LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL PARK AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT

November 30, 2010

The Honorable Board of Directors
Los Angeles County
Regional Park and Open Space District
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Directors:

APPROVE A REVISED PLAN OF EXPENDITURE TO REALLOCATE SPECIFIED FUNDS FROM THE CANCELLED PLACERITA CANYON ACQUISITION PROJECT TO THE ELSMERE CANYON ACQUISITION PROJECT, ASSIGN THE RIGHT TO APPLY FOR THOSE FUNDS TO THE CITY OF SANTA CLARITA, APPROVE THE PAYMENT OF COSTS INCURRED FOR THE ACQUISITION PRIOR TO THIS ACTION AND MAKE THE REMAINING FUNDING FROM THE PLACERITA CANYON ACQUISITION PROJECT AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE PROJECTS (FIFTH DISTRICT - 3 VOTES)

SUBJECT

Approval of the recommended actions will reallocate $750,000 in County Safe Neighborhood Parks Proposition funding through an assignment to the City of Santa Clarita for the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project to purchase 842 acres of open space land in Elsmere Canyon and make the remaining $127,208.26 in funding from the cancelled Placerita Canyon Acquisition Project available for future projects. Because the acquisition may be completed before this Board action the City of Santa Clarita may need to be reimbursed for costs already incurred.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:

1. Find that the proposed administrative actions are not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act as the actions do not meet the definition of a project according to Section 15378 (b)(4)(5) of the State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, because the actions are administrative activities for government grants which by their terms do not involve any commitments to any specific projects which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

2. Approve the revised plan of expenditure for the Department of Parks and Recreation to reallocate $750,000 of Specified Project funds allocated under Section (8), Subsection (a), Paragraph (2), Subparagraph (CC) of the County of Los Angeles Safe Neighborhood Parks Proposition of 1992 from the cancelled Placerita Canyon Acquisition Project, through an assignment of the right to apply for those funds to the City of Santa Clarita, for the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project, and the remaining balance of $127,208.26 of Specified Project funds allocated under the same section to the Various Fifth District Parks Acquisition and Development placeholder grant for reallocation to other projects.

3. Transfer the remaining $127,208.26, available for reallocation to other projects, from the cancelled Placerita Canyon Acquisition Project to the Various Fifth District Parks Acquisition and Development placeholder grant.

4. Authorize the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation, in his capacity as Director of the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District, to award a grant and grant amendment when applicable conditions have been met, to administer the grant as of the date of award and pursuant to guidelines in the Procedural Guide for Specified, Per Parcel, and Excess Funds Projects.

5. Authorize the Director to reimburse the City of Santa Clarita for costs incurred prior to the date of the award for the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Approval of the recommended actions will reallocate $750,000 of Specified Project funds allocated under Section (8), Subsection (a), Paragraph (2), Subparagraph (CC) of the County of Los Angeles Safe Neighborhood Parks Proposition of 1992 (the 1992 Proposition) from the cancelled Placerita Canyon Acquisition Project to fund the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project. The total cost for the project is $6,000,000. The project is funded with $3,750,000 in Santa Clarita Open Space Preservation District funds, $500,000 in State Bond funding, $1,000,000 committed by the Fifth Supervisorial District from the Sunshine Canyon Landfill Benefit Trust Fund and the $750,000 of requested 1992 Proposition funds.

The project consists of the acquisition of 842 acres in Elsmere Canyon east of State Highway 14 in the Newhall Pass. Acquiring the privately held Elsmere acreage will preserve vital connections for wildlife movement and trail networks between the San Fernando Valley and the Santa Clarita Valley. The property will preserve critical open space and improve connectivity with existing natural areas. The property will connect to existing wildlife corridors and the Rim of the Valley Trails system. It is adjacent to Whitney Canyon, the Angeles National Forest and approximately 400 acres of protected land owned by the Mountains Restoration and Conservation Authority.

