

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 19, 2019

Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith Acquisition

Project No. 19-035-01

Project Manager: Christopher Kroll & Emely Lopez

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,000,000 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority to acquire the 23.71-acre Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property for habitat conservation, open space, and public access and recreation in the Santa Monica Mountains, Los Angeles County.

LOCATION: Ramirez Canyon, Santa Monica Mountains, Los Angeles, CA

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to § 31400 - 31410 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (“the grantee”) to acquire the 23.71-acre Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith Property in the Santa Monica Mountains (consisting of Los Angeles County Assessor Parcel Nos. 4467-002-066, -067 and -068) for purposes of habitat conservation, open space, and public access and recreation.

This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds for the acquisition, the grantee shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer):
 - a. All relevant acquisition documents for the acquisition including, without limitation, the appraisal, purchase and sale agreement, escrow instructions, environmental or hazardous materials assessment, and title report;

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

- b. A baseline conditions report; and
 - c. Evidence that sufficient funds are available to complete the acquisition.
2. The grantee shall pay no more than fair market value for the property, as established in an appraisal approved by the Executive Officer.
 3. The property acquired under this authorization shall be managed and operated for public access and recreation, open space, and habitat conservation. The property shall be permanently dedicated to those purposes by an appropriate instrument approved by the Executive Officer.
 4. Conservancy funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining a sign on the property or in a nearby publicly-viewable area, the design and location of which are to be approved by the Executive Officer.
 5. The grantee shall prepare a management plan in accordance with Fish and Game Code §2794.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (§31400-31410) regarding public access.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The project will serve more than local needs.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends disbursement of up to \$1,000,000 to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) to acquire the 23.7-acre Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property (the “property”), which encompasses three parcels (Los Angeles County Assessor Parcel Nos. 4467-002-066, -067 and -068), in the Santa Monica Mountains (See Exhibit 1). The purpose of the acquisition is to provide direct public access to and space for future amenities at an existing multi-benefit coastal campground, close a gap in the Coastal Slope Trail, and protect significant habitat including coastal chaparral, coastal sage scrub, oak, and walnut woodlands.

The Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property is adjacent to the scenic Malibu coast and within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area (SMMNRA). SMMNRA is the world’s largest urban national park and includes more than 500 miles of recreation trails and neighbors approximately 19 million residents in the greater Los Angeles Area. An estimated 15 million people from all over the world visit SMMNRA annually. In addition, the Santa Monica Mountains area hosts a diverse population of rare and sensitive wildlife species. Rapid development in the Santa Monica Mountains is causing concern for public access and habitat protection. MRCA has played a key role in addressing public access and habitat protection

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

concerns through efforts such as creating overnight accommodations, leading the efforts on creating the Coastal Slope Trail (CST), and protecting vital habitat in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The acquisition of the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property will improve potential public access to the only affordable overnight campground in the SMMNRA, the Ramirez Canyon Park campground. To address equitable overnight accommodations on the Malibu coast, MRCA completed the multi-benefit Ramirez Canyon Park campground in 2018. The Ramirez Canyon Park campground incorporates ADA accessibility, low impact camping, and a lower cost overnight option. However, the campground is not easily accessible by the public because the entrance to Ramirez Canyon Park is via a private road that provides for only pedestrians, bicycles, or vehicles displaying a valid disabled placard to use the road to Ramirez Canyon Park and its campground. As a result, except for vehicles displaying a valid disabled placard, the campground only accommodates individuals who can park along Pacific Coast Highway and then walk or bike the private road the approximately 1.3 miles into the campground. The acquisition of the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property will address this lack of vehicular parking for the campground. The property has an existing paved road that is accessible from Pacific Coast Highway via Kanan Dume Road. The property has an area that can potentially be used for vehicular parking and an existing dirt path that leads to the Ramirez Canyon Park campground site 0.5-mile away. This acquisition could also potentially be an appropriate space for the installation of campground and trail amenities including an ADA-accessible restroom, a staging area, a drinking fountain, and picnic tables. In this dry coastal mountain environment, access to the amenities mentioned, especially a water fountain, is essential for campers, hikers, and coastal visitors. MRCA manages the Ramirez Canyon Park campground and is just beginning a planning effort for the Coastal Slope Trail and development of amenities on this property would be included in that plan.

The Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith acquisition will also increase recreational opportunities by enabling potential development of the proposed 73-mile-long CST, a trail that will run the length of the Santa Monica Mountains from Point Mugu State Park in the west to Topanga State Park in the east (see exhibit 1). The CST is an important trail alignment of the California Coastal Trail that provides breathtaking, panoramic vistas of the Pacific Ocean (see exhibit 2). The property is accessible to visitors via Kanan Dume Road, one of the main connectors to Highway 101 inland and to the coastal Pacific Coast Highway. In addition, the property has the capacity to allow designated trail parking, create a new CST trailhead, and develop a new CST segment of 0.5 miles. This proposed new 0.5-mile segment will go through the property and will close a major trail gap between Ramirez Canyon Park and the proposed CST over the public parkland on the west side of Kanan Dume Road. One of the goals for the CST is to connect access between major parklands across the Santa Monica Mountains. There is the potential to connect at least 15 public parklands when the CST is completed. Approximately 70% of land slated for the CST is now in public hands.

Furthermore, the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith acquisition will protect H1 (“highest biological significance, rarity, and sensitivity”) and H2 habitat (“high biological significance, rarity, and sensitivity”), as classified in the Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program. The property

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

is comprised of thriving native plant communities, such as chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and grassland habitat. The abundance of vegetation and a year-round creek near the property provides habitat to several species including mule deer, bobcat, coyote, badger, gray fox, long-tailed weasel, western toad, western fence lizard, San Diego horned lizard, and desert cottontail. Additionally, there are many species of birds and sensitive wildlife species that inhabit the area, including red-shouldered hawk, eagles, barn owl, California quails, greater roadrunner, western scrub-jay, black phoebe, and steelhead trout. This property provides significant wildlife habitat and serves as a movement corridor for the species within the SMMNRA. Public management of this wildlife corridor is intended to protect the habitat and migration routes for plants and animals, not just in the immediate area, but for the entire Santa Monica Mountains. Once publicly owned, this property will join the surrounding larger public property already owned and managed by MRCA, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and the National Park Service (NPS).

In 2016, at the Coastal Commission hearing on the coastal development permit for the campground, residents expressed objections to the campground because of the risk associated with campfires. Recently, these concerns were raised again at a Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors hearing on amending the Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program (LCP) to revise definitions and provisions for camping in the Santa Monica Mountains. The 2018 Woolsey Fire burned the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property, and 500 homes in the area were lost. MRCA's acquisition of the property will ensure adaptive management strategies are used to address the residents' concerns and protect habitat. Adaptive management measures are incorporated into the coastal development permit for the campground and include closely managing the campsite, a limit on overnight campers (max 16 per night), conducting daily inspections, and closing the campsite during the fire season (September 15 through January 15). These strategies will help protect residents and wildlife already vulnerable to wildfire threats.

Site Description:

The Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property is 23.7 acres of privately-owned land, mostly undeveloped. The property is surrounded on the north, east and west by public parklands owned and managed by MRCA, SMMC, and the NPS. The property is zoned to allow the development of three single-family residences, one at 7,000 square feet and two at 10,000 square feet. The property contains three residential building pads and a paved driveway from Kanan Dume Road to the pads. To the south of the property, there are single-family residences. The property lies approximately 1.5 miles north of Pacific Coast Highway with an extensive frontage along Kanan Dume Road. Entry to the property is from Kanan Dume Road on the existing paved driveway.

The property is still mostly undisturbed and is part of the Ramirez Canyon watershed, a 2,880-acre watershed located between Kanan Dume Road and Escondido Canyon. The topography of the area ranges from the stream bed and flood plain area to steep mountains. The property is located within the 150,000 acres of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. The SMMNRA includes Malibu and most of the Santa Monica Mountains, extending from the

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

Hollywood Bowl to Point Mugu in Ventura County. The SMMNRA is the world's largest urban national park.

The patchwork of private-public land ownership and development pressures is a real threat to managing the national park on a landscape level and maintaining vital wildlife corridors. Conservation of the 23.7-acre Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property will build on the Conservancy's conservation efforts in the Santa Monica Mountains, an area where the Conservancy has participated in numerous restoration projects and acquisitions to protect vital coastal watersheds and wildlife habitat.

