

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 28, 2017

RAMONA GARDENS NATURAL PARK

Project No. 16-052-01
Project Manager: Sam Jenniches

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) to Community Conservation Solutions (CCS) to augment a previous Conservancy authorization to CCS to plan and design a multi-benefit green infrastructure park at the Ramona Gardens Housing Development in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of the city of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County.

LOCATION: Boyle Heights neighborhood, city of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Integrated Coastal and Marine Resource Protection

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)
Exhibit 2: [February 2, 2017 Staff Recommendation](#)
Exhibit 3: [Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy March 27, 2017 Resolution and Staff Report](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31113 and 31220 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) of funds from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to Community Conservation Solutions (CCS) to augment a previous Conservancy authorization to CCS to plan and design a multiple benefit green infrastructure park at the Ramona Gardens Housing Development in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of the city of Los Angeles, subject to the same conditions detailed in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) of funds from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to Community Conservation Solutions (CCS) to augment a previous Conservancy authorization to CCS to plan and design a multiple benefit green infrastructure park at the Ramona Gardens Housing Development in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of the city of Los Angeles, Los Angeles County.

The proposed augmentation of funds will fill a gap in funding for the project created because the project costs were far higher than expected. The Natural Park at Ramona Gardens Housing Development, as augmented by the proposed authorization, will continue to meet multiple needs: creation of a publicly-accessible natural habitat in the park-poor, densely-populated Ramona Gardens housing project; permanent native tree and vegetation buffers for the high levels of noise and air pollution from the adjacent freeway and transit corridor; green open space and walking paths to help address multiple health problems; natural places for children to play and adults to walk; shade trees; and green street walkways that connect residents of Ramona Gardens and Boyle Heights to schools, Hazard Park and other public services.

CCS's mission is to tackle the most complex and challenging problems created when people and nature intersect by developing creative, practical and lasting solutions that unite diverse communities and interests and leverage investments of public funds. CCS has successfully crafted innovative solutions to serious environmental problems affecting California's natural and human communities by integrating the protection and restoration of natural lands and waters with compatible community uses, economic benefits and permanent public benefits.

A more detailed *Project Summary* can be found in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

Site Description: The Ramona Gardens Natural Park project site is located on 3.87 acres of primarily vacant land within the Ramona Gardens Housing Project, owned and managed by the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. The site is located between the residential buildings and a massive transit corridor comprised of the 12-lane CA 10 Interstate Freeway, the El Monte Busway/ HOV Lane and a Metrolink train line. A short cinderblock wall and a few sparse trees separate the transit corridor from residences at Ramona Gardens. The site is primarily paved and includes the shell of an old concrete structure; degraded and unused handball and tennis courts; an old basketball court; a small playground; mobile units used as offices, gang intervention services; a library; a storm drain and drainage grates; and a small community garden. The site connects to a pedestrian bridge that provides access across the I-10 freeway and transit corridor. The Ramona Gardens housing project is located within Boyle Heights, and is bounded by the freeway and transit corridor described above, residential streets and industrial land uses.

Project History: In March of 2017, the SMMC approved a grant of \$100,000 to the Coastal Conservancy to augment the Conservancy's existing grant to CCS, which became necessary after expected costs for the project exceeded the granted amount. The SMMC elected to grant the funds to the Conservancy rather than the grantee, to facilitate the grantee's project management and enable the project to stay on schedule.

A more detailed *Project History* can be found in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy

Feb. 2, 2017 Conservancy Authorization: Proposition 1 funds	\$510,000
Proposed Augmentation: SMMC Grant to Conservancy	\$100,000
Other Funders	<u>\$125,580</u>
Project Total	\$735,580

The project, as augmented, has not changed and remains consistent with Proposition 1, the funding source for the initial Conservancy authorization. See the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation for a detailed discussion.

The expected source for the proposed augmentation of funds is the grant from SMMC to the Conservancy. These funds are being provided expressly for the purpose of completing the proposed project.

In turn, the SMMC funds are derived from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84), and the use of such funds are consistent with Proposition 84, as detailed in the SMMC March 27, 2017 Resolution and Staff Report (Exhibit 3).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION, 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), AS REVISED JUNE 25, 2015, CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES AND CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN/ STATE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN:

The proposed authorization does not alter the Ramona Gardens Natural Park project from the description and other aspects of the project detailed in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2). It simply augments the funding for the project. Accordingly, for the same reasons specified in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation, the Ramona Gardens Natural Park project, as modified by the proposed authorization, remains consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, 2013 Strategic Plan Goal(s) & Objective(s)(Revised 2015), and Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines and with the local watershed management plan/state water quality control plan.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

As noted immediately above, the proposed authorization does not alter the nature of the Ramona Gardens Natural Park project. The project remains statutorily exempt from review under the

California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262, in that it involves only planning studies and feasibility analyses for possible future actions which have not yet been approved, adopted, or funded as described in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2). Since the proposed authorization does not alter the project in any way that would change the environmental compliance analysis, no further findings or additional environmental documentation are required under CEQA.