

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT
August 12, 2005

ITEM: **10**

SUBJECT: **PARTNERSHIP WITH SAN DIEGO POLICE
DEPARTMENT**

Consideration and possible adoption of a resolution (*tentative Resolution 05-18*) authorizing the Executive Officer to explore a potential partnership with the San Diego Police Department. The purpose of this partnership is to increase public safety in the San Diego River Park. (*Deborah Jayne*)

PURPOSE: Consideration and possible adoption of tentative Resolution 05-18.

DISCUSSION: Public safety in and along the San Diego River (and the Public's perception of its safety) must be greatly enhanced if the River Park is to become a reality. Towards that end, the San Diego Police Department has recently approached the Conservancy about a potential partnership. I am supportive of the concept and am seeking the Governing Board's authorization to initiate further discussions with the Department for this purpose.

Background

Beginning in 1996, San Diego Police Department, Western Division has made regular sweeps of the San Diego Riverbed in an attempt to curb homelessness and criminal activity along the San Diego River.

According to their statistics, during an aggressive three-month campaign last year, 161 arrests were made which generated over 1000 convictions for crimes ranging from assault/rape to drug offenses to trespassing.

The Mission Valley Preserve is the 51-acre stretch of riverbed favored by the homeless. The Preserve begins just south of the YMCA on Friars Road and runs to Interstate 5. The riverbed is used as a base for criminal activity for several reasons including: (1) dense brush and vegetation which provides

privacy for criminal activity; (2) a lack of access – it is difficult for the police and the general public to gain entry; and (3) location—the area is located near business and residences.

In addition to the criminal activity in the riverbed, trespassers are damaging the river's sensitive ecosystem. Hazardous materials found onsite include: paint, car batteries, human waste, chemicals (used for making drugs), spray paint, and biohazard waste.

Stepped up police enforcement and conviction, particularly those convictions with “stay-away” conditions, have decreased the homeless population.

However, unfortunately at this time, the San Diego Police Department does not have the resources to continue their aggressive presence. They are looking for partners and stakeholders interested in increasing public safety in the riverbed.

A potential partnership between the Conservancy and the San Diego Police Department could take numerous forms. For example, funding could be provided to enhance police presence in the Riverbed or to conduct a large-scale mapping and removal effort of non-native invasive vegetation (i.e., from Mission Trails Regional Park to the ocean). A project of this kind in the San Diego River would serve two important purposes: (1) restore the natural ecology of the riverbed; and (2) remove overgrowth which provides shelter and concealment to transients. In any event, the Conservancy would coordinate closely with others (e.g., City of San Diego, San Diego River Park Foundation, and Friends of Mission Valley Preserve, etc.) to ensure that all new efforts compliment/build upon past or ongoing efforts. Recall that one of the three projects you previously approved for Proposition 40 River Parkways funding provides money to the City for restoration efforts in the Mission Valley Preserve.

The balance of the Proposition 40 River Parkways allocation or new Proposition 50 River Parkways grants are possible sources of funding to support the proposed partnership. Several other jurisdictions have received State grant money to map and remove non-native invasive vegetation (e.g., the Mission Trails Regional Park and the Santa Margarita and San Luis Rey Watersheds Weed Management Area).

LEGAL CONCERNS: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

SUPPORTING
DOCUMENTS:

1. Tentative Resolution 05-18
2. "Rains Roused Riverbed Dwellers". San Diego Union Tribune. December 6, 2004.
3. San Diego Police Department Report "*Mission Valley River Preserve: Transforming a Criminal Refuge into a Nature Preserve through Collaborative Effort*", 1998.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt Resolution 05-18.