



City of Malibu

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January 30, 2019

Sent via email to edmiston@smmc.ca.gov

Joseph Edmiston, Executive Director
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
570 West Avenue 26, Suite 100
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Date Received 1-30-19 Time _____
ERB meeting of 2-12-19
Agenda Item No. 2A
Total No. of Pages 2

RE: Project Scheduling for Projects in Woolsey Fire Area

Dear Mr. Edmiston:

As you know, the Woolsey Fire of November 2018 had drastic and terrible effects on hundreds of properties in the City of Malibu and in the Santa Monica Mountains, including many properties owned by MRCA. As all of us are struggling to recover from the devastating losses, MRCA's circulation for public review and comment of environmental documents for two important projects located in the heart of the areas impacted by the fire has been a shock to the community, and has resulted in the City receiving significant complaints about the process.

Mandatory evacuation of the entire City of Malibu occurred on November 9. The evacuation order was not fully lifted for nine days, until 9:00 p.m. on November 18. In the Malibu city limits alone, at least 440 homes were lost. Many more homes are severely damaged and remain unoccupied due to smoke and other damage.

MRCA released the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Escondido Canyon Park to Murphy Way Connector Project for circulation on January 4, 2019, just seven weeks after the City was re-opened. City staff was notified by email of the document's release. The comment deadline is February 18.

MRCA released the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Lechuza Beach Public Access Improvements Project for circulation on January 10, 2019, just one week later. City staff was not notified of this document's release. The comment deadline is February 24. A public meeting has been scheduled for this project on Wednesday, March 6, 2019, at 2:00 p.m., at the Conejo Recreation and Park District in Thousand Oaks.

The intent of the CEQA environmental review process is to provide a meaningful opportunity for the public and decision-makers to understand and comment on the potential environmental impacts of a project so that significant impacts can be minimized. It is not clear how MRCA provided notice to the public of these two documents, whether by mail or in the newspaper, or by some other means, but this notice does not appear to have been effective based on contact with residents who were informed by the City, and not MRCA, of the projects. Many property owners in the area immediately adjacent to the projects have been displaced and may not be receiving mail, reviewing

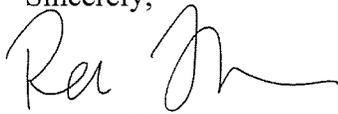
local papers, or even living in the area where they could review a posted notice. Given the circumstances, we believe that extra effort should be given to ensure actual notice is provided to nearby residents.

The decision to circulate these two documents while so many property owners are displaced has upset many residents who care deeply about these projects and their impacts on the environment. Unfortunately, those residents are focused on the very basics of recovery, such as securing shelter, meeting mandatory deadlines for debris clearance, and protecting their property from mudslides and debris flow, and are therefore unable to participate in the process due to these challenges they face in the wake of the fire.

Particularly upsetting is the fact that the process currently used appears designed to result in minimal public participation and comment. This appearance is reinforced by the decision to host a public meeting on a work day, during business hours, outside of Malibu, which will significantly limit the ability of nearby property owners to attend. The City strongly objects to holding these meetings outside of Malibu, particularly when a number of venues exist in the City where this event could be held, including Malibu City Hall, which the City previously offered to make available. This is an objection the City raised last June when MRCA scheduled the public meeting for the Puerco Canyon trailhead and camp project at a location well outside the city limits in Pacific Palisades. That this practice is becoming a pattern is very troubling to the City, a significant obstacle to residents attending, and obviously results in greatly constraining public participation and comment.

The City requests that the process for these two projects be postponed for at least six months and the public review process re-started and effectively noticed no sooner than September 2019. As discussed above, these meetings also should be scheduled at facilities in Malibu, whether at an MRCA property, at City Hall or elsewhere. If MRCA insists on proceeding as currently proposed, the City will have no choice but to assume MRCA's actions are designed to avoid public comment and review.

Sincerely,



Reva Feldman
City Manager

Cc: Mayor Wagner and Honorable Members of the Malibu City Council
Bonnie Blue, Planning Director