



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
Los Angeles River Center & Gardens
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Los Angeles, California 90065
Phone (323) 221-9944 Fax (323) 221-9934

REGIONAL & OPEN SPACE DIST
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May 15, 2014

Mr. Agie Jordan III, Program Manager
Los Angeles County Regional Park & Open Space District
510 S. Vermont Avenue Room 230
Los Angeles, California 90020

PROJECT REQUEST 58A1-99-0807

Dear Mr. Jordan,

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority is submitting the enclosed proposal materials to request a location change for Grant 58A1-99-0807. The proposed alternative location is still within Santa Clarita Woodlands Park but due to the extraordinary natural setting and recreational opportunities located at the Mentryville area of the park, we are proposing for the grant funds to be relocated to this site.

We request that the Description of the Project be changed to read:

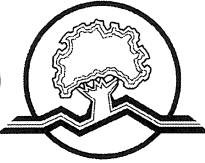
Construction and renovation of new and existing facilities in Mentryville within the larger, MRCA-owned Santa Clarita Woodlands Park. Development of an overnight camping facility for vocational training, recreation, and education of At-Risk Youths.

Please find enclosed a proposal narrative, site photos, and budget that describe the project at Mentryville. Please feel free to contact me by phone at (323) 221-9944 extension 124 or by email at leslie.chan@mrca.ca.gov if you have any questions. We appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to implementing this project.

Sincerely,

Leslie Chan

Enclosures: Project Proposal
 Proposal Photos
 Proposed Budget



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PROJECT PROPOSAL 58A1-99-0807

SUMMARY

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a local public agency, and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC) propose to relocate the project and associated funding from Project 58A1-99-0807 from East Canyon to Mentryville, an alternate site within the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park. The construction of new and renovated facilities at Mentryville and the type and quality of programs that will utilize them will meet all of the goals of the original project, and will provide additional benefits for At-Risk Youth and the general public. An alternate vocational skill set is proposed along with the alternate site at Mentryville, namely, the training of At-Risk Youth to become communicators and educators in environmental topics and issues including ecology, stewardship, outdoor skills, and natural resource interpretation.

The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) is proposing to rehabilitate the Johnson Park picnic area and educational infrastructure, located in Mentryville at Pico Canyon, in unincorporated Los Angeles County, near the City of Santa Clarita. The proposed scope will result in an outdoor camping and program facility that will be completely unique to the greater Los Angeles area. In comparison to the original project location at East Canyon, Mentryville is easily accessible by the I-5 freeway yet far enough removed to provide visitors a quiet and natural setting within which to recreate and participate in a variety of programs.

BACKGROUND

The proposed site is particularly significant in the history of California and Los Angeles County as Pico Canyon was the site of the first commercially successful oil well in the western United States (Pico No. 4). Mentryville was the name for the small town established in the canyon to support this industry. Mentryville was home to over 100 families, mostly oil company employees, until the early 1930s. Mentryville and Pico No. 4 are registered as California State Historical Landmarks. Today the canyon offers hikers, bikers, and equestrians not only a glimpse of California history, but shaded trails into the rugged and lushly vegetated headwaters of Pico Canyon, and the Santa Susana Mountains.

Johnson Park was originally developed as a recreation amenity for Mentryville's residents.

Johnson Park is a half-acre group picnic area, directly adjacent to Pico Canyon Road, that includes seating for large groups (100+), a restroom, open areas, and barbeque/prep area facilities. It is located approximately two miles into the canyon. The site is terraced and has three levels, with access between levels provided by stairs and

a perimeter path. The exact age of the picnic area is not known, but was probably developed in the late 1800s and has not been renovated since. When originally built, residents and oil company employees used the site for picnics, barbeques, dances, and social events. Popular activities included dining, dancing, and horseshoes, and the site was designed to facilitate these activities. Items were constructed with materials associated with operation of oil wells, such as piping and corrugated tin. The restroom is a more modern structure and was built from concrete block. The existence of this restroom makes the site particularly suited for cost-effective rehabilitation as an overnight camping and program facility.

