

**DATE:** January 28, 2008

**TO:** RMC Governing Board

**FROM:** Belinda V. Faustinos, Executive Officer

**SUBJECT:** Item 8E Review of grant program Step 1 applications and consideration of resolution approving preliminary staff recommendations for Tier 1 status

**PROGRAM AREA:** All

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the RMC approve the preliminary staff recommendations for Tier 1 status

**BACKGROUND:** On September 24, 2007 the RMC approved grant program guidelines which provided for Step 1 project applications to be submitted for funding consideration. The timeline shown below is a summary of the schedule for action on the grant program.

<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Action</b>
September 24, 2007	Approval of Grant Program Guidelines
October 1, 2007	Release Grant Program Guidelines
October 22, 2007	Grant Program Workshop
November 21, 2007	Step 1 Applications Due
November 21, 2007 – January 11, 2008	Staff review of Step 1 Applications
January 18, 2008	Notice of Tier Status
January 28, 2008	Board Review of Preliminary Ranking Recommendations & Identification of Target Areas
<del>March 24, 2007</del> June 23, 2007	First Possible Grant Award Recommendation for Board Consideration - Tier 1 Projects
Ongoing - 4 <sup>th</sup> Monday of Each Month	Consideration of Funding Recommendations

Under consideration for the Board's action will be to revise the grant schedule so that the anticipated date for approval of funding recommendations will be June 23, 2007 in order to give the Tier 1 Step 2 applicants sufficient time to submit their documents. Staff will continue to use the urgency criteria to address any time sensitive projects until that time.

RMC received 239 Step 1 applications on November 21, 2007. The applications sub totals for each of the program areas is as follows:

Mountains, Hills, Foothills	49	20%
Rivers/Tributaries	103	43%
Urban Lands	87	36%

Consistent with prior years the percent of Rivers/Tributaries project applications is the largest program area for this grant round. However, there has been a marked increase in the number of applications in the Urban Lands program. It is also important to note that many of the

Rivers/Tributaries projects are within the urban landscape such as the Emerald Necklace area and Compton Creek. The distribution of Step 1 projects bodes very well for increasing our project delivery to urban areas. Given our geographic area the percent distribution between the three programs seems appropriate, particularly as the Angeles Forest is more than 75% of the Mountains, Hills, Foothills area. Since more than 90% of the Angeles Forest is protected open space the percentage of Mountains, Hills, Foothills projects is consistent with the potential acquisition opportunities.

Staff also analyzed the distribution of project applications by COG area:

<b>COG</b>	<b>Number</b>
Gateway	75
San Gabriel Valley	129
Orange County League of Cities	21
North Facing Slope/West SG Mnts/Upper Santa Clara River	11
Territory-wide	3

We continue to have a very low showing in project applications from our ten Orange County cities. In fact only three cities submitted applications: Anaheim, Brea and Los Alamitos. Staff expects to improve on this in the coming years through our efforts in working with the cities through the Coyote Creek Watershed Plan implementation process. In the Los Angeles County area 24 cities did not submit a project for consideration and it was a fairly even split between Gateway and San Gabriel Valley cities. The cities that did not submit included: Baldwin Park, Bell, Bell Gardens, Bradbury, Commerce, Cudahy, Hawaiian Gardens, Industry, Irwindale, La Habra Heights, La Mirada, La Puente, Los Angeles, Monterey Park, Norwalk, San Dimas, Santa Fe Springs, South Pasadena, Temple City, Vernon, Walnut and West Covina. In the North Slope area only the City of Santa Clarita submitted projects for consideration.

A summary of the applicant entities is as follows:

Cities	96
LA County Public Works	7
LA County Parks & Recreation	7
Non Profits	73
US Forest Service	13
Watershed Conservation Authority	21
Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority	5
Others	16

Some of the entities that submitted several project applications (three or more) are: Cities of Azusa, Bellflower, Cerritos, Compton, Duarte, El Monte, Pasadena, Paramount, Rosemead, South El Monte and Whittier. Among the non-profit entities the following organizations submitted more than three applications: Amigos de los Rios, California Resource Connection, Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, Glendora Community Conservancy, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy, and Save Our Community.

