

**DATE:** April 6, 2020

**TO:** RMC Governing Board

**FROM:** Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

**SUBJECT:** Item 17: Consideration of a resolution to accept local assistance funds from Natural Resources Agency for Lower Los Angeles River restoration projects

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**PROGRAM AREA:** Lower Los Angeles River and Tributaries

**PROJECT TYPE:** Implementation

**JURISDICTION:** Lower Los Angeles River Corridor

**PROJECT MANAGER:** Salian Garcia

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy Governing Board approves a resolution to accept local assistance funds from Natural Resources Agency for Lower Los Angeles River restoration projects.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Exhibit A: Lower LA River Revitalization Plan – Rio Hondo Confluence Signature Project  
 Exhibit B: Site Plan  
 Exhibit C: Los Angeles County Public Works Budget Appropriation Proposal

As specified in the Budget Act of 2017, of ten million dollars appropriated for the Los Angeles County River Restoration Projects, seven million dollars (\$7,000,000.00) were appropriated for the multijurisdictional effort in developing projects along the lower Los Angeles River currently targeted for enhancement within the confluence area of the Rio Hondo River. These projects include the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Cultural Center and the relocation of Los Angeles Flood Control District maintenance yard at 5525 E Imperial Highway, within the City of South Gate; and the implementation of a River Ranger pilot program for the Rio Hondo Confluence area; and any remaining funds be used towards design and implementation of enhancements at the confluence area.

The provision of this appropriation from California Natural Resources Agency, the fund recipient, is available for encumbrance or expenditure through June 30, 2022. Unlike previous general and local assistance appropriations, the funding could not be directly moved to the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC). Subsequently, the RMC will accept the general fund allocation for local assistance in the form of a grant or other encumbering instrument. This funding will be expended on development and implementation, including but not limited to feasibility studies, concept and schematic design, outreach activities, environmental assessments, contract management, construction, maintenance, programming and security.

**BACKGROUND:** Planning for the Lower Los Angeles River was initiated by passage of AB 530, which established the Lower Los Angeles River Working Group and completed a

Revitalization Plan. The plan identified several opportunities for urban river enhancements that touch on integration of open space, recreation, housing, active transportation, business development and public safety.

One of the three signature project areas identified in the Lower LA Revitalization Plan (LLARRP) was the Rio Hondo Confluence Area Project—see Exhibit A. Improvements at the Rio Hondo Confluence aim to maximize public use and enjoyment of the river corridor, and include channel modifications, vegetated open space, riverbank terracing, bridge parks, and bike paths.

One of the specific projects identified in the LLARRP was a Community Cultural Center in Southeast Los Angeles. RMC, with the County of Los Angeles, is leading developing of the SELA Cultural Center in the City of South Gate, with other project partners such as LA County Supervisorial Districts, Public Works, Natural Resources Agency, and the Department of Arts and Culture. The Project site is approximately nine and a half (9.5) acres located south of Imperial Highway and adjacent to the Los Angeles River (see Exhibit B). The site is currently owned and operated by the County of Los Angeles Public Works' Flood Control District and being used as a service yard. The Project is envisioned as a multi-arts facility consisting of a visual arts and music institution as well as spaces that could potentially incorporate other local cultural and community organizations. Also planned for the Project is site programming featuring outdoor performance space, trails, and play areas. The Project is anticipated to include approximately 95,000 square feet of building programming and 500,000 square feet of site programming.

Additionally, in support of diverse, vibrant spaces along and connected to the Lower LA River, the LLARRP recommended development of a River Ranger Program to strengthen real and perceived public safety, and support education, job training, and stewardship and naturalist programs. A River Ranger Program Establishment Plan was completed in May 2019. Funding could be used to develop a pilot implementation of a River Ranger program for Rio Hondo Confluence area. Any remaining funds would be used toward design and implementation of enhancements at the confluence area.

**FISCAL INFORMATION:** The funding will be appropriated to the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy in the form of a grant or other encumbering instrument as provided in the Budget Act of 2017. The funding is available for encumbrance or expenditure through June 30, 2022:

Budget Act of 2017 (Assembly Bill No. 97, Chapter 14)

For local assistance, Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency: Los Angeles County, River Restoration Projects in the amount of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000), and of this amount, allocation to the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy is seven million dollars (\$7,000,000).

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY AND RMC ADOPTED POLICIES/AUTHORITIES:** The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) statute 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.