PROPOSED SCOPE

Improvements

The requested and matching funds will be used to develop Johnson Park as a camping facility that will be programmed for use by At-Risk-Youth as well as the general public as described below. Many elements of the park are in disrepair but most can be salvaged. The scope proposed includes design and construction (labor and materials) for the following:

1. Improve seating at multiple picnic and program areas
2. Create new tent camping sites
3. Construct two shade structures over picnic/program areas
4. Refurbish the interior and exterior of restroom building
5. Refurbish plumbing for restroom and camp kitchen
6. Refurbish lighting
7. Improve access within the site and provide an ADA-compliant route
8. Improve vehicle access and parking lot at Johnson Park
9. Refurbish picnic tables
10. Clean site and remove debris
11. Renovate the barbeque/food preparation facilities to add storage, refrigerator and facilitate use as an overnight camp kitchen
12. Add fencing where needed for safety and space delineation
13. Design and install interpretive materials to educate visitors and program participants about the rich cultural and natural resources within Mentryville, Pico Canyon, and the surrounding Santa Clarita Woodlands

USE OF THE FACILITY

The Mentryville facility will take at-risk youth out of the city environment and enable them to spend a night in nature under the stars; providing them with structured activities that challenge them physically and mentally; providing them real job skills; showing them a world that they perhaps never dreamed of or knew they could be part of; introducing them to caring, professional role models in fields from science to recreation,

construction, and law enforcement. These are benefits that counter the influences which lead youth to join gangs.

In addition to a focus on science and recreation, the program will utilize MRCA's proven techniques for leadership training and gang prevention. Designed to build a participant's confidence, communication, problem solving and leadership skills, teamwork and challenge is an inherent part of the program. Whether through traditional experiential education vehicles such as search and rescue challenges, or the process of working together to put up a tent or lead a hike, the experiences at Mentryville will stress teamwork and interdependence as well as train youths for future careers and responsibilities.

The MRCA's commitment to at-risk youth, and in particular to the special needs of both boys and girls, is demonstrated by the diversity of staff and by the on-going commitment to staff training in issues such as gender equity and cultural diversity. MRCA also partners with like-minded groups such as the Los Angeles Conservation Corps (LACC) that also actively recruit and hire both male and female crew members. The SMMC and MRCA are Equal Opportunity Employers.

It is the goal of this project that at-risk youth participating in the MRCA Youth Leadership Series will utilize the Mentryville camp facility to further train on and engage in naturalist work. Job training programs utilizing the Mentryville facility will comply with all Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District requirements. When the facilities are not in use by at-risk youth, the area can be utilized by private organizations. The MRCA programs utilizing the site are designed to teach trainees the skills necessary to advance their qualifications for future careers.

NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The proposed site at Mentryville is within the 3,500 acre Santa Clarita Woodlands Park (owned by the MRCA) located in the Santa Susana Mountains. The historic, cultural and natural resources of this larger park are open to all, but for most of Los Angeles County's at-risk youth, these resources are unavailable. Unfamiliarity with this resource and lack of easy transportation make this resource seem unattainable. This program seeks to change that by providing a facility that can be used to directly expand the outdoor education and recreational opportunities of at-risk youth, and furthermore, to develop skills of communication and stewardship within the youth so they become ambassadors to their communities of these resources. The training that can be provided at the new facility developed by this project will facilitate the experiences, awareness, and knowledge gained by the youth being brought back to their communities and some of the barriers to this access can be overcome. The site's location within the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park can be leveraged to enrich the overall community and inspire exploration of the natural resources that are close by. Providing a high quality overnight

camping facility within this park will expand the diversity of recreational resources available to visitors and will enable multiple-day excursions to take advantage of this area.

