

Regional Conservation Authority

**BIOLOGICAL MONITORING PROGRAM WORK PLAN AND
COST ESTIMATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009-10**

Staff Contact:

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Background:

A key component and requirement of the MSHCP is the Biological Monitoring Program which collects data on the 146 Covered Species and their associated habitats for the purpose of assessing the MSHCP's effectiveness at meeting conservation objectives and to provide information to the Management Program. The RCA is primarily responsible for funding the Monitoring Program; however, the Monitoring Program is overseen and implemented by a Monitoring Program Administrator. As per the MSHCP, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) is the Monitoring Program Administrator for the first 8 years of the permit. The CDFG is not contracted by, nor does it receive funding from, the RCA. Rather, the CDFG has committed staff and resources to oversee, administer, and implement the Monitoring Program based on the availability of the State's budget.

The MSHCP requires the Monitoring Program Administrator to submit to the Reserve Management Oversight Committee (RMOC) an annual Work Plan and Cost Estimate for implementation of the Monitoring Program. The FY 2009-10 Work Plan described the monitoring activities planned, schedule for field work, and estimate of cost for personnel and operations. The majority of funding is allocated to contracts for monitoring staff. Staff is largely funded by the RCA through a contract with the Santa Ana Watershed Association, a local non-profit organization.

The RMOC membership has not yet been redefined; therefore, we are asking the Executive Committee to endorse the work plan and cost estimate.

Agenda Item 8.1 Staff Report
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June 8, 2009

Executive Committee and Staff Recommendation:

That the RCA Board of Directors approve the Biological Monitoring Program Work Plan and Cost Estimate for Fiscal Year 2009-10 in the amount of \$1,049,828

FINANCIAL INFORMATION	
In Fiscal Year 2009-10 Budget: Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Cost: \$ 1,049,828.00 Annual Cost: \$ N/A
Source of Funds: Tipping Fees, Infrastructure Contributions, Rents	Budget Adjustment: N/A From To
Approved by: <i>Honey Bernas</i>	Date: May 11, 2009

Attachment:

Western Riverside County MSHCP Biological Monitoring Program FY 2009-10 Work Plan and Cost Estimate.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 8.1

Attachment

Western Riverside County MSHCP Biological Monitoring Program FY 2009-10 Work Plan and Cost Estimate

**WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MSHCP
BIOLOGICAL MONITORING PROGRAM
FY 2009-10 WORK PLAN AND COST ESTIMATE**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The overall goal of the Biological Monitoring Program (Monitoring Program) is to collect data on the 146 Covered Species and associated habitats for the purpose of assessing the MSHCP's effectiveness at meeting conservation objectives and to provide information for adaptive management. The activities described in this work plan for Fiscal Year 2009-10 continue the activities commenced in the previous fiscal year and follow the framework outlined in section 5.3 of the MSHCP. Fiscal Year 2009-10 is the sixth fiscal year and the fifth biological year of a five to eight year inventory phase of the Biological Monitoring Program.

2.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

The Biological Monitoring Program is implemented within the MSHCP Conservation Area on lands that are owned and managed by the various MSHCP participants. To ensure consistency in monitoring efforts throughout the Conservation Area, the Biological Monitoring Program is overseen and implemented by a Monitoring Program Administrator selected by the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA). The duties and responsibilities of the Monitoring Program Administrator are described in Volume 1, Section 6.6.6 of the MSHCP. As per the MSHCP, the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG) is the Monitoring Program Administrator for the first eight years of the permit.

The RCA works closely with the Monitoring Program Administrator to develop and implement the annual work plan and budget. The RCA has primary responsibility for funding the Biological Monitoring Program. The Monitoring Program Administrator implements the Biological Monitoring Program using staff contracted by the RCA. The CDFG is not contracted by, nor does it receive direct funding from, the RCA. Rather, the CDFG has committed staff and resources to oversee and administer the Biological Monitoring Program based on the availability of the State's budget.

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The Biological Monitoring Program is responsible for monitoring the status and trend of the 146 Covered Species and associated species and habitats over a 500,000 acre Conservation Area. Because there is little existing scientifically-based data for the majority of Covered Species, the first five to eight years of the Biological Monitoring Program are devoted to an inventory phase. The purpose of the inventory phase is to determine where Covered Species occur within the Conservation Area, gather more

information on their activity patterns, and develop efficient protocols for detecting them. The development of protocols is necessary to test the reliability of survey methods, to determine whether a species is present in an area, and, if not detected, to provide the confidence level that the species is not present.