The Placerita Canyon Acquisition Project to acquire open space adjacent to Placerita Canyon Nature Center was cancelled because the property is not currently available. Of the total of $877,208.26 in the Placerita Canyon Acquisition Project, the County of Los Angeles will assign the right to apply for $750,000 in funding to the City of Santa Clarita and the remaining $127,208.26 will be transferred to Various Fifth District Parks Acquisition and Development placeholder grant for reallocation for future projects.

It is also recommended, that the Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation (Director) be authorized to award a grant, in the amount of $750,000 to the City of Santa Clarita for the project when applicable conditions have been met, such as grantee qualifications, consistency between the project and requirements of the 1996 Proposition, and grantee agreement with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements for the project, and to administer the grant pursuant to the Procedural Guide for Specified, Per Parcel, and Excess Funds Projects (Procedural Guide) previously approved by your Board.

Finally, because the sale of the property is progressing so rapidly, the City of Santa Clarita may incur acquisition costs before your Board is able to approve the allocation of funds. Your Board's approval would be required to allow the Director to reimburse the City of Santa Clarita for such expenditures.

In a related item on today's agenda, the Chief Executive Office and the Department of Parks and Recreation requests your approval to reallocate the $750,000 in Safe Neighborhood Parks Proposition funds as an assignment to the City of Santa Clarita for the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project and to make the remaining funds from the Placerita Canyon Acquisition Project available for reallocation.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

The proposed recommendations further the Board approved County Strategic Plan Goals of Operational Effectiveness (Goal 1), and Community and Municipal Services (Goal 3), by enhancing open space and recreational opportunities to benefit County residents in the Fifth Supervisorial District.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

Sufficient appropriation for the $750,000 grant for the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project grant and for the $127,208.26 grant amendment to the Various Fifth District Parks Acquisition and Development placeholder grant is budgeted in the Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District's (District) Assessment Fund, HB4.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

The 1992 Proposition provided funding for projects that were specified in the measure and identified a procedure for revision of those projects prior to July 1, 1998. That procedure remains the method by which specified project funds may be approved by your Board for other uses. An agency may submit a revised plan of expenditure to use the funds for a project that is consistent with the purposes of the 1992 Proposition after the grantee's governing body considers and approves the revision of its project at a public meeting.

If your Board does not approve the requests, the Department of Parks and Recreation may either expend the funds for the uses originally specified, request your Board's approval to fund different new projects with the funds, or relinquish its claim to the funds.

On June 2, 2009, your Board approved the Procedural Guide, for governing the administration of District grants. The Procedural Guide will appropriately govern the administration of the recommended additional grant as well.

However, the Procedural Guide does not delegate the authority to the Director to reimburse otherwise eligible project costs incurred before the execution of a project grant agreement. Because the City of Santa Clarita may incur costs prior to the execution of a grant agreement for the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project, the Director is recommending your Board's approval to allow the District to reimburse the City of Santa Clarita for such costs.

ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

All public agency projects funded by the District are required to comply with CEQA as a condition of the grant. The lead agency is responsible for preparing the appropriate environmental documentation for the project. The City of Santa Clarita is the lead agency for the Elsmere Canyon Acquisition Project.

The administrative actions proposed by the District are not subject to CEQA in that the actions do not meet the definition of a project according to Sections 15378 (b)(4)(5) of the State CEQA Guidelines, because the actions are administrative activities for government grants which by their terms do not involve any commitments to any specific projects which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment.

CONTRACTING PROCESS

A Grant Project Agreement and an amendment will be entered into and administered under authority delegated to the Director and pursuant to the Procedural Guide approved by the Board in 2009. The Project Agreement and amendment will be approved as to form by County Counsel.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

The recommended project in the Fifth Supervisorial District will increase open space and recreational opportunities in the southern Antelope Valley.

CONCLUSION

Please instruct the Executive Officer-Clerk of the Board to return one adopted copy of this action to the Chief Executive Office, Capital Projects Division, and to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Respectfully submitted,

Russ Guiney
Director, Parks and Recreation

RG:IV:WRO:LB:REGIONALPARKOPENSPACEDISTRICT(ELSMERE CANYON BL)

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors