



Council Agenda Report

To: Mayor Farrer and the Honorable Members of the City Council

Prepared by: Mary Linden, Executive Assistant

Approved by: Reva Feldman, City Manager

Date prepared: March 23, 2020 Meeting date: April 13, 2020

Subject: Support for State Funding for the Purchase of Triangle Ranch Property at US-101 and Kanan Dume Road (Councilmember Wagner)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: At the request of Councilmember Wagner, authorize the Mayor to send a letter to Senator Henry Stern and Assemblymember Richard Bloom in support of their request for a General Fund budget item of \$14,500,000 to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) for the purchase of 150 remaining acres of the Triangle Ranch property located at the US-101 and Kanan Dume Road corridor.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact associated with the recommended action.

WORK PLAN: This item was not included in the Adopted Work Plan for Fiscal year 2019-2020. This project is part of normal staff operations.

DISCUSSION: In September 2018, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) completed the acquisition of 170 acres of open space in the central Santa Monica Mountains south of the 101 Freeway along Kanan Road (Attachment 1). The acreage was part of what is known as the Triangle Ranch property and was purchased in three phases with grants from numerous State and local funding sources.

The remaining piece of the property is comprised of 150 acres at the base of Ladyface Mountain currently part of a development project of more than 25 large, single family dwellings. This development threatens the health and safety of the wildlife living in the Santa Monica Mountains and will have a detrimental impact on the success of the wildlife crossing being constructed at Liberty Canyon to provide safe and sustainable passage for wildlife across the 101 Freeway.

In addition, Kanan Dume Road is designated by the County of Los Angeles as a Disaster Route and is a critical piece of Malibu's Evacuation Plan as it one of the main arterial connector roads between Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu and US-101 freeway through the Santa Monica Mountains.

In order to prevent the proposed development phase of the Triangle Ranch project, Senator Henry Stern and Assemblymember Richard Bloom have proposed a State budget item of \$14,500,000 for SMMC to purchase the remaining property as dedicated open space.

On March 4, 2020, the City of Agoura Hills sent a letter of support to Senator Stern and Assemblymember Bloom in support of that budget item (Attachment 2). Councilmember Wagner is requesting the Council authorize the Mayor to send a similar letter of support.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. MRCA press release dated September 28, 2018
2. City of Agoura Hills letter dated March 4, 2020



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
King Gillette Ranch
26800 Mulholland Highway
Calabasas, California 91302

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

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Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Acquires Gateway to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

Now public parkland, 170 acres of the Triangle Ranch Property in unincorporated Los Angeles County adjacent to Agoura Hills was acquired in three phases. A fourth phase acquisition is in the making

AGOURA HILLS, CA (September 28, 2018) — The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) announced today that it had acquired 170 acres of iconic open space in the central Santa Monica Mountains south of the 101 Freeway along Kanan Road. Known for decades as the Triangle Ranch property because of the shape of the land holding, the \$16.5 million property was purchased in three phases beginning in March of this year with grants from numerous State and local funding sources including the State Wildlife Conservation Board, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the County of Los Angeles, the City of Agoura Hills, and the nonprofit Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The Phase 3, 70-acre acquisition was completed this week.

“The Triangle Ranch project demonstrates how strong partnerships support successful conservation projects,” said John Donnelly, Executive Director, of the California Wildlife Conservation Board, which granted \$3,400,000 from the Habitat Conservation Fund for the Phase 3 acquisition. “With our partners, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, we are proud to protect wildlife travel corridors in an increasingly urban environment and provide increased public access opportunities in Los Angeles County.”

Thousands of motorists pass by the now permanently protected parkland each day, which has long been identified as a crucial linkage for habitat preservation, watershed protection, and wildlife movement in the area. The parkland ties the approximately 1,000-acre Ladyface Mountain core habitat area with the Liberty Canyon inter-mountain range wildlife corridor and Malibu Creek State Park. Existing informal trails will be developed to increase public access from Kanan Road.

“This acquisition preserves this irreplaceable landscape and secures wildlife corridors and pathways which animals depend upon for survival,” said Craig Sap, Chairperson of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and California State Parks Angeles District Superintendent. “For now, and forever this land will greet residents and visitors alike with its natural beauty.” The Conservancy contributed a total of more than \$9.8 million to all three phases of the acquisition with a combination of grants from Propositions 40, 50,

84, 1 and 68. The new parkland adds to more than 500 contiguous acres of protected open space owned by the Conservancy and the MRCA in this area.

The new parkland contains a section of Medea Creek, a tributary of Malibu Creek, which supports a population of western pond turtles, a sensitive species. It also features the largest known population of the federally-listed annual wildflower *Lyon's pentachaeta*. The property includes broad swaths of coast live oak woodland, chaparral, purple sage scrub, native and annual grassland, and valley oak savannah. Many rock outcroppings contain unique microsites for plants and animals. The new parkland supports mountain lion, mule deer, American badger, bobcat, gray fox, ring-tailed cat, long-tailed weasel, California quail, and dozens of reptile species.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl was an early and key supporter of the project, granting \$2.5 million in Los Angeles County Proposition A funds towards the acquisition of Phase I. "I am very happy to support this significant expansion of open space at Triangle Ranch because it ensures that this wild and beautiful habitat will be available for the people and animals of LA County to enjoy for generations to come," said LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl.