The program area maps that will be distributed at the meeting will show that a significant element of analyzing both the Step 2 applications and "Target Areas" will be to identify the highest priorities in those cities/communities that have submitted a significant number of closely located projects. While it is important to focus on projects that are most qualified another

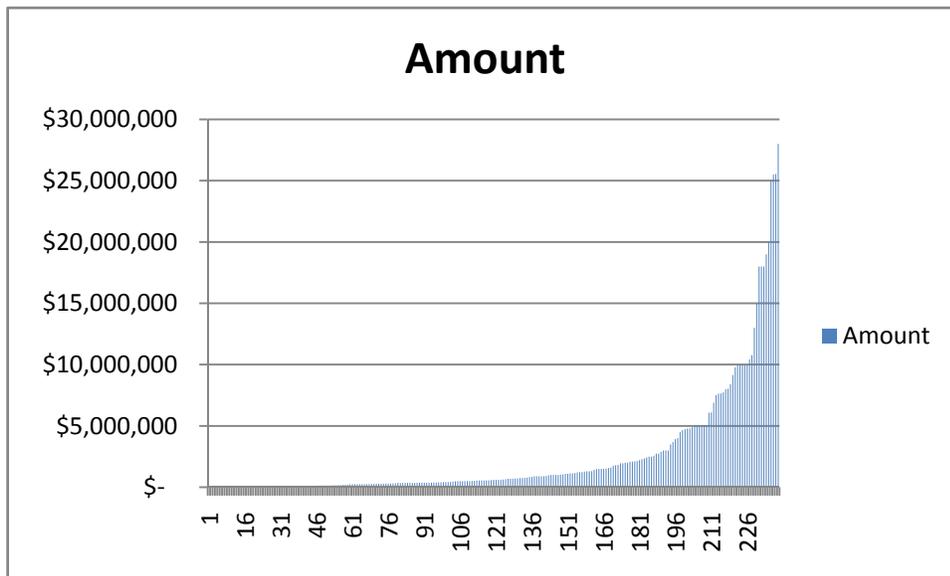
consideration must be the ultimate equitability of distributing our funds within the territory. Further, staff will determine whether the applicant determined program area identified for these projects is appropriate given that the point data appears to specify a different program area.

The project types that were submitted for consideration are as follows:

Acquisition	162
Development of Parks	126
Habitat Restoration	99

Since one of the primary targets of this grant program was to identify opportunities for acquiring new parkland the fact that approximately 68% of the applications are for the acquisition of new parkland is particularly significant. Projects which include development of new parkland comprised 53% of the total applications while habitat restoration projects only comprise 42% of the total applications submitted.

The total amount applied for under this program is \$587,474,324. This represents more than 10 times the total amount of funding available to the RMC over the next four years, \$51 million. As the chart below shows approximately 39 of the applications submitted were for projects of over \$5M each. Approximately 106 applications were for projects under \$1 million. There were also 11 projects which were submitted without a dollar amount pending further development of a budget.



The process used by staff to review the Step 1 applications was to assign them to a Program Manager by Geographic Program Areas (according to the RMC Grant Program Guidelines, Section 1.4, September 2007):

“To facilitate the comparison and aggregation of similar projects and assure that funds are available for a wide range of projects, these grant funds will be applied to three program areas that can be described in geographic terms:

1. Urban Land

2. River/Tributary Parkways
3. Mountains, Hills, and Foothills

Project applicants will be asked to identify which program area their project falls into. Projects cannot qualify for inclusion in more than one program area, as described below:

**Urban Lands**—All land within the developed, urban core of the RMC territory that is NOT within the area identified for River/Tributary Parkways, or within the Mountains, Hills, and Foothills.

**River/Tributary Parkways**—Land falling within one-quarter mile on either side of the centerline of a river or tributary within the RMC territory, but NOT within the Mountains, Hills and Foothills or Urban Land areas.

**Mountains, Hills, and Foothills**—Land lying within the area of a named system of mountains, hills and foothills. More specifically, land lying within the geographic area of the San Gabriel Mountains, the San Jose, San Rafael, Montebello, Puente, Chino, Coyote, or Signal Hills, the San Gabriel foothills, and within the territory of the RMC but NOT within the Urban Lands or River/Tributary Parkways.

Staff then identified which projects met the very specific Tier 1 criteria identified in the grant program guidelines as follows:

*Tier 1 projects are those ready for immediate implementation that meet the following criteria:*

1. *Acquisition/development projects that add NEW acreage for open space or develops NEW areas for recreational uses, and habitat creation/restoration projects that will result in NEW habitat opportunities or preservation of “threatened” habitat, consistent with the planning targets in the Greater Los Angeles County Integrated Regional Water Management Plan*
2. *For acquisition projects, compelling evidence of a willing seller (e.g., via a letter of intent or option)*
3. *For development or restoration projects, compelling evidence that land tenure and all necessary permits are secured*
4. *Verifiable evidence that the project has sufficient funding resources such that the RMC grant will complete the funding package and allow immediate project implementation*

*Tier 2 projects are all projects that do not meet the Tier 1 criteria.*

A full list of the fifteen (15) projects that met the Tier 1 criteria is attached as Exhibit A. There are seven (7) Mountains, Hills, Foothills, three (3) River/Tributary and five (5) Urban Lands projects. Well over half of these projects are acquisitions.

