5-mile reach of the East Fork of the San Gabriel River (EFSGR). This project is located approximately 14 miles north of the city of Azusa on federal lands managed by the ANF San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, within the boundaries of the WCA territory. A project vicinity map is included as Exhibit A.

This project, to be completed over three phases, includes a feasibility study, design, and implementation of physical site improvements and restoration activities, as well as development and implementation of an interpretive outreach program and a study on the effectiveness of the overall project activities. RMC09105 is a grant to support Phase 1, which includes the planning activities and development of the summer-long outreach program with two years of implementation. This pilot project is being completed with the intent that it will be replicated in other areas of the Angeles National Forest and the San Gabriel River Watershed.

BACKGROUND: Recreational use is highly concentrated in areas of the ANF that are relatively flat, such as within the project area. This is due to steep topography and dense chaparral that dominates the mountainous landscape. The heavy use combined with a lack of facilities has resulted in degradation within the project site. Current conditions are not sustainable for long-term management. Impacts include: damage to vegetation, soil compaction and erosion, on-site litter, and stream alteration where visitors build rock dams in the river bed to create recreational bathing pools. The East Fork of the San Gabriel River (EFSGR) has also experienced high levels of litter deposition both in and adjacent to the watercourse. The Regional Water Board determined that the level of trash has exceeded the existing Water Quality Standard necessary to protect the beneficial uses of the river, therefore the water quality is impaired due to trash based on the Section 303(d) listing.

The San Gabriel River Confluence with the Cattle Canyon Improvements Project proposes to better manage the recreation use and balance the needs for resource protection; in order to implement the project, the WCA has partnered with the U.S. Forest Service through cooperative agreements. These cooperative agreements will develop a project that promotes sustainable recreation and active uses in the ANF. The future desired condition to be advanced by the proposed project includes developing environmentally sustainable recreation opportunities to meet the needs of a growing urban and culturally diverse population, particularly for day use.

The project seeks the following goals and objectives:

- Provide recreation facilities and infrastructure that are high quality, well-maintained, safe, accessible and consistent with visitors' expectations.
- Shift and concentrate recreational use to certain areas in order to minimize adverse effects over a broader area.
- Promote stewardship of public land by providing quality and sustainable recreation opportunities that result in increased visitor satisfaction.
- Allow for better management of the recreation resources on the Forest.
- Improve riparian habitat conditions in certain areas and make progress toward enhancing stream habitat conditions by restoring vegetation, minimizing invasive plants and noxious weed presence, and developing management strategies to regulate access.

The current Phase 1 of the project has seen the development of an outreach program focused on the prevention of specific harmful recreational behaviors. The outreach program has completed two summer seasons of implementation during the summers' of 2013 and 2014. The remaining Phase 1 project component includes completion of a planning study, and environmental assessments in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act, and other applicable laws. The WCA and ANF Staff are currently finalizing a Final Concept Site Plan.

At the onset of the planning process it was identified that the appropriate environmental documentation would likely be a Mitigated Negative Declaration and Environmental Assessment (MND/EA), prepared jointly to increase efficiency. However, in initiating the environmental process WCA and ANF Staff evaluated the proposed actions contained within the Final Concept Plan, identifying potentially significant impacts to the federally threatened Santa Ana Sucker, thusly the project may be shifting concentration of recreational use to certain areas of EFSGR in order to minimize adverse effects over a broader area. Construction related impacts may be significant as well, including installation of abutments for a proposed pedestrian bridge. As it pertains to the NEPA (but not CEQA), the project may have significant socioeconomic impacts due to displaced of recreational users as the overall potential parking capacity at the site will be reduced.

Based on the potential for significant impacts it has been mutually determined by ANF and WCA Staff that an Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) must be prepared. This is the appropriate documents to disclose potential environmental impacts that may not be avoided through the proposed action. WCA has identified that the procedural process for preparing EIR/EIS will require an extension to the grant timeline and has requested an extension to the timeline for RMC09105 through October 31, 2017 (see Exhibit B). This represents a thirteen (13) month extension. RMC Staff considers the project as highly successful in advancing plans and activities that addresses a complex project scope through cooperative efforts between the WCA and ANF, but acknowledges that the nature of this collaboration has delayed the project timeline.

Issuance of a Notice of Intent/Preparation for the EIR/EIS and public scoping is anticipated to being in late September 2016. The draft EIR/EIS is expected in March 2017 and the final EIR/EIS is expected October 2017. WCA proposes to use federal funding provided by the ANF through cooperative agreement to cover the cost of additional environmental services needed for the EIR/EIS preparation.

Please see Exhibit B for a revised tasklist and timeline.

FISCAL INFORMATION: There is no change to the total grant value of \$766,584.

Funding for this project is allocated from the following Proposition 84 allocations, under statute:

75050. The sum of nine hundred twenty-eight million dollars (\$928,000,000) shall be available for the protection and restoration of rivers, lakes and streams, their watersheds and associated land, water, and other natural resources in accordance with the following schedule: (g) The sum of seventy-two million dollars (\$72,000,000) shall be available for projects within the watersheds of the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers according to the following schedule:

(1) \$36,000,000 to the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy pursuant to Division 22.8 (commencing with Section 32600).....