Grantee Qualifications:

Founded in 1985, the MRCA is a local public agency exercising the joint powers of the SMMC, the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District pursuant to § 6500 et seq. of the Government Code. MRCA's mission is to complement the work of these, and other, agencies in protecting land and public access in Los Angeles County and Ventura County. MRCA has acquired and manages over 75,000 acres of parkland. MRCA's efforts have been integral to the effort to reserve coastal resource areas in the mountains for the public and future generations. MRCA staff has extensive experience performing the tasks necessary to close acquisitions in a timely manner, including the successful management of numerous state acquisition grants from the SMMC, the Conservancy, and the Wildlife Conservation Board. The MRCA also has extensive experience working with various federal, state, and local agencies to protect sensitive habitat and provide public recreational opportunities for all. Lastly, the MRCA can provide operational and management activities such as ranger patrols, park maintenance, and fire protection, which ensures that subject property can be well protected for the long term under the MRCA's management.

Project History:

The Ramirez Canyon preservation efforts represent a collaborative partnership between the MRCA, National Park Service, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land, and the Conservancy. All five organizations have coordinated in the past to garner support for conservation of the Santa Monica Mountains. The Conservancy has been integral in enabling preservation and recreation on the Ramirez Canyon. In 2001, the Conservancy granted \$70,000 to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to acquire approximately 37 acres for the Upper Ramirez and Escondido Canyon Acquisition. The grant assisted with acquiring three parcels located on the ridgelines of Ramirez and Escondido Canyon in order to protect an important wildlife corridor between two of the largest public parklands in the Santa Monica Mountains. In 2013, the Conservancy granted \$200,000 to MRCA to purchase two properties, which together encompass approximately 104 acres of undeveloped land. The properties were acquired for preservation, recreation, and public access. The 2013 acquisition also helped remove the threat of development and permanently protect significant coastal resources.

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

The Ramirez Canyon Park campground is also listed as a potential project in the Explore the Coast Overnight Assessment for amenity upgrades, program funding, and restoring damages from the Woolsey fire. Explore the Coast Overnight is a Conservancy program that aims to address the scarcity of affordable overnight camping on the coast. The project is listed to address campsite visitor amenities and support MRCA's camping programs.

For the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property, MRCA has been leading negotiations with the property owner for at least a decade. MRCA led discussions regarding conservation easements as the owner contemplated development on the subject property. In early 2018, the property owner finally expressed interest in selling the property in fee. In May 2019, the MRCA successfully obtained an option for the fee title of the property.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,000,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (proposed)	\$615,000
Los Angeles County	\$1,613,000
Project Total	\$3,228,000

The expected source of Conservancy funds for the proposed project is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Wildlife Protection Act of 1990 (Proposition 117), known as the Habitat Conservation Fund ("HCF") (Fish and Game Code §2780 et seq). HCF funds may be used for acquisition of habitat necessary to protect mountain lions and deer; acquisition of habitat to protect rare, endangered, threatened, or fully protected species; and acquisition of riparian habitat. (Fish and Game Code §2786)

The proposed project will protect habitat that serves as a wildlife corridor for mountain lions and deer. The property also contains essential habitat required for rare species including the San Diego horned lizard, a listed species of concern. In addition, the Ramirez Creek flows through the property (see exhibit 1), which contains riparian habitat. For these reasons, the proposed acquisition is consistent with the purposes of the HCF.

MRCA secured \$1,613,00 from Los Angeles County Proposition A and has applied to WCB for the balance of the funds: \$615,000. The project is scheduled to go to WCB's board meeting in early 2020.

A state or local agency that manages land acquired with HCF funds must prepare a management plan. (Fish and Game Code §2794).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (PRC), specifically with Chapter 9 regarding public coastal access.

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

Under §31400, the Conservancy has a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the coast. The Conservancy's funding of the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith acquisition is consistent with Chapter 9 because of the opportunities for trail connectivity to the coast and to the CST, the scenic trails that traverse the Santa Monica Mountains area.

Under §31400.1, the Conservancy may award grants to any public agency to acquire land for public access purposes to and along the coast if the Conservancy has determined that the accessway will serve more than local public needs. As discussed in the "Project Summary" section above, the SMMNRA is host to 15 million visitors each year from all over the world.

