

DATE: April 16, 2020

TO: WCA Governing Board

FROM: Jeremy Munns, Project Manager

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 11: Consideration of a resolution to ratify a grant application to the Regional Parks and Open Space District's Recreation Access Program for the Lower LA River Ranger REACH Zone Program

RECOMMENDATION: That the Watershed Conservation Authority Governing Board ratify the application for grant funding to the Regional Parks and Open Space District's Recreation Access Program for the LA River Ranger REACH Zone Program.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The River Ranger Program is a new program envisioned to promote safe, equitable access and stewardship of the entire 51-mile LA River and its tributaries as an activated and connected greenway that supports ecological, social, and recreational opportunities. As the river is undergoing multiple revitalization efforts and embraced as a community resource, the River Ranger Program will ensure safe, enjoyable and equitable experiences along the LA River and its tributaries by promoting equitable access, recreational and educational opportunities, community engagement, and resource protection along this vital resource.

The River Ranger Program seeks to implement the River Ranger Program Establishment Plan completed in May 2019 (Plan). As outlined in the Plan, the River Ranger program will provide various types of services along the river channel and adjacent green spaces through the principles of 1. Resource Management and Maintenance, 2. Recreation and Interpretation/Educational Programs, 3. Outreach and Engagement, 4. Public Safety, and 5. Administration and Coordination. This will be achieved through, but not be limited to, a tiered staffing approach with Sworn Peace Officer Rangers, River Safety/Maintenance and Interpretive/Recreation Specialists, and River Stewards (At Risk-Youth Corps) that assist with maintenance and interpretation. The goal is to have a unified presence along the river that ensures maintenance and protection of natural resources and accessible features, offers diverse recreational and educational programs that reflect community interests and unique site conditions, and has staff and partners grown from local communities to help redefine the LA River as a safe and inviting community asset.

The Plan recommended implementation of pilot programs in 3-4 mile segments called REACH Zones. Funding would support establishment of a REACH Zone around the confluence of the LA and Rio Hondo Rivers in the cities of South Gate, Downey, and Bell Gardens, which are high-need study areas and contain severely disadvantaged and disadvantaged communities. Discussions with these cities show interest in establishing a REACH Zone between 4-5 miles in length. WCA will also coordinate with MRCA to launch this REACH Zone in the Lower LA River, and another REACH Zone in the Upper LA River.

Grant funds are being identified to help staff the Specialists and River Stewards roles, as well as fund programming (see Exhibit A: Budget). To foster community investment, the WCA will partner with one or two locally established non-profit organizations to develop programming and conduct outreach to the community about the program. WCA also plans to partner with the Conservation Corps to staff maintenance and interpretive roles. By partnering with local groups, the staff of the River Ranger Program can reflect those of the communities it serves and tailor programming to local needs.

BACKGROUND: The Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space District (RPOSD) released a call for projects for its Recreation Access grant program—a program of Measure A—with applications due by February 25, 2020. Funds authorized for the program total \$7.2 Million and grant requests must range between \$50,000 and \$1,850,000. Recreation Access grants are intended to establish or continue building upon established programs to increase the ability of residents to access public lands, park facilities, and park amenities, including education, interpretive services, safety information, transportation, and other activities that increase accessibility for County residents, especially those in High-Need or Very-High-Need Study Areas.

The River Ranger Program was envisioned in response to AB 1558 (C. Garcia), by the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA), and Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), to address river-adjacent communities' limited utilization of the LA River and safety issues regarding access.

The River Ranger Program was developed through a stakeholder and community driven process to ensure the Program serves community-identified needs. Representatives from 22 cities along the Los Angeles River and tributaries, federal, state, and county agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that do work along the River guided overall development of the program framework and components. Fourteen local NGO partners attended 51 community events and collected 3,820 surveys. Participants were asked to rate the importance of specific ranger roles and to provide input on river safety concerns. Participants were also asked about their frequency of visits to the River and invited to provide written comments. Responses from these surveys shaped the services of the Program.

The River Ranger Program presents an opportunity to enhance safe access to recreational opportunities in the LA River for high need communities in a highly urbanized area and increase the ability of County residents to connect to this public resource. Based on cumulative responses to the survey, improving access, connectivity, signage to the River, care for natural resources and safety presence surfaced as the most desired roles for a River Ranger to promote use of the River.

FISCAL INFORMATION: The total amount of grant requested funding is \$1,320,000. If awarded, the WCA's Fiscal Year Capital Budget would be updated to reflect the funds accepted by the Governing Board.