Exhibit B is a list of eleven (11) projects that have been designated as “ineligible.” The table reports on the name of the project, applicant, description, RMC funds requested and program type.

Program Area Overview: Based on the above definitions of Program Areas, the following information provides a summary of the program areas and staff recommendations for Tier 1 and Tier 2.

**River/Tributary Parkways (Exhibit C)** – Land falling within one-quarter mile on either side of the centerline of a river or tributary within the RMC territory, but NOT within the Mountains, Hills and Foothills or Urban Land areas. The number of applications received for this program area: 103; Three applications are ineligible; and three are recommended for Tier 1. The full list of River/Tributary program applications is attached as Exhibit C.

- Summary of applicants: Applicants for this program area included the following:
  - Non-Profits submitted 26 applications. The non-profits included Amigos de los Rios, Friends of Los Angeles River, The Nature Conservancy, Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Altadena Foothills Foundation, Save Our Community, Inc., California Resource Connections, Inc., San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy, League of Women Voters, Claremont Area
  - Agencies submitted 35 applications. The agencies included Angeles National Forest, Watershed Conservation Authority, Los Angeles County Flood Control, Central Basin Municipal Water District, Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority
  - Cities submitted 30 applications. The cities included Azusa, Bellflower, Pico Rivera, Long Beach, Pasadena, El Monte, Duarte, Montebello, Downey, Lakewood, Covina, Maywood, San Gabriel and Norwalk
- Ineligible projects: There were two project proposals which did not meet the funding criteria for use of the funds.
  - Arroyo Seco Invasive Plant Removal Project submitted by Angeles National Forest in the amount of \$257,000 is ineligible because it is outside of the RMC's territory.
  - River School project, submitted by Friends of the Los Angeles River was a request for \$35,000 to conduct classroom outreach and field trips to the LA River and its tributaries, including water testing and community clean ups. Because the educational program is not linked directly to a specific project, it is not eligible.
  - Wrigley Heights North Acquisition, submitted by City of Long Beach was a request for \$18,000,000 to acquire an 18.6 acre existing golf driving range, for continued operation by the City.
- Three projects are recommended for Tier 1 (see spreadsheet):
  - Big Tujunga Dam Restoration
  - Arrastre Canyon Acquisition
  - West San Gabriel River Walk
- Recommendations for Tier 2:

The balance of the eligible projects are recommended for Tier 2

**Mountains, Hills, and Foothills (Exhibit D)** – Land lying within the area of a named system of mountains, hills and foothills. More specifically, land lying within the geographic area of the San Gabriel Mountains, the San Jose, San Rafael, Montebello, Puente, Chino, Coyote, or Signal Hills, the San Gabriel foothills, and within the territory of the RMC but NOT within the Urban Lands or River/Tributary Parkways.

- Applicants for this program included the following:
  - Non-Profits submitted 18 project applications. The non-profits included Antelope Valley Conservancy, Glendora Community conservancy, San Gabriel Mountains Regional Conservancy, the Glendora Community conservancy, the La Verne Land Conservancy, Sierra Club Angeles Chapter, Riverside Land Conservancy, The Riverlands Preservation Trust of the Rio San Gabriel (Rio Trust) and the Friends of Coyote Hills.
  - Agencies submitted 21 project applications. The agencies included Three Valleys Municipal Water District, USDA Forest Service, Puente Hills Landfill Native Habitat Preservation Authority, Wildlife Corridor Conservation Authority, Desert and Mountain Conservation Authority, Los Angeles County Flood Control District, Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation.
  - Cities submitted 11 project applications. The cities included Azusa, Diamond Bar, Glendora, La Verne, Monrovia, San Dimas, Santa Clarita, Signal Hill, and Sierra Madre.
- Ineligible projects. There was 1 ineligible project application.
  - Placerita Canyon Open Space Acquisition, submitted by the City of Santa Clarita was a request for 500,000 to help acquire an additional 140 acres of Open Sapce contiguous to Golden Valley Open Space, Placerita Canyon State Park and the City's Greenbelt Buffer Zone. There is only a small portion of this acreage within the RMC Territory.
- Recommendations for Tier 1- Three projects are recommended for Tier 1
  - There are seven project applications recommended for Tier 1,
    - Acquisition Monrovia Hillside Wilderness Preserve (acquisition) ID # 10
    - Development of Milton & Harriet Recreation Area (development) ID #3
    - Wildwood Canyon Preserve Acquisition Project San Dimas (acquisition) ID # 47
    - Soledad Canyon CAPP Acquisitions (acquisition) ID # 4
    - Summitridge Park Southern Trail Development Project (development) ID # 24
    - Sycamore Canyon Trail Phase IV Development Project (development) ID # 25
    - Una Lake Wetlands Acquisition & Restoration (acquisition only) ID # 15
- Recommendations for Tier 2
  - There are 38 recommended for Tier 2, names of projects, summary of details for each application (refer also to spreadsheet)