Under §31400.2, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of the acquisition of interests by a public agency, with the amount of funding determined by the total amount available for coastal access projects, the fiscal resources of the applicant, and the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects. Without the Conservancy's funds, MRCA would not have sufficient funds to acquire the land by the May 2020 deadline established in the purchase agreement.

Under §31408, to the extent feasible, and consistent with their individual mandates, each agency, board, department, or commission of the state with property interests or regulatory authority in coastal areas shall cooperate with the Conservancy with respect to planning and making lands available for completion of the California Coastal Trail, including constructing trail links, placing signs, and managing the trail. MRCA will assist with the development and management of 0.5 miles of CST on the property. The Conservancy will work with the MRCA to properly sign the trail.

Under §31409, consistent with the Conservancy's authority under this chapter to develop a system of public accessways to, and along, the state's coastline, the Conservancy may award grants and provide assistance to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to establish and expand those inland trail systems that may be linked to the California Coastal Trail. The proposed acquisition will allow for the creation of 0.5 miles of the CST and a new trailhead on the west side of the Santa Monica Mountains.

The proposed funding for the acquisition has been determined with an understanding of the balance of HCF funds available to the Conservancy, the resource value of the site, the readiness of the seller, and the financial limitations of MRCA. The proposed acquisition would provide enhanced opportunities for public access and is, therefore, consistent with Chapter 9 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation.

Under §31117, the executive officer must submit any plan or project proposed to be carried out pursuant to Division 21 within the coastal zone portion of the Santa Monica Mountains Zone, as defined in Section 33105, to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) for review at least 60 days prior to approval by the State Coastal Conservancy. Given that MRCA is a local

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

governing public entity that works in conjunction with the SMMC under the Joint Exercise of Powers Act, the Coastal Conservancy does not need to further notify the SMMC in this instance since the SMMC is a member of the MRCA requesting the funding for this acquisition.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources: The proposed acquisition will help protect Ramirez Canyon watershed, a significant coastal and watershed resource. Ramirez Canyon Creek runs across the property, and MRCA will utilize adaptive management strategies to support the land's natural systems.

Standard No. 5, Environmentally Sensitive Areas: As mentioned in the project description, the property is comprised of significant biological habitat classified as H1 & H2, and it also serves as a movement corridor for the species within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.

Standard No. 8, Trails: The Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith acquisition will allow for the creation of 0.5-miles of the CST and provide easy access to the CST trail segment.

Standard No. 9, Scenic Overlooks: The CST trail that runs through the property overlooks the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Monica Mountains.

Standard No. 12, Support Facilities: MRCA can utilize the property's existing paved road for campsite and trailhead parking. Not only will this acquisition provide public parking, but it will also support future implementation of amenities such as a staging area, a drinking fountain, picnic tables, and ADA-accessible restrooms. MRCA will work on securing funding for future site amenities once the acquisition is finalized.

Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access: At this time, the public must walk or bike 1.3 miles along Ramirez Canyon Road into the campground. The present lack of vehicular campground access contributes to this public coastal access barrier for Angelenos and coastal visitors. MRCA will utilize the proposed acquisition to address this issue.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#)

GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective E** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed acquisition will allow for the creation of 0.5-mile of CST, an important trail alignment of the California Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective G** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed acquisition will provide access to the 23.7-acre Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property, which leads into both the Ramirez Canyon Park campsite and the CST.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy’s statutory programs and purposes:** See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:**
 - a. *CA Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk Plan* (CA Natural Resources Agency, July 2014). The plan identifies “Actions Needed to Safeguard Biodiversity and Habitats” including #1: Improve habitat connectivity and protect climate refugia. The acquisition will add to the effort to preserve natural resource habitats in the watersheds draining to the Pacific Ocean.
 - b. *California Water Action Plan* (California Natural Resources Agency, 2014). Goal #4, “Protect and Restore Important Ecosystems”, identifies the protection of coastal watersheds as a priority action.
 - c. *CA Wildlife Action Plan* (California State Department of Fish and Wildlife), 2015). The project will further the following statewide conservation strategy: Protect land and/or water through acquisition fee-title ownership or preferably conservation easements. The project will protect grasslands, which are one of the Plan’s conservation targets for the South Coast region.
4. **Support of the public:**