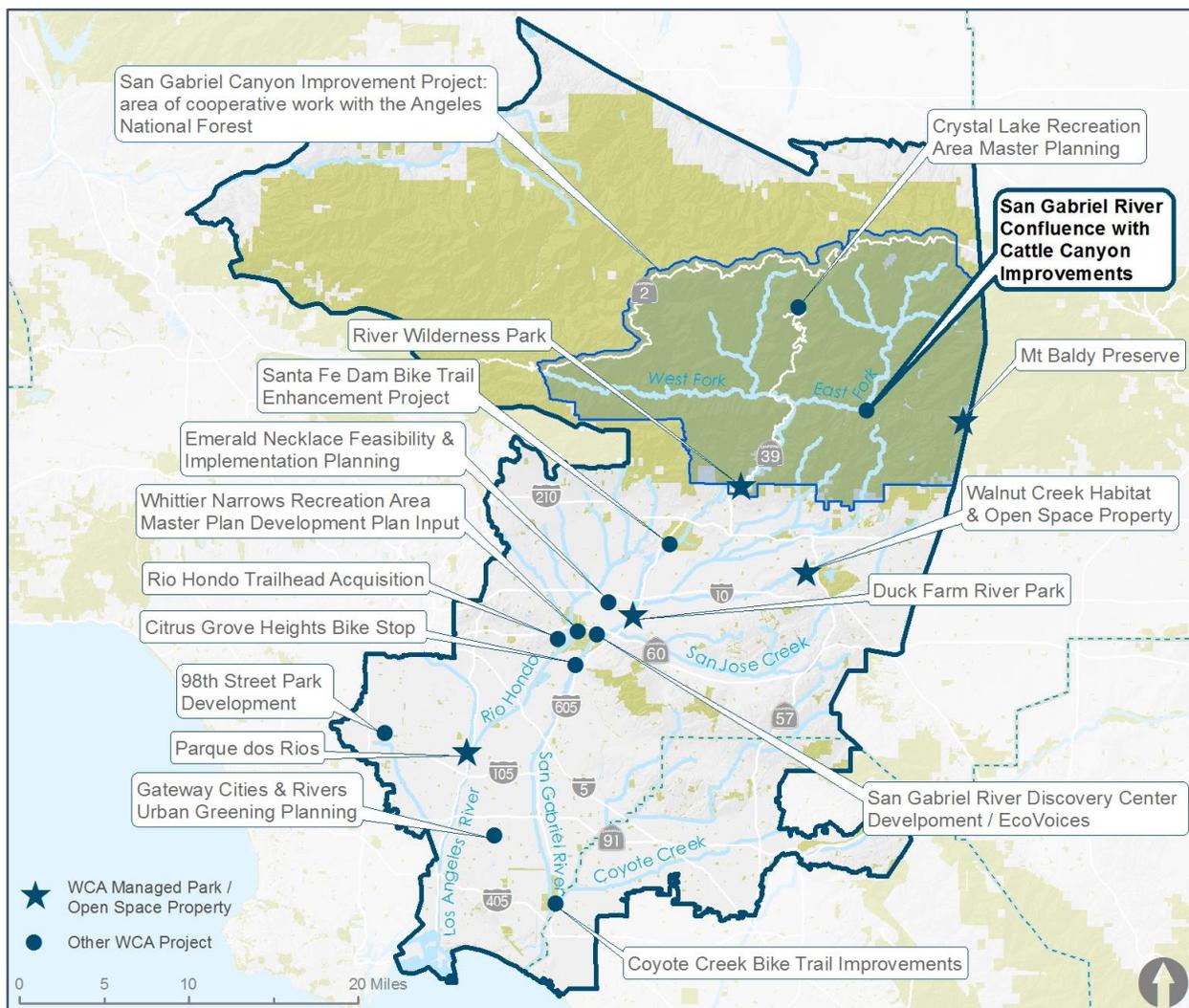
75060. The sum of five hundred forty million dollars (\$540,000,000) shall be available for the protection of beaches, bays and coastal waters and watersheds, including projects to prevent contamination and degradation of coastal waters and watersheds, projects to protect and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters and lands, and projects and expenditures to promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state, in accordance with the following schedule: (3) To the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy....\$15,000,000.

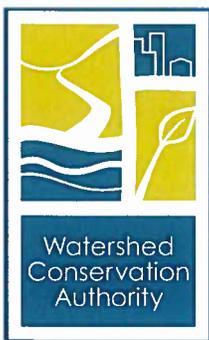
LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY AND RMC ADOPTED POLICIES/AUTHORITIES: This grant was initially authorized by the RMC on June 28, 2010, as specified in Resolution 2010-68. RMC Resolution 2012-14 approved a grant amendment to extend the performance period through May 30, 2015. RMC Resolution 2014-10 approved: 1) adjustment in the scope of the design and permitting scope, 2) increase the grant by \$4,000 to a total not to exceed amount of \$770,584 and, 3) adjusted the funding allocation between tasks identified in the grant budget. An additional timeline extension was authorized to September 30, 2016 by Resolution 2016-02.