**Urban Lands (Exhibit E)** – All land within the developed, urban core of the RMC territory that is NOT within the area identified for River/Tributary Parkways, or within the Mountains, Hills, and Foothills.

Number of applications received for this program area: 87

- Applicants for this program area included the following:
  - Non-Profits submitted 21 applications. The non-profits included Amigos de los Rios, Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, The Trust for Public Land, Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Save Our Community, Inc., California Resource Connections, Inc., League of Women Voters, Claremont Area, St. Isidore Center, Watts Neighborhood Council, and the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden.
  - Agencies submitted 16 applications. The agencies included Watershed Conservation Authority, Los Angeles County Flood Control, Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation Department Central Basin Municipal Water District, El Monte City School District.
  - Cities submitted 50 applications. The cities included Azusa, Bellflower, Cerritos, Whittier, Brea, South El Monte, Long Beach, Artesia, Alhambra, Lynwood, Rosemead, Huntington Park, Pomona, Claremont, Maywood, Paramount, and South Gate.
- Ineligible projects: There were seven project proposals which did not meet the funding criteria for use of the funds.
  - Development of Palm Street Linear Park (Excel #167), submitted by the City of Bellflower to develop a passive use park adjacent to an existing pocket park utilizing public land. The project is deemed ineligible because the applicant secured a 10 year lease and bond funds require a 25 year term lease.
  - Development of Palm Station on the Greenway Trail (Excel #166), submitted by the City of Whittier for the design and construction of an educational exhibit highlighting three main architectural styles of early Whittier homes (Victorian, Craftsman, and Spanish eclectic). Project is deemed ineligible because proposed signage does not meet program content requirements.
  - Habitat Authority Mobile Education- Whittier (Excel #180), submitted by the Puente Hills Habitat Authority includes purchase of an environmentally-friendly vehicle to travel to schools and the community for outreach programs consistent with "Coexisting with Wildlife message." Funding request is deemed ineligible because program funding will not pay for vehicle costs.
  - Hazard Stream System Wetland Restoration Project (Excel #181), submitted by North East Trees. The project is located in East Los Angeles; project will restore approximately .5 miles of stream course with several smaller wetlands through removal of railroad gravels and recontouring of the valley floor. Newly restored habitat will become an integral part of Hazard Park through implementation of trails, bridges and observation areas, making the wetland and stream accessible to the public for the enjoyment of nature. Project is deemed ineligible for funding because it is outside of RMC Territory.
  - Liberty Park Racquetball Project (Excel #193), submitted by the City of Cerritos for the renovation of the four-racquetball courts into a large multi-purpose room with one remaining racquetball court to better serve the community with a variety

of programming elements. Project is for active recreation and therefore does not meet program goals for funding.

- St. Isidore Center Acquisition/Restoration (Excel #226) submitted by a committee from the St. Isidore Center for the purchase of former historic church building to convert to non-denominational chapel open to the community. This project is deemed ineligible because bond funds cannot be used for restoration of building that does not meet program goals.
- Canyon Institute Community Service Mobile (Excel #227), submitted by California Resource Connections, Inc. to develop a green resource center, known as "The Canyon Institute" as part of Azusa River Wilderness Park. The grant request includes the purchase of an environmentally friendly vehicle which is not an eligible under the grant program.

- Recommendations for Tier 1:

Five projects are recommended for Tier 1 (see spreadsheet):

#### Four Land Acquisition Projects

- 114<sup>th</sup> Street Park, South LA (acquisition) Excel #247
- Jefferson Park, Pomona (acquisition) Excel #246
- Pine Avenue Park, Maywood (acquisition) Excel #209
- White Avenue Park, Pomona (acquisition) Excel #243

#### One Development Project

- Gibson Mariposa Park, El Monte (development) Excel #173

- Recommendations for Tier 2:

The balance of the eligible projects are recommended for Tier 2 (see spreadsheet)

**LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY AND RMC ADOPTED POLICIES/AUTHORITIES:** Public Resources Code Section 32604 provides in part that 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.
- (c) Approve conservancy funded projects that advance the policies and priorities set forth in Section 32602.