

**DATE:** November 18, 2019

**TO:** RMC Governing Board

**FROM:** Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

**SUBJECT:** Item 22: Consideration of a resolution approving a Proposition 1 grant to the Watershed Conservation Authority for the Implementation of the LA River Ranger Program Reach Zones (RMC 19005)

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**PROGRAM AREA:** River and Tributary Parkways

**PROJECT TYPE:** Implementation

**JURISDICTION:** County of Los Angeles

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Marybeth Vergara

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the RMC Board approve a Proposition 1 grant in the amount of \$250,000 to the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) for the Implementation of the LA River Ranger Program Reach Zones (RMC 19005).

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Exhibit A – Funding Request Letter  
 Exhibit B – Budget  
 Exhibit C – Task List and Timeline

The Implementation of the LA River Ranger Program Reach Zones will facilitate coordination between Los Angeles River and tributary-adjacent governments to develop a river ranger pilot program. As well as developing interpretive programming, recreation and education programs and providing on-going public engagement to let river-adjacent communities know that the pilot is coming and gauge overall public views and evaluation of the program.

State funding has been identified to implement an initial two-year seasonal River Ranger pilot program rollout starting this summer 2020 along one or more reaches of the Lower LA River. In support of this objective, this funding for the River Ranger Pilot Program Development Project will ensure the successful launch of the pilot through the development and execution of participating Agency agreements, development of program and educational materials, and provide on-going public engagement and prepare a post-program evaluation tool and summarize lessons learned.

The pilot program rollout will be done in coordination with the RMC, WCA and the MRCA to identify the exact location(s) for the REACH zones and program partners. This will include coordination with each of the cities involved with the zones, police agencies that will participate (LA County Sheriff or local police departments), regional entities including the LA County Parks and Recreation Department, non-profit organizations, schools near the Lower LA River and the general public.

Currently, work is being done to establish next steps to rollout the River Ranger Program and the establishment of REACH (River, Education, Adventure, Community, and Habitat) Zones. These will be 3-4 mile stretches along the River, including tributaries, with specific aspects that will lend itself to a highly visible location for River Rangers including access to the River, proximity to a publicly accessible park, trails and open space. The establishment of a REACH Zone will create River appreciation, the benefits rippling out into surrounding communities and revitalization efforts. The Plan identifies criteria for the REACH Zones as well as factors to consider when locating these zones.

**BACKGROUND:** The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) established an agreement to implement Assembly Bill 1558 (AB 1558), also known as the River Ranger Bill, introduced by Assembly member Cristina Garcia (AD 58). The bill required both Conservancies to collaborate with multiple state and local agencies to develop a river ranger program to provide a network of river rangers along the entire 51-mile Los Angeles River and its tributaries. The Conservancies agreed to implement AB 1558 with support from their JPAs – WCA and MRCA. MRCA facilitated the completion of Phase 1 – Visioning and Framework, which included development of vision, goals, objectives, and framework for a river ranger program which was finalized in June 2018. Senate Bill 1126 (SB 1126) introduced by State Senator Anthony J. Portantino (SD 25) and signed by Governor Brown on September 28, 2018 extended the time frame of AB 1558 to March 30, 2019 to allow for WCA to facilitate the completion of Phase 2 of the report.

On October 15, 2018, WCA Board approved resolution 2018-23 to accept a \$250,000 grant from the RMC (RMC 18005) to complete the River Ranger Program Establishment Plan. Phase 2 included recommendations for a governance structure, identification of funding sources to sustain a river ranger network, and a pilot program implementation strategy. WCA, working with our MRCA partners, engaged agency stakeholders while community-based organizations conducted targeted public outreach throughout the study area to inform the final plan. The final plan was submitted to the State Legislature in May 2019 for consideration to fund the following three-tiered pilot River Ranger program:

1. Enhance Public safety, resource management and general maintenance utilizing Sworn Peace Officer Rangers.
2. Engage river adjacent communities through interpretation and recreation opportunities administered by program staff & contracted partners.
3. Employ Conservation Corps Youth and trainees to become River Stewards providing maintenance services and supporting naturalist and outreach programs.