**LEGEND**

**CHANNEL ENHANCEMENTS**

- 1 Modified Low-Flow Channel
- 2 Vegetated Terraces
- 3 River Crossing
- 4 Access Ramp

**PARK ENHANCEMENTS**

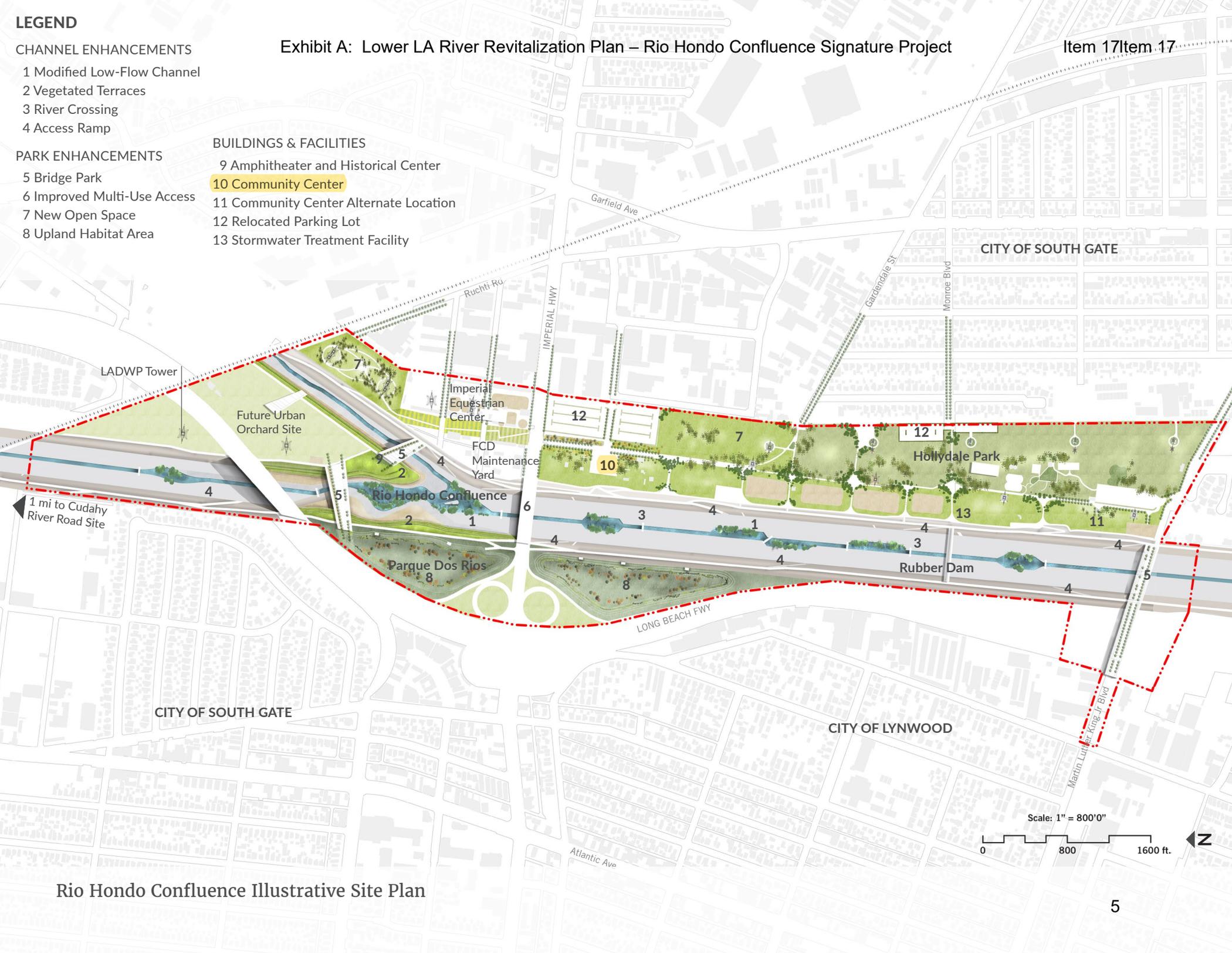
- 5 Bridge Park
- 6 Improved Multi-Use Access
- 7 New Open Space
- 8 Upland Habitat Area

**BUILDINGS & FACILITIES**

- 9 Amphitheater and Historical Center
- 10 Community Center
- 11 Community Center Alternate Location
- 12 Relocated Parking Lot
- 13 Stormwater Treatment Facility

**Exhibit A: Lower LA River Revitalization Plan – Rio Hondo Confluence Signature Project**

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Rio Hondo Confluence Illustrative Site Plan

Scale: 1" = 800'0"





