

DATE: January 21, 2021

TO: WCA Governing Board

FROM: Jane Tsong, Project Manager

THROUGH: Mark Stanley, Executive Officer

SUBJECT: Item 15: Consideration of a resolution to authorize the negotiation for the acquisition of real property in the San Gabriel River floodplain in Azusa, Assessor Parcel Numbers (AINs) 8684-027-004 and 8684-027-010 from the Gatti Family Trust.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) Governing Board authorize the Executive Officer or designee to negotiate for the acquisition of real property in the San Gabriel River floodplain in Azusa, Assessor Parcel Numbers (AINs) 8684-027-004 and 8684-027-010, from the Gatti Family Trust. WCA negotiator: Mark Stanley.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Acquisition would protect approximately 18 acres along one of the region's most significant water sources—the San Gabriel River, among the last remaining opportunities in Los Angeles County for floodplain habitat restoration and compatible public access on a significant scale. Negotiation for the terms of acquisition is time-sensitive because the site is under strong threat of development.

Situated at a dramatically incised bend of a major regional waterway in the City of Azusa, Rainbow Ranch lands provide one of only remaining opportunities in Los Angeles County for floodplain habitat restoration on a significant scale. Because its topography can accommodate public access without damaging pristine habitat, this land is poised to connect wilderness-hungry urban visitors with the power of nature. Acquisition would protect the County-designated San Gabriel Canyon Significant Ecological Area and pave the way for restoration of habitat for aquatic species on the mainstem of the San Gabriel River. (Exhibit A: Vicinity Map)

BACKGROUND: Rainbow Ranch has been identified as a key area for preservation/restoration in the community-supported Azusa River Wilderness Park Master Plan (ARWP), which calls for restoration of the natural floodplain, trails for public access, and interpretation to support passive recreation compatible with resource management and high integrity habitat. ARWP is called out in the 2006 San Gabriel River Master Plan. The parcel is also called out as a conservation priority in the City of Azusa General Plan and is one of the last privately-owned lands in the San Gabriel Canyon Significant Ecological Area.

Currently the site is home to a family-owned and -operated equestrian training facility. The land is zoned for resort use, and its flat buildable topography is under very strong development pressure.

WCA has procured a Preliminary Title Report and appraisal. These documents set the stage for negotiation with the property owner, who has demonstrated interest in the land being preserved as a public benefit.

During this time, WCA will continue engagement with community groups and park users, and will seek funds for habitat restoration and planning of compatible public uses.

Less than 5% of Southern California's riparian and wetland communities remain, yet these lands play an oversized role in absorbing and slowing floodwaters, managing erosion, and getting water into soil and groundwater. Per square foot they clean more air and water, support more different species, and have the potential to sequester more greenhouse gasses including carbon than any other habitat type in the region. Acquisition of Rainbow Ranch will enable urban users of Azusa River Wilderness Park to experience a continuous watershed from floodplain to ridgelines and to understand the role of riparian ecosystems in sustainable local water infrastructure.

This multi-benefit project exemplifies WCA's mission to enact conservation, restoration, and environmental enhancement that are consistent with the goals of flood protection, water supply, groundwater recharge, and water conservation.

FISCAL INFORMATION: Initial pre-acquisition activities for Rainbow Ranch are funded by the existing grant RMC17019 for the San Gabriel Mountains and Foothills Open Space Acquisition Master Plan.

WCA has submitted an application to fund the potential acquisition through RMC Prop 68. If additional funds are needed, staff will apply to the upcoming Los Angeles County Regional Parks and Open Space Measure A competitive grant call for projects anticipated to be released in early 2021.



Rainbow Ranch - Vicinity Map

Rainbow Ranch is a parcel situated in the floodplain in a bend of the San Gabriel River North of Azusa.
It is currently operated as a equestrian facility.



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January 21, 2021 – Item 15

RESOLUTION 2021-05

**RESOLUTION OF THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY TO
AUTHORIZE THE NEGOTIATION FOR THE ACQUISITION OF REAL
PROPERTY IN THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER FLOODPLAIN IN AZUSA,
ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBERS (AINS) 8684-027-004 AND 8684-027-010
FROM THE GATTI FAMILY TRUST. WCA NEGOTIATOR: MARK STANLEY.**

WHEREAS, the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) has been established to facilitate joint projects between the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy and Los Angeles County Flood Control District; and

WHEREAS, The Watershed Conservation Authority has 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 authorizes the negotiation for the acquisition of real property in the San Gabriel River floodplain in Azusa (AINS) 8684-027-004 and 8684-027-010; and

WHEREAS, this action is exempt from the environmental impact report requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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.
3. **ADOPTS** the staff report dated January 21, 2021.
4. **AUTHORIZES** the negotiation for the acquisition of real property in the San Gabriel River floodplain in Azusa, Assessor Parcel Numbers (AIN) 8684-027-004 and 8684-027-010 from the Gatti Family Trust.

~ End of Resolution ~

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Motion: _____ Second: _____

Ayes: _____ Nays: _____ Abstentions: _____

Resolution 2021-05

Passed and Adopted by the Board of the
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
On January 21, 2021

Herlinda Chico
Governing Board Chair

ATTEST: _____

David Edsall, Jr.
Deputy Attorney General