One of the goals of the Biological Monitoring Program is to develop efficient long-term monitoring protocols that reduce redundancies by collecting information on multiple species where possible. For example, bird species co-occurring in similar habitat (e.g., willow riparian) during the breeding season can be detected using the same survey protocols. There will always be some Covered Species that occur in isolated pockets within the Conservation Area or that are difficult to detect using standard survey protocols; for these species a focused survey effort will be required.

4.0 STAFF COMPOSITION

Biological Monitoring Program staff work as a team to coordinate, develop, and implement required monitoring activities for the MSHCP. The Monitoring Program is composed of the following staff positions, which are filled based on availability of funding:

- Monitoring Program Administrator
- Monitoring Program Coordinator
- Lead Biologists
- Taxa Program Leads
- General Field Crew, bird specialization
- General Field Crew, mammal specialization
- General Field Crew, amphibian & reptile specialization
- General Field Crew, invertebrate specialization
- General Field Crew, plant specialization
- Database Manager
- GIS Analyst
- Office Manager
- Clerical Assistant

The majority of staff is funded by the RCA through contracts with the Santa Ana Watershed Association (SAWA), a local non-profit agency. The Monitoring Program Administrator, Monitoring Program Coordinator and some field crew are funded by the Wildlife Agencies (CDFG and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

5.0 SPECIFIC TASKS OF THE MONITORING PROGRAM

5.1 Administration & Coordination

Administering and coordinating the Monitoring Program requires a significant amount of effort. Sufficient staff and resources must be acquired, field work must be scheduled, land access must be coordinated with other agencies, and survey activities must take place. The Monitoring Program Administrator, Monitoring Program Coordinator, Office Manager, and Lead Biologists carry out the following tasks:

- Develop annual work plans and budgets
- Identify contract needs, write scopes of work, manage contracts
- Advertise, interview, and hire Monitoring Program staff; conduct performance reviews
- Develop training manuals and training programs for staff
- Direct and schedule staff activities
- Identify field supply and equipment needs; submit orders; maintain inventory, including vehicles
- Identify land access needs and coordinate with agencies on access agreements
- Facilitate monthly reserve management/monitoring coordination meeting
- Attend monthly RCA team meetings and other agency meetings
- Give occasional presentations to the RCA Board
- Coordinate with Wildlife Agencies on survey methodology and monitoring activities
- Develop the operations and implementation manuals
- Oversee production of annual survey reports
- Distribute Monitoring Program data as appropriate

5.2 Biological Surveys

Conducting biological surveys is the most visible part of the Biological Monitoring Program. It is also the component that requires the most staff. Prior to collecting data, all aspects of a project must be developed. This task includes identifying the purpose of the survey, choosing the data collection methods and sampling locations, selecting data analysis methods, and determining what answers the data are expected to provide. The following tasks are carried out by the Monitoring Program Coordinator, Lead Biologists, GIS Analyst, Taxa Program Leads, and Field Crew:

- Develop protocols and sampling designs
- Implement focused species surveys
- Conduct community surveys for multiple species
- Conduct vegetation analyses

5.3 Training

The Monitoring Program is required to have a training program approved by the Wildlife Agencies to ensure consistent data collection, uniform implementation of protocols, handling procedures, and appropriate experience with Covered Species (Vol. 1, Sec. 7.0). The types of species training needed in any given year is dependent on the types of survey activities planned; however, safety training (e.g., first aid, CPR) is provided every year. Training is provided both by experienced Monitoring Program staff and by qualified outside entities (e.g., U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). The following training is required of monitoring staff:

- Endangered species identification and handling
- Local flora and fauna identification
- Wilderness first aid and CPR training
- Defensive driver training

5.4 Data Management & Reports

All of the data collected by the Monitoring Program must be carefully managed. Prior to field work, data forms are developed and survey locations are mapped. As data return from the field, they are entered into a database and checked for accuracy. After data collection is completed, the data are analyzed and a summary report is written describing survey results. The results of each year's monitoring efforts are provided in the Annual Report submitted to the RCA. All Monitoring Program staff contribute to the following tasks:

- Field form and protocol development
- GIS mapping to support surveys, analysis, and reports
- Database development
- Data entry and quality control
- Data analysis, statistics
- Project summary reports
- Annual report
- Maintain computer equipment and database

6.0 MONITORING EFFORTS IN FY 2009-10

The Biological Monitoring Program activities planned for FY 2009-10 are largely based on the requirements of the MSHCP species objectives found in Volume 2 of the MSHCP. The species objectives specify time intervals for detecting and reporting on each of the Covered Species in the Conservation Area. When the species objectives do not specify a time interval, the status of the Covered Species must be reported on at least once every eight years as per General Management Measure 7 (Vol. 1 Sec. 5.0). In addition to the species objectives, survey priorities are influenced by the quantity and quality of information available for each species (little or poor information means more

survey effort sooner), whether another agency is already conducting surveys (less effort required on our part), relative ease of gathering information (e.g., yellow warbler surveys during least Bell's vireo surveys), and priority of the species to the RCA and wildlife agencies (e.g., burrowing owl). Funding availability is also considered when deciding on monitoring activities.