**<Project Site  
is development  
of 9.5 acre site  
on south side of  
Imperial Hwy**



MARK PESTRELLA, Director

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

900 SOUTH FREMONT AVENUE  
ALHAMBRA, CALIFORNIA 91803-1331  
Telephone: (626) 458-5100  
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ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:  
P.O. BOX 1460  
ALHAMBRA, CALIFORNIA 91802-1460

January 6, 2020

IN REPLY PLEASE  
REFER TO FILE: **SWP-3**

Ms. Polly Escovedo  
California Natural Resources Agency  
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Escovedo:

### **LOS ANGELES COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS RIVER RESTORATION PROJECTS BUDGET APPROPRIATION PROPOSAL OF RECOMMENDED PROJECTS**

The 2017-18 State Budget appropriated \$10 million to the Natural Resources Agency for Los Angeles County River Restoration Projects. As the intended beneficiary of this appropriation, and as you suggested, we have prepared this proposal for how we would spend this appropriated funding. Los Angeles County Public Works recommends the following two efforts for the identified funding: Puente Creek Greenway Improvement Project, and Rio Hondo Confluence Area Improvements. Both efforts seek to implement transformative change to publicly-owned space by providing public access, active transportation, recreational amenities, and/or other beneficial uses along flood control infrastructure and right of way.

Public Works has been working with your agency over the past several months to allocate \$3 million toward the Puente Creek Greenway Improvement Project, which includes a 2-mile paved multiuse trail along with landscaping, new access gates, decorative fencing, access ramps, and wayfinding signage. We look forward to continuing the required steps to enter into an agreement to fund the project.

Public Works is proposing that the remaining \$7 million of the general fund allocation be applied toward Rio Hondo Confluence Area Improvements. As identified in the April 2018, Lower Los Angeles River Revitalization Plan improvements at the Rio Hondo Confluence aim to maximize public use and enjoyment of the river corridor, and include channel modifications, vegetated open space, river bank terracing, bridge parks, and bike paths. Additionally, the Southeast Los Angeles (SELA) Cultural Center is being developed by the Lower Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers and Mountains Conservatory and will provide educational and recreational opportunities for the surrounding communities as well as the Los Angeles region. The proposed location of

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the SELA Cultural Center is currently occupied by a Los Angeles County Flood Control District maintenance yard, which would need to be relocated before the property could be considered excess property and sold for an alternate use.

We propose to use the remaining \$7 million towards the District maintenance yard relocation, the implementation of a River Rangers pilot program for the Rio Hondo Confluence area, and any remaining funds would be used toward design and implementation of enhancements at the confluence area.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Daniel Sharp at (626) 458-7153 or [dsharp@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:dsharp@pw.lacounty.gov).

Very truly yours,

MARK PESTRELLA  
Director of Public Works

DANIEL J. LAFFERTY  
Deputy Director

RJ:bm

P:\swppub\Secretarial\2019\Letters\20191223 CRN Letter River Restoration Funding.2

April 6, 2020 – Item 17

RESOLUTION 2020-19

RESOLUTION OF THE SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES  
RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY (RMC) APPROVING  
ACCEPTANCE OF LOCAL ASSISTANCE FUNDS FROM THE  
NATURAL RESOURCES AGENCY FOR LOWER LOS ANGELES  
RIVER RESTORATION PROJECTS

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 Legislature and Governor of the State of California have approved a grant for the Lower Los Angeles River Restoration project, Southeast Los Angeles Cultural Center and other Rio Hondo Confluence Area Projects; and

WHEREAS, the California Natural Resources Agency has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of the project, setting up necessary procedures; and

WHEREAS, said procedures established by the California Natural Resources Agency require the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) to certify by resolution the approval of application and/or acceptance of local assistance funds; and

WHEREAS, the RMC will enter into an agreement with the State of California/California Natural Resources Agency for the Southeast Los Angeles Cultural Center and Rio Hondo Projects; 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 actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act.
- 3 ADOPTS the staff report dated April 6, 2020.
- 4 APPROVES the acceptance of general fund allocation for local assistance in the amount of \$7,000,000 for the Southeast Los Angeles Cultural Center Project.
- 5 AUTHORIZES the Executive Officer to conduct all negotiations, execute, and submit all documents including, but not limited to agreements, payment requests, and so on, which may be necessary for the completion of the aforementioned Project.

~ End of Resolution ~

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the  
SAN GABRIEL AND LOWER LOS ANGELES RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS  
CONSERVANCY on April 6, 2020.

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

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

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

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Edsall  
Deputy Attorney General