The proposed project is supported by the public landholding agencies within the Santa Monica Mountains, specifically, the National Park Service, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and California State Parks, as well as many community organizations who offer outdoor and coastal programs for underrepresented youth, among them Community Nature Connection, Peace4Kids, Happy Trails for Kids and Southeast Asian Community Alliance.
5. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone in Los Angeles County.
6. **Need:** MRCA is unable to acquire the property without Conservancy funds. If not publicly acquired, the current property owner could pursue residential development consistent with the zoning. Additionally, MRCA would not be able to implement the much-needed campsite amenities or provide a key segment of the Coastal Slope Trail without this acquisition.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** An estimated 15 million people from all over the world visit the SMMNRA each year. It is the nation’s largest urban park. The park includes more than 500 miles of recreation trails, all adjacent to a metropolitan region of more than 19 million people. It is a highly popular scenic and recreational destination. In addition, the Santa Monica Mountains area hosts a diverse population of rare and sensitive wildlife species, such as the steelhead trout, and provides habitat for over 450 vertebrate animal species, including coyote, bobcat, and mountain lion.

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

Moreover, Ramirez Canyon Park is home to MRCA's premier outreach programs for adults and children with special needs, seniors, and low-income youth visiting nature for the first time.

8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The project site is not vulnerable to sea-level rise because of its distance from the shoreline and elevation.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** MRCA entered into an option agreement to purchase fee title to the property that expires on May 20, 2020. The landowner has only recently agreed to sell the property. This may be the public's only opportunity to acquire the site.
10. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The acquisition will increase recreation for an estimated 15 million coastal visitors in two forms. First, it will extend the CST and create a trailhead that will allow for a scenic hike, overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Second, it will create parking to enable direct access to the only lower cost, low impact, and ADA accessible campsite along the Malibu coast at Ramirez Canyon Park. Furthermore, the acquisition will preserve significant H1 and H2 habitat that would otherwise be subject to residential development.
11. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
12. **Innovation:** Acquisition of the property enables the success of the lower cost coastal accommodations at the SMMC's Ramirez Canyon Park. There currently are no other lower-cost coastal accommodations along the 21-mile Malibu coast. The Ramirez Canyon Park campground includes innovative solutions to address real barriers to coastal access for underserved populations such as providing camping gear at no-charge and programs to bring inner-city, foster, and special needs kids camping at the coast.
13. **Readiness:** With the Conservancy funding, MRCA will be able to close the acquisition by May 10, 2020, the expiration date of the option.
14. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
15. **Return to Conservancy:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
16. **Cooperation:** Several community organizations cooperate with MRCA and SMMC to provide underrepresented groups with coastal access opportunities, including the support at the property for the overnight camping and educational programs at Ramirez Canyon Park. SMMC and MRCA also cooperate to manage the trail and camping amenities on the property and with the National Park Service to manage the property as part of the larger SMMNRA.
17. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea-level rise:** To address climate change vulnerability, especially from fire, the Ramirez Canyon Park campground is closed during the fire season, September 15 through January 15. Wildlife in the Santa Monica Mountains is vulnerable to wildfire threats as well as development threats.

RAMIREZ CANYON, LAUBER SMITH ACQUISITION

18. Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions: The proposed acquisition prevents the development of up to three single-family residences, which in turn reduces at least 127 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

Acquisition of the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations §15325 in that the acquisition constitutes a transfer of ownership to preserve open space and habitat. The proposed project also is exempt under §15313, which exempts the acquisition of lands for fish and wildlife conservation purposes, §15316, which exempts the acquisition of land to establish a park where the land is in a natural condition and the management plan for the park has not been prepared, and §15319, which exempts the annexation of lots for small structures that are in turn exempt under §15303, regarding new construction or conversion of small structures.

The grantee intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the CST Public Works Plan that will include analysis of improvements at the Ramirez Canyon, Lauber Smith property. Until then, the property will be preserved for open space and habitat. Minor improvements and public access uses that qualify for a CEQA exemption may be pursued in the meantime, such as using the existing street for public parking (exempt under §15303 as a conversion of an existing small structure to another use) and street striping and trail signage (exempt under §15304 as minor alterations to land that do not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees).

Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the project.