The City of Agoura Hills, which abuts the new parkland, contributed \$800,000 in city funds towards the acquisition of Phase 2 of the project. "The residents of the City of Agoura Hills and unincorporated Los Angeles are thrilled that Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Triangle Ranch purchase have now closed and the property will forever be in the hands of the MRCA," said Agoura Hills Councilmember Illece Buckley Weber, who represents the city on the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Advisory Committee. "A big thank you to all of the stewards of the environment who made it possible for the City of Agoura Hills to remain the Gateway to the Santa Monica Mountains in perpetuity."

Negotiations are pending for the final, fourth phase of the project, which includes 150 additional acres. This is anticipated to be completed sometime in 2019.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is a local government public entity dedicated to the preservation and management of open space and parkland, watershed lands, trails, and wildlife habitat. The MRCA works in cooperation with other government partners to acquire parkland, participate in vital planning processes, provide natural resources and scientific expertise, and complete major park improvement projects. The MRCA manages and provides ranger services and fire protection for almost 75,000 acres of parkland that it owns and that are owned by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy or other agencies and provides comprehensive education and interpretation and leadership programs for youth. It is one of the lead agencies providing for the revitalization of the Los Angeles River.



"Gateway to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area"

March 4, 2020

Senator Henry Stern
State Capitol, Room 5080
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assembly Member Richard Bloom
P. O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249

RE: Triangle Ranch

Dear Senator Stern and Assembly Member Bloom:

On behalf of the City of Agoura Hills, the Gateway to the Santa Monica Mountains, we support your request for a General Fund budget item of \$14,500,000 to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for capital outlay and local assistance for the Triangle Ranch project. This is a critical open space purchase for the following reasons:

1. Wildlife Connectivity - it is undisputed that many species of animals live and roam throughout the Santa Monica Mountains, most importantly, mountain lions. The National Park Service has been studying the behavior and ecology of mountain lions for quite some time. Over the years, researchers have collared and monitored more than 75 mountain lions in and around the Santa Monica Mountains. The proposed Triangle Ranch project of more than 25 large single family dwellings, at the base of Ladyface Mountain, will significantly decrease the connectivity in the mountains thereby blocking the movement of the mountain lions. The long term survival of the mountain lion population is dependent on their ability to move between regions, to ensure genetic diversity and overall health of the population. As we recently witnessed, the blockage of movement, forces the mountain lion into developed areas which lead to depredation permits and killings of this important wildlife.

Moreover, as you are aware, for many years, the City of Agoura Hills has been extremely concerned about habitat connections or linkages in this area and through Resolutions in 1991, 1996 and again in 2014, the City Councils have committed themselves to protecting such linkages. It is undisputed that there are at least three wildlife corridors under Kanan Road connecting the subject Triangle Ranch parcel to the east side of Kanan Road which leads to the proposed green infrastructure - the Wildlife Crossing at Liberty Canyon, a safe and sustainable passage for wildlife across US 101, an 8 lane freeway that runs east and west through Agoura Hills.

Senator Stern and Assembly Member Richard Bloom

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2. Kanan Road - County Route N9, also known as Kanan - Dume Road, is one of the main connectors from US 101 to SR-1 through the Santa Monica Mountains. It passes through a portion of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and is a major commuting route. Kanan Road is the Triangle Ranch project's sole access to both Pacific Coast Highway and to US 101. The homes already approved by the County of Los Angeles will be in the heart of a Disaster Route.

Kanan Road is designated by Los Angeles County as a Disaster Route. Los Angeles County GIS Data Portal states:

“Disaster Routes play a primary role in disaster response and recovery. During a disaster and immediately following, Disaster Routes are used to transport emergency personnel, equipment, and supplies into an affected area in order to save lives, protect property, and minimize impact to the environment. During a disaster, Disaster Routes have priority for clearing, repairing and restoration over other roads.”

In addition to Kanan Road serving as a Disaster Route, it also serves as an evacuation route. The Triangle Ranch project is in a very high fire severity zone, adjacent to, and surrounded by, equestrian properties within the Santa Monica Mountains. This important evacuation route is already impacted by developments in the area and new development may impact efforts to evacuate horses and other livestock.

3. Lastly, there are three perennial blue line streams in the area, all of which run into the Malibu Creek Watershed, which in turn, run into the Pacific Ocean. The significant grading and development of Triangle Ranch will directly impact two of the blue line streams.

Again, we thank you for your leadership on this budget request of \$14.5 million to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for the purchase of Triangle Ranch to be maintained as open space.

Very truly yours,



Illece Buckley Weber
Mayor, City of Agoura Hills

cc: Senator Stern District Office
Assembly Member Bloom District Office
Governor Gavin Newsom
Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for
Natural Resources