**FISCAL INFORMATION:** This grant awards to the Watershed Conservation Authority a total amount of \$250,000 in Proposition 1 funds.

Funding for this project is allocated from the following:

Proposition 1, Chapter 188, Statutes of 2014  
Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 allocations, Chapter 6 under statute:

79735 (a) of the funds authorized by Section 79730, one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) shall be available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for projects to protect and enhance an urban creek, as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 7048, and its tributaries pursuant to Division 22.8 (commencing with Section 79508....

Of this amount, \$13,000,000 is for planning and implementation of projects approved jointly by both Conservancies. The proposed grant is to be funded from these joint funds.

### **LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY AND RMC ADOPTED POLICIES/AUTHORITIES:**

Public Resources Code Division 22.8 provides in part that:

Section 32602: There is in the Resources Agency, the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, which is created as a state agency for the following purposes:

- (a) To acquire and manage public lands within the Lower Los Angeles River and San Gabriel River watersheds, and to provide open-space, low-impact recreational and educational uses, water conservation, watershed improvement, wildlife and habitat restoration and protection, and watershed improvement within the territory.
- (b) To preserve the San Gabriel River and the Lower Los Angeles River consistent with existing and adopted river and flood control projects for the protection of life and property.
- (c) To acquire open-space lands within the territory of the conservancy.

Section 32604: The conservancy shall do all of the following:

- (a) Establish policies and priorities for the conservancy regarding the San Gabriel River and the Lower Los Angeles River, and their watersheds, and conduct any necessary planning activities, in accordance with the purposes set forth in Section 32602.
- (b) Approve conservancy funded projects that advance the policies and priorities set forth in Section 32602.
- (d) To provide for the public's enjoyment and enhancement of recreational and educational experiences on public lands in the San Gabriel Watershed and Lower Los Angeles River, and the San Gabriel Mountains in a manner consistent with the protection of lands and resources in those watersheds.

Section 32614: The conservancy may do all of the following:

- (b) Enter into contracts with any public agency, private entity, or person necessary for the proper discharge of the conservancy's duties, and enter into a joint powers agreement with a public agency, in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Section 32602.
- (e) Enter into any other agreement with any public agency, private entity, or person necessary for the proper discharge of the conservancy's duties for the purposes set forth in Section 32602.
- (f) Recruit and coordinate volunteers and experts to conduct interpretive and recreational programs and assist with construction projects and the maintenance of parkway facilities.

Further, Section 32614 provides that: The conservancy may do all of the following:

- (g) Undertake, within the territory, site improvement projects, regulate public access, and revegetate and otherwise rehabilitate degraded areas, in consultation with any other public agency with appropriate jurisdiction and expertise, in accordance with the purposes set forth in Section 32602. The conservancy may also, within the territory,

upgrade deteriorating facilities and construct new facilities as needed for outdoor recreation, nature appreciation and interpretation, and natural resources protection. The conservancy may undertake those projects by itself or in conjunction with another local agency; however, the conservancy shall provide overall coordination of those projects by setting priorities for the projects and by ensuring a uniform approach to projects. The conservancy may undertake those projects with prior notification to the legislative body of the local agency that has jurisdiction in the area in which the conservancy proposes to undertake that activity.