Exhibit A

Territory Map: San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project





August 30, 2016

Mark Stanley
Executive Officer
Rivers and Mountains Conservancy
100 N. Old San Gabriel Canyon Rd.
Azusa, CA 91702

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Mark Stanley

Re: San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project
(RMC09105) Grant Extension

Dear Mr. Stanley:

The Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) is hereby requesting an extension through October 31, 2017 for the RMC grant for the San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project (RMC09105).

Please find attached for your review and approval an amended project schedule/timeline. This extension is being requested as the proposed final conceptual plan for project-related improvements has been determined by WCA and Angeles National Forest Staff to have potentially significant impacts to the federally threatened Santa Ana Sucker. Pertaining to the National Environmental Policy Act, concerns were also identified regarding the proposed reduction in parking capacity, with a potential for recreation user displacement. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must therefore be prepared.

The grant timeline as previously amended was scoped for the preparation of a jointly prepared Environmental Assessment / Mitigated Negative Declaration (EA/MND). Although a joint document is still proposed to optimize efficiency and avoid duplication, the EIS/EIR will require additional consultant services to support more in depth analyses. Additionally, the EIS/EIR preparation and review process will be significant longer as compared to a MND/EA. Federal resources are available to fund the additional consultant services, however, a timeline extension of thirteen (13) months is being requested to accommodate this higher level of review.

If you have any questions, please contact the WCA project manager, Rob Romanek at Romanek@wca.ca.gov or at (626) 815-1019 ext. 108.

Sincerely,


Brian Mejia
Governing Board Chair

Enclosure: Amended Project Schedule

BM:rr

Exhibit A: San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project, Phase 1 Amended Task List & Timeline (RMC09105)

August 30, 2016

| Task ID | Tasks | Jul. to Sept. 2012 | Oct. to Dec. 2012 | Jan. to Mar. 2013 | Apr. to Jun. 2013 | Jul. to Sept. 2013 | Oct. to Dec. 2013 | Jan. to Mar. 2014 | Apr. to Jun. 2014 | Jul. to Sept. 2014 | Oct. to Dec. 2014 | Jan. to Mar. 2015 | Apr. to Jun. 2015 | Jul. to Sept. 2015 | Oct. to Dec. 2015 | Jan. to Mar. 2016 | Apr. to Jun. 2016 | Jul. to Sept. 2016 | Oct. to Dec. 2016 | Jan. to Mar. 2017 | Apr. to Jun. 2017 | Jul. to Sept. 2017 | Oct. 2017 |
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| 1 | Fully Execute Partnership Agreement | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2A | Visitor Survey & Interpretive Program Evaluation Survey Development | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2B | Visitor Survey Implementation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2C | Visitor Survey Implementation Report | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3A | Interpretive Program Development & Training | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3B | Interpretive Program Implementation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | Site Assessment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Concept Plan & Feasibility Study | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | Environmental Impact Assessment (CEQA/NEPA) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Site Design | <i>Task Postponed to Phase 2</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Water Quality Monitoring | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

September 26, 2016 – Item 9

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-19

RESOLUTION OF THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY (RMC) AUTHORIZING A GRANT AMENDMENT TO THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO EXTEND THE TIMELINE FOR THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER CONFLUENCE WITH CATTLE CANYON IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT (RMC09105).

WHEREAS, The legislature has found and declared that the San Gabriel River and its tributaries, the Lower Los Angeles River and its tributaries, and the San Gabriel Mountains, Puente Hills, and San Jose Hills constitute a unique and important open space, environmental, anthropological, cultural, scientific, educational, recreational, scenic, and wildlife resource that should be held in trust to be preserved and enhanced for the enjoyment of, and appreciation by, present and future generations; and

WHEREAS, The people of the State of California have enacted the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84), which provides funds for the RMC grant program; and

WHEREAS, The RMC may award grants to local public agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations for the purposes of Division 22.8 the Public Resources Code; and

WHEREAS, This action is exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and NOW

Therefore be it resolved that the RMC hereby:

1. FINDS that this action is consistent with the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Act and is necessary to carry out the purposes and objectives of Division 22.8 of the Public Resources Code.
2. FINDS that the grant is consistent with the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, which provides funds for the RMC grant program.
3. FINDS that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
4. APPROVES a grant amendment to the Watershed Conservation Authority to extend the timeline for the San Gabriel River Confluence with Cattle Canyon Improvements Project (RMC09105) through October 31, 2017.
5. ADOPTS the staff report dated September 26, 2016.

~ End of Resolution ~

Motion _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS
CONSERVANCY on September 26, 2016

Frank Colonna, Chair

ATTEST:

Terry Fujimoto
Deputy Attorney General