Total Cost:

Total RPOSD Funding:	\$1,320,000.00
Total Other Funding:	\$2,145,000.00
Program Total:	\$3,465,000.00

Program Development

Item Task	Start Date	End Date	RPOSD Funding	Other Funding	Total Funding	Deliverable	Comments
Program Development	02/2020	07/2021	\$0.00	\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00		
Establishing Agreements	02/2020	07/2021	\$0.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00		
			\$0.00	\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00		

Program Year 1

Item Task	Start Date	End Date	RPOSD Funding	Other Funding	Total Funding	Deliverable	Comments
Maintenance and Safety Specialist	05/2020	09/2023	\$200,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$240,000.00	Agreements, paystubs, invoices	Labor, training, and contracted services
River Stewards	05/2020	09/2023	\$170,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$210,000.00	Agreements, paystubs, invoices	Labor, training, and contracted services
Interpretation and Recreation Specialist	05/2020	09/2023	\$200,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$240,000.00	Agreements, paystubs, invoices	Labor, training, and contracted services
Maintenance Materials and Supplies	05/2020	09/2023	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	\$15,000.00	Photos	Portable equipment and tools
Programming Materials & Supplies	06/2020	09/2022	\$15,000.00	\$0.00	\$15,000.00	Photos, Receipts	Portable Equipment (ie. Binoculars)
Uniform and Branding	06/2020	09/2022	\$4,000.00	\$5,000.00	\$9,000.00	Photos	Uniforms, Flyers, Signage
Outreach	03/2020	09/2023	\$30,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$55,000.00	Outreach Materials, meeting notes, summary report	Community and Stakeholder Engagement
WCA Project Management	02/2020	09/2023	\$30,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$45,000.00	Paystubs, invoices	Labor and grant administration
Sworn Peace Officer Rangers	05/2020	09/2023	\$0.00	\$650,000.00	\$650,000.00	Agreements, paystubs, invoices	
Staff Training	05/2020	09/2023	\$0.00	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00		
Start-up Costs	03/2020	03/2022	\$0.00	\$275,000.00	\$275,000.00	Capital Investments	
			\$664,000.00	\$1,140,000.00	\$1,804,000.00		

Program Year 2

Item Task	Start Date	End Date	RPOSD Funding	Other Funding	Total Funding	Deliverable	Comments
Interpretation & Recreation Specialist	05/2020	09/2023	\$200,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$240,000.00	Agreements, paystubs, and invoices	Labor, training, and contracted services
Maintenance and Safety Specialist	05/2020	09/2023	\$200,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$240,000.00	Agreements, paystubs, and invoices	Labor, training, and contracted services
River Stewards	05/2020	09/2023	\$170,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$210,000.00	Agreements, paystubs, and invoices	Labor, training, and contracted services
Maintenance Materials and Supplies	05/2020	09/2023	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	Photos, receipts	Portable Equipment and Tools
Programming Materials	05/2020	09/2023	\$10,000.00	\$0.00	\$10,000.00	Photos, receipts	Portable Equipment (ie. Binoculars)
Uniforms and Branding	05/2020	09/2022	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00	Photos, receipts	Uniforms, flyers, signage
Outreach	03/2020	09/2023	\$30,000.00	\$25,000.00	\$55,000.00	Outreach materials, meeting notes, summary reports	Community & Stakeholder Engagement
WCA Project Management	02/2020	09/2023	\$30,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$40,000.00	Paystubs, Invoices	Labor and Grant Administration
Sworn Peace Officer Rangers	05/2020	09/2023	\$0.00	\$650,000.00	\$650,000.00		
Staff Training	05/2020	05/2023	\$0.00	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00		
			\$652,000.00	\$855,000.00	\$1,507,000.00		

Program Evaluation and Closeout

Item Task	Start Date	End Date	RPOSD Funding	Other Funding	Total Funding	Deliverable	Comments
Program Evaluation	09/2020	09/2023	\$0.00	\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	Annual materials, surveys, data, and summary reports	
Close Out	10/2022	04/2023	\$4,000.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00	Paystubs	Labor
			\$4,000.00	\$30,000.00	\$34,000.00		

April 16, 2020 – Item 11

RESOLUTION 2020-09

RESOLUTION OF THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO RATIFY A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE REGIONAL PARKS AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT'S RECREATION ACCESS PROGRAM FOR THE LOWER LA RIVER RANGER REACH ZONE PROGRAM.

WHEREAS, The Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) has been established as a joint powers agency between the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (RMC) and the Los Angeles County Flood Control District; and

WHEREAS, the WCA has further been established to focus on projects which will provide open space, habitat restoration, and watershed improvement projects in both the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers watershed; and

WHEREAS, this action will ratify a grant application to the Regional Parks and Open Space District (RPOSD) Recreation Access Program for the Lower LA River Ranger REACH Zone Program; and

WHEREAS, the WCA, as Applicant, will enter into a contract with the County for the Lower LA River Ranger REACH Zone Program; and

WHEREAS, the proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act; **NOW**

Therefore be it resolved that the WCA hereby:

1. **FINDS** that this action is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the WCA.
2. **FINDS** that the actions contemplated by this resolution are exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
3. **ADOPTS** the staff report dated April 16, 2020.
4. **RATIFYS** the filing of an Application for grant funds from the RPOSD Recreation Access Program for the Lower LA River Ranger REACH Zone Program; and
5. **APPOINTS** the WCA Executive Officer, to conduct all negotiations, and to execute and submit all documents including, but not limited to applications, agreements, amendments, payment requests and so forth, which may be necessary for the completion of the aforementioned project.

~ End of Resolution ~

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Resolution 2020-09

Motion: _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
On April 16, 2020

Herlinda Chico
Governing Board Chair

ATTEST: _____
David Edsall, Jr.
Deputy Attorney General