Youth at-risk in Los Angeles County face circumstances over which they have no control and which have the unfortunate effect of limiting the opportunities to which they are exposed. The natural resources that have been conserved and improved for public use are relatively close to these youth but remain unattainable because of issues such as poverty and transportation costs. The sad fact remains that the physical, social, and mental health benefits provided by protected natural open spaces are not enjoyed by many of the community who would be impacted the most. This project will provide a facility that can be used by at-risk youth from all priority areas, reaching youth from all over Los Angeles County. The facilities will be available to all existing providers of services for at-risk youth, filling the gap that currently exists for a facility like this for communities in the northern San Fernando Valley and the Santa Clarita Valley. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the cultural, natural, and historic resources found in Mentryville means this facility will be able to provide an experience and training opportunity found nowhere else. The proposed location at Mentryville is an even more suitable setting to provide this benefit than East Canyon because it is farther back in the canyon away from the sounds and sight of the freeway, and because the site itself has such a rich history.

The development of this overnight facility in Mentryville will add immeasurably to services already offered by parks and recreation departments, activity leagues, schools, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and the many non-profit organizations already doing meaningful work with at-risk youth. In addition to the planned programming through the MRCA's Youth Leadership Series, it will be available to other groups like Los Angeles Conservation Corps and Outward Bound which focus on the priority areas of South and East Los Angeles. These programs will provide environmental education, outdoor recreation experiences, and will provide social, vocational and leadership development opportunities that will serve as a gateway to the variety of professions available in our mountain and urban parks.

RESPONSE TO NEED IN THE COMMUNITY

The factors that contribute to the problems facing at-risk youth—poverty, crime, lack of a family support system, and violence—also contribute to at-risk youth's perception that this is the only world that is available to them. But the natural world, with all its beauty, belongs to all. An inherent part of every MRCA program is the message "this belongs to you." These youth leave MRCA parks knowing that these resources are theirs to explore and enjoy, forever.

The value of taking children out of the city and into the outdoors has long been recognized. The concept is part of the American tradition but is an experience too often unavailable to those who need it most. The facilities developed at Mentryville will be available to existing providers of gang prevention and other at-risk service providers who are unable to manage an outdoor camp facility of their own but recognize how the experience can enhance their work. By reaching out to and coordinating with community-based organizations who are in the business of gang prevention and intervention, drop-out prevention and other social services, MRCA will be able to more effectively address the youth problems in the area, and will provide new recreational opportunities for at-risk children in Los Angeles County.

This facility will address existing youth problems in the community in the following ways:

- Employment/job training: Federal, State, and local park agencies throughout Los Angeles and surrounding counties are eager to hire urban young adults. Few youths are aware of the job possibilities that exist in our parks. Training programs offer participants an opportunity to gain real job skills while exploring a variety of careers, from park maintenance to planning to visitor services to law enforcement ranger.
- Education: This facility will enable program participants and visitors to enjoy time in the historic setting of Mentryville and Pico Canyon. Opportunities for environmental, cultural, and historical education existing within close proximity because of this facility's specific location within the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park. Improvements to the interpretive materials at Mentryville will expand educational opportunities for guided groups as well as individuals visiting the site independently.
- Exposure: The more experience a child has, the better prepared that person will be for life; the more flexible they will be when confronting different people and situations; the more successful they will be at choosing a life path that suits their interests and abilities.
- Mentors: MRCA's programs and those of our partners are committed to providing role models for participants. MRCA Interpretive staff and Rangers, some of whom have successfully worked their way up from the ranks of programs such as Urban Naturalists in Training, are excellent role models for youth participants.
- Modeling: One of the greatest lessons the natural world has to offer is that there is no escaping interdependence. Youths—especially those from the city who find themselves growing up in a nature-deficient context and one that often breeds hostility, stress, and violence—need desperately to feel their connection to the natural world, to see themselves as part of natural cycles and to learn a more effective way of connecting to each other. Nature provides an area of neutrality where different people can come together to find common ground.

- Leadership: Team building and leadership are an important component of any program for at-risk youth. Giving and accepting support, building trust and communication, working together toward a shared goal. These are life skills that young people will take back into their community.
- Self-esteem: People feel good about themselves when they accomplish something they didn't think they could do. MRCA's training and educational programs are filled with experiences of success for the individual and the group.
- Alternatives: At-risk youth are faced with opportunities to make life-changing decisions on a daily basis. Urban young adults need a reason to make the right decisions day after day. They need to envision a goal and a direction to keep focused on. Our training and educational programs offer a positive alternative.
- Fun: The at-risk youth MRCA works with expend a tremendous amount of energy merely surviving, a life-style that makes children old before their time. Enjoyment of community and the environment are integral parts of our programs.

Youth from dense urban environments will have an opportunity to leave the urban context and access this new facility that will provide respite and another perspective from which to experience the world.

EXPERIENCE IN SERVING, EMPLOYING AND WORKING WITH AT-RISK YOUTH

For over 20 years, MRCA has been offering youth development programs for urban youth with limited access to nature. The MRCA Youth Leadership Series is comprised of four programs, including Future Urban Naturalist for early elementary students, Junior Naturalist for late elementary and middle school student, Naturalist Explorers for high school students, and Outdoor Leaders, a paid apprenticeship program for high school and college students. These programs blend the natural world and leadership development through a unique multi-week approach. Youth build strong and lasting relationships with MRCA naturalists and each other while developing into environmental stewards. Over the past 4 years, MRCA has graduated over 160 youth through the Youth Leadership Series, and it continues to grow. The proposed facility will support these programs by providing an overnight camping facility suitable for use during program duration.

The MRCA is able utilize staff from many divisions with diverse expertise. Though MRCA naturalists primarily present these programs, staff from other divisions often come in to share their knowledge and exposure youth to a variety of park careers. For instance, planning staff focus on the development processes of new parks or rangers lead a first-aid or park safety lesson.

Since its inception, the MRCA has designed, constructed, and manage many natural park throughout Los Angeles. Projects include Vista Hermosa Natural Park, Marsh Park on the Los Angeles River, Augustus F. Hawkins Natural Park (now managed by City of Los Angeles), and Pacoima Wash Natural Park (opening May 2014). All of the parks serve park-poor neighborhoods and provide sites for MRCA to conduct public programs and outreach opportunities. The parks managed by the MRCA and partner agencies provide ideal locations for youth to learn and connect with the natural world. The MRCA is also are able to give youth unique experiences, and the proposed facility at Mentryville will create a new opportunity: camping under the stars in the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park.

The MRCA has a similar project in progress courtesy of funding from the Los Angeles County Open Space & Park District (Prop A) at Red Rock Canyon. The camping facility there has been well received and at-risk youth groups have already begun to enjoy this new facility. The varying needs of MRCA's programs, ranging from first-time camping to family camping, have influenced the plans for the Mentryville facility, ensuring that the improvements will provide maximum benefit for at-risk youth programs. All four of MRCA's programs will have the opportunity to utilize the Mentryville camp facility. In addition, the facility will be made available to groups like LACC to implement their own programs.

PROGRAMMING, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Maintenance and operations of Mentryville and Pico Canyon are currently funded by Prop A and unrestricted revenue. This will not change due to the project. The MRCA staff maintains thousands of acres of parkland throughout Southern California and has years of experience maintaining public parks and trails.

Maintenance and operations of Mentryville and Pico Canyon (including the Johnson Park site) is already conducted by the MRCA's force account labor. Any additional maintenance of the new improvements will be incorporated into staff's existing maintenance schedules and routes. Maintenance will consist of weed control, trash pick-up, restroom clean-up, graffiti removal, trail maintenance, plant restoration, etc. Because staff already regularly visits the project area, sufficient time is available to maintain the project.

When training is not in session, the facility can be available for reservation by other groups wishing to engage the educational opportunities found within the area. Rental of this facility will be of great benefit to all future visitors to the park and would provide a potential revenue stream for furthering park programs.

EMPLOYMENT OF YOUTH

The SMMC and MRCA have not only demonstrated a commitment to employing at-risk youth, but have developed training and apprenticeship programs to recruit at-risk youth to all aspects of the park profession. In particular, graduates of the MRCA Naturalist Explorer program have the opportunity to become paid, part-time staff of the MRCA through the Outdoor Leaders program. Additionally, MRCA works closely with partners such as the LACC to serve more youth. It is expected that youth utilizing this site will be drawn from all parts of Los Angeles County. We have budgeted \$5,000 for the employment of at-risk youth during the development and construction phase, for site cleaning and restroom building cleaning and painting work.

The 1998 grant application included \$67,000 of youth labor. In the years since 1998, MRCA has determined that skilled construction work, such as welding, concrete, electrical, and architectural work, is not feasible to accomplish with minimally trained youth. The improvements needed for this proposal are virtually 100% skilled labor, and therefore offer limited possibilities for employment of youth. As of February 2014, MRCA/SMMC had met \$1,118,877 of their \$1,251,201 goal, have plans in place for 80% of the remaining goal, and estimate unreported youth labor to more than meet the goal. We strive to utilize youth employment at every opportunity but considering the technical aspect of the proposed tasks is not necessary to spend a large amount of the subject grant to meet the agency's overall goal.

COST EFFECTIVENESS

The request for \$242,616.11 in grant funds (amount remaining) to be allocated to this project will achieve the greatest possible benefit for at-risk youth throughout Los Angeles County, through the development of training and camping facilities at Mentryville. Once the capital improvements detailed in this proposal are completed, both the at-risk youth population of Los Angeles and the general public will be continue to benefit for decades to come. The cost effectiveness of this project comes largely from the refurbishment and reuse of a site with existing infrastructure including a restroom building.

The cost of the project is reasonable compared to the amount of increased use. The project is cost-effective because it will maximize use of the existing materials onsite, thus decreasing the potential cost of the renovations. The improvements will add significant value to the Santa Clarita Woodlands by transforming this dilapidated and currently minimally unusable area into a highly usable overnight camping and educational program facility. The installation of educational materials to interpret Mentryville history will be a highly cost effective way to provide an educational tour of this significant site by interpreting the sites already in place. Benefits include increased aesthetic appeal, recreational benefits, functionality, safety, and educational opportunities for the visitors of the park. The project is also cost-effective in that it

employs proven MRCA standard design elements and materials, value-added in-house expertise and labor, and will capitalize on years of park building experience.

In addition to the cost-effectiveness of the scope proposed for the Prop A funds, MRCA is also proposing to contribute a match of \$45,000 by completing a portion of the scope with other funds.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Mentryville and the open space and trails of Pico Canyon are owned and managed by the MRCA. Established as public open space in 1995, the initial preservation effort was made with broad public support and interest, including the City of Santa Clarita and Friends of Mentryville. As this project will refurbish and improve an existing but degraded picnic area, the project is expected to have widespread support.

The MRCA has been actively pursuing formalized partnerships with a variety of organization and agencies that provide at-risk youth job training and/or leadership training, as well as local school district and those existing servers of at-risk youth who would be able to take advantage of the facility at Mentryville.

ACCESS TO PROJECT

There is easy, direct freeway access to Mentryville. There will be no fee for informal use of the associated picnic area by hikers, equestrians, or mountain bikers utilizing the Pico Canyon trail system. No barriers limit access to our project site. Currently, a visitor's parking lot exists adjacent to the town of Mentryville with a 2-mile connecting road that leads to the Johnson Park site. Hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians are able to access the site easily. In addition, program-related vehicles will be allowed to drive the 2-mile trail if arranged by advanced notice through the MRCA and if beneficial to the program objectives. The project scope includes improvement of the road and parking lot serving the Johnson Park area and the addition of an access pathway to the multiple areas within Johnson Park.

READINESS OF PROJECT

Due to the relative simplicity of the project and the existence of many key pieces of infrastructure, this project can be accomplished quickly. Extensive design work is not necessary for most of the project as it focuses mainly on refurbishment of existing facilities and infrastructure. There is easy access to the site by a previously mentioned paved road which facilitates the implementation of improvements. Additionally, some of the work is expected to be contracted and some of the work will be conducted by MRCA

construction Division which enables the work to be completed quickly. MRCA is confident that it would be able to complete the project by December 2014.

OTHER BENEFITS

The one-of-a-kind resource that can be experienced at Mentryville stems from its rich natural and cultural history.

Cultural Resources:

The easily accessible petroleum once seeped to the surface of the canyon floor in pools. Tataviam Indians who lived in the area starting around 450 A.D. used this oil to waterproof baskets, and soothe arthritis. It is also thought that this petroleum was a prized commodity in early trading along the routes that converged in the Santa Clarita Valley. In 1855, retired General Andrés Pico, leader of Mexican forces in the Mexican-American War of 1846, settled at a nearby ranch. The canyon was named after General Pico who, in 1855, began hauling asphaltum out of the canyon to use for lubricant and caulking compound, and for tarring the roofs of his Rancho San Fernando. In 1876, the oil derrick known as "Pico Number 4", run by Alex Mentry, hit a gusher and became the first commercially producing oil well in the United States. The success of this derrick drew workers that eventually settled into what is now known as "Mentryville". When "Pico Number 4" was capped in 1990 after 114 years of operation, it was the longest-running oil well in the world.

Natural Resources:

On the north-facing flank of the Santa Susana Mountains, the canyons of Santa Clarita Woodlands Park contain globally unique combinations of tree species, perennial streams, spring wildflower displays, and abundant wildlife. Even black bears and mountain lion roam here--only a few miles away from the urbanized San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. These 4,000 acres of public parkland are a critical component of a cross-mountain range wildlife habitat corridor that links the Santa Monica Mountains to the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests.

Threads and educational themes from this story will be used to create an interpretive system that will be able to be used by unguided visitors to the site as well as participants of any programs held here.

		Prop A Request	Match	Match Source
Lower Level: Camp Kitchen, Food Prep & Picnic Area				
	Food Preparation Counter	\$2,000		
	Refinish Sinks	\$1,000		
	Add fridge & Lockable Storage Cabinet	\$2,500		
	Refinish Picnic tables		\$7,000	SMMC- Prop 40
	Shade Structure for Picnic Area	\$18,000		
Mid-Level & Restroom Building				
	Resurface program area	\$6,000		
	Refurbish plumbing piping and septic tank		\$2,000	SMMC- Prop 40
	Installation of Filter on Water Inlet	\$5,000		
	Clean and Paint Restroom Building*	\$3,000		
	New restroom fixtures & refurbish interior	\$7,000		
	Install storage shed	\$10,000		
Upper Level				
	Repair seating and infrastructure- upper	\$5,962		
	Shade structure for upper program/camp	\$18,000		
	Adding Lighting to Shade Structures	\$10,000		
	Add fencing around demonstration well	\$5,000		
	Create tent sites	\$10,000		
Vehicle Access & Pathways				
	Parking lot Paving		\$36,000	FEMA Grant
	Fix Stairs and railing	\$3,500		
	Parking Lot Lighting	\$15,000		
	Upgrade Electrical to Site	\$10,000		
	Access Pathway between levels	\$20,000		
Interpretive Materials		\$25,000		
Site Preparation- General Cleanup (Youth) (43)		\$5,000		
Tree Planting within Santa Clarita Woodlands Park			\$20,000	Prop A Trees
	Construction Sub-Total	\$181,962		
Project Planning and Design		\$60,654		
		Request Total	Match Total	
		\$242,616	\$65,000	

Mentryville- Johnson Park site layout



Proposal Photos 58A1-99-0807
May 15, 2014

Lower Level: Camp Kitchen, Food Preparation & Picnic Area



Proposal Photos 58A1-99-0807
May 15, 2014

Lower Level: Camp Kitchen and Food Preparation Area to be improved



Proposal Photos 58A1-99-0807
May 15, 2014

Mid-level: Camping/Program Area



Proposal Photos 58A1-99-0807
May 15, 2014

Mid-Level: Restroom building to be refurbished



Proposal Photos 58A1-99-0807
May 15, 2014

Upper Level: Program area seating and Demonstration Well