Section 32614.5:

- (a) The conservancy may award grants to local public agencies, state agencies, federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations for the purposes of this division.
- (b) Grants to nonprofit organizations for the acquisition of real property or interests in real property shall be subject to all of the following conditions:
  - (1) The purchase price of any interest in land acquired by the nonprofit organization may not exceed fair market value as established by an appraisal approved by the conservancy.
  - (2) The conservancy approves the terms under which the interest in land is acquired.
  - (3) The interest in land acquired pursuant to a grant from the conservancy may not be used as security for any debt incurred by the nonprofit organization unless the conservancy approves the transaction.
  - (4) The transfer of land acquired pursuant to a grant shall be subject to the approval of the conservancy and the execution of an agreement between the conservancy and the transferee sufficient to protect the interests of the state.
  - (5) The state shall have a right of entry and power of termination in and over all interests in real property acquired with state funds, which may be exercised if any essential term or condition of the grant is violated.
  - (6) If the existence of the nonprofit organization is terminated for any reason, title to all interest in real property acquired with state funds shall immediately vest in the state, except that, prior to that termination, another public agency or nonprofit organization may receive title to all or a portion of that interest in real property, by recording its acceptance of title, together with the conservancy's approval, in writing.
- (c) Any deed or other instrument of conveyance whereby real property is acquired by a nonprofit organization pursuant to this section shall be recorded and shall set forth the executor interest or right of entry on the part of the state.



November 12, 2019

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

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**EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**Mark Stanley**

Dear Mr. Stanley,

The Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) respectfully requests your consideration to provide Proposition 1 grant funds, not to exceed \$250,000, for the River Ranger Pilot Program Development Project. (Exhibit A: Budget; Exhibit B: Timeline)

#### Project Summary

The River Ranger Pilot Program Development Project is part of the implementation stage of the River Ranger Program Establishment Plan, which provided visions, goals, and frameworks for a potential river ranger program on the Los Angeles River and its tributaries.

The River Ranger Pilot Program Development Project will facilitate coordination between Los Angeles River and tributary-adjacent governments to develop a river ranger pilot program. In addition, the project will develop potential programming, such as educational programs. The project will ensure that river-adjacent communities know that the pilot is coming to their communities through on-going public engagement and will gauge overall public views of the pilot.

As a two-year grant, the project will consist of two pilots taking place Summer 2020 and Summer 2021, which will allow for the development and evaluation of two distinct pilot programs. Lessons learned in the Summer 2020 pilot will be applied to the Summer 2021 pilot, both pilot programs will be evaluated.

The specific tasks, detailed below, include project management, agency agreements for the river rangers, program development, community outreach, and evaluation of the river ranger program.

#### Tasks and Deliverables

The budget and timeline are provided as Exhibits A and B, respectively, and the specific tasks and deliverables are provided in detail below:

*Task 1: Project Management*

WCA will provide project and grant management for the life of the grant, including, but not limited to, administrative oversight and financial accounting.

Deliverables: Invoice packages and quarterly reports.

*Task 2: Agency Partnerships*

*Partnerships between WCA, RMC, and river-adjacent governments and agencies are crucial for the pilot project, as those government entities have control over river rights-of-way. Those local, and regional, agencies must be on-board with the river ranger program and must establish formal agreements with the RMC to pursue the program.*

WCA will facilitate meetings between the RMC and river-adjacent agencies, such as cities, police agencies that will participate (LA County Sheriff or local police departments), regional entities including the Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department, non-profit organizations, schools near the Lower Los Angeles River, and the general public. The purpose of the meetings will be to identify exact locations along the river for the pilot programs, which agencies will take responsibility on pilot program elements such as public safety and maintenance, and drafting and finalizing agency agreements on the responsibilities and structure of the pilot programs.

Deliverables: Meeting agendas and agency agreements.

*Task 3: Program Development*

*The opportunity to develop potential programming, such as active recreation or river and water education, as a part of the river ranger program presents itself as part of the pilot program. Providing programming will ensure that the river is used by park-poor river-adjacent communities.*

WCA will provide due-diligence on potential programming, which may include pilots of the programming itself.

Deliverable: Programming Report, detailing potential programs and outcome of the pilot programs.

*Task 4: Public and Stakeholder Outreach*

*Public acceptance of the river ranger program rests on how much they know about the program itself and how it can help them safely access the river, outreach and letting the public know that the river rangers are coming will provide for a program that the public trusts.*

WCA will provide outreach, which may include partnering with local organizations for robust and on-going outreach to inform river-adjacent communities about the river ranger pilot. Outreach will include, but not be limited to, door-to-door engagement, pop-ups, and learning opportunity events.

Deliverables: Flyers, email lists and newsletters, correspondence with river-adjacent communities.

*Task 5: Program Evaluation Development*

*Evaluating how and what the river ranger program did well and what it could add or improve upon at the end of the pilot period will provide for a holistic evaluation that can add to the program if it's made permanent.*

WCA will develop evaluation materials, including, but not limited to, public safety perception, crime statistics, cleanliness, and overall impact of the rangers.

Deliverables: Evaluation materials, and preliminary evaluation materials.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this request or the attached budget and timeline, please contact Bryan Moller, Project Manager at [bmoller@wca.ca.gov](mailto:bmoller@wca.ca.gov).

Very best,

Herlinda Chico  
WCA Governing Board Chair

River Ranger Program Establishment Plan Budget	
Task	Task Budget
<b>Task 1:</b> Project Management	\$25,000
<b>Task 2:</b> Agency Agreements	\$45,000
<b>Task 3:</b> Program Development	\$75,000
<b>Task 4:</b> Public and Stakeholder Outreach	\$50,000
<b>Task 5:</b> Program Evaluation Development	\$30,000
<b>Indirect Costs (10%)</b>	\$25,000
Total Budget	\$250,000

River Ranger Pilot Program Implementation								
Timeline								
Tasks & Timeline	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4
<b>Task 1:</b> Project Management								
<b>Task 2:</b> Agency Agreements								
<b>Task 3:</b> Program Development								
<b>Task 4:</b> Public and Stakeholder Outreach								
<b>Task 5:</b> Program Evaluation Development								

November 18, 2019 – Item 22

RESOLUTION 2019-44

RESOLUTION OF THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY (RMC) APPROVING A PROPOSITION 1 GRANT TO THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LA RIVER RANGER PROGRAM REACH ZONES (RMC19005)

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 Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (“Proposition 1”) and

WHEREAS, the State of California has authorized an expenditure of funds from Proposition 1, the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 to the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy for capital outlay and local assistance multi-benefit grants for ecosystem and watershed protection and restoration projects; 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, The proposed project meets an objective of the California Water Action Plan for more reliable water supplies, restoration of important species and habitat, more resilient and sustainably managed water infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, The proposed project meets the goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions consistent with AB 32; and

WHEREAS, The proposed project is consistent with the San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan; and

WHEREAS, The proposed project protects land and water resources; and

WHEREAS, The grantee has requested a grant from Proposition 1, Section 79731 (f) or Section 79735 (a) of the Water 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 Proposition 1 RMC Grant Program is consistent with the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 ("Proposition 1"), which provides funds for the RMC grant program.
- 3 FINDS the proposed project meets at least one of the purposes of Proposition 1.
- 4 FINDS the proposed project meets at least one of the three objectives of the California Water Action Plan.
- 5 FINDS that the proposed action is consistent with the San Gabriel and Lower San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan as adopted by the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy;
- 6 FINDS that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
- 7 ADOPTS the staff report dated November 18, 2019.
- 8 AUTHORIZES a grant of Proposition 1 funds in the amount of \$250,000 to the Watershed Conservation Authority for the Implementation of the LA River Ranger Program Reach Zones (RMC 19005)

~ End of Resolution ~

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the  
SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS  
CONSERVANCY on November 18, 2019.

Motion \_\_\_\_\_ Second: \_\_\_\_\_

Ayes: \_\_\_\_\_ Nays: \_\_\_\_\_ Abstentions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Frank Colonna, Chair

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
David Edsall, Jr.  
Deputy Attorney General