An overview of the monitoring efforts planned for FY 2009-10 along with rationale for surveys is provided below. Details of survey methodology can be found in the survey protocols available at the Biological Monitoring Program office in Riverside, CA. The Monitoring Program's ability to complete these tasks will be dependant upon revenue flow at the RCA and the budget of the CDFG.

6.1 Invertebrates

6.1.1 Quino Checkerspot Survey

The species objectives for Quino checkerspot require the documentation of its distribution on an annual basis. The Monitoring Program has surveyed for Quino checkerspot in the Conservation Area during the last four biological years. Future surveys efforts will focus on improving our understanding of Quino habitat and distribution.

6.1.2 Delhi Sands Flower-Loving Fly Survey

The species objectives for Delhi fly require documenting successful reproduction by this species at all three Core Areas identified in the MSHCP every year for the first five years of the permit. The Monitoring Program has surveyed for the Delhi fly within its accessible Core Area during the last four biological years. Surveys for the Delhi fly will continue in FY 2009-10.

6.1.3 Fairy Shrimp

Surveys for covered fairy shrimp (Santa Rosa, Riverside, and vernal pool) were conducted by the Monitoring Program in the winter of 2007-08. All three were detected. The species objectives for Santa Rosa fairy shrimp were met. Riverside fairy shrimp and vernal pool fairy shrimp need to be found in additional Core Areas in order for their respective species objectives to be met. Fairy shrimp surveys will be conducted in vernal pools on newly acquired lands if there is adequate rainfall in 2009-10.

6.2 Birds

6.2.1 Loggerhead Shrike and Golden Eagle.

The species objectives for both of these species require verification of reproduction in identified nesting or Core Areas. Due to budget constraints, regular surveys for these species and their nests can not be made. One or more

biologists will coordinate with local biologists and use local knowledge to direct a limited survey effort focused on finding nests. This effort may result in progress towards meeting the loggerhead shrike and golden eagle species objectives.

6.3 Amphibians and Reptiles

6.3.1 Stream Surveys

The species objectives for arroyo toad require the maintenance of 80% of the breeding locations within the Conservation Area as measured across any consecutive five year period. Surveys for stream-dependent amphibians in FY 2009-10 will be conducted in accessible habitat within the Conservation Area in conjunction with efforts carried out by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Geological Survey. Priority will be given to streams with appropriate habitat for arroyo toad.

6.3.2 Western Pond Turtle

The Monitoring Program effort for FY 2009-10 is a continuation of a collaborative effort with the CDFG and the U.S. Geological Survey that began in FY 2008-09 to document the distribution of western pond turtles in southern California. The focus of the Monitoring Program's activities will be in MSHCP Core Areas not yet surveyed for western pond turtles.

6.4 Mammals

6.4.1 Los Angeles Pocket Mouse Trapping

The species objectives for Los Angeles pocket mouse require the Monitoring Program to demonstrate that Los Angeles pocket mouse populations are stable or increasing in seven Core Areas and that at least 4,200 acres are occupied every eight years. This species objective requires distribution and population trend information. It will take more than one year's survey effort to determine whether or not this objective is being met. The FY 2009-10 efforts will focus on getting distribution information. It is expected that the Los Angeles pocket mouse trapping effort will also yield information about San Bernardino kangaroo rat and Aguanga kangaroo rat. This information will contribute to surveys for those species planned for the spring of 2011 or 2012.

6.4.2 Carnivore Surveys

Species objectives for bobcat, coyote, long-tailed weasel, and mountain lion require the conservation of contiguous-habitat blocks and the maintenance of corridors that provide an effective means for dispersal. In 2007 and 2008, the Monitoring Program developed methodologies and began surveys to detect the above-listed mammals in the contiguous habitat blocks, linkages and movement corridors identified by the MSHCP. This work will continue in FY 2009-10.

6.5 Plants

6.5.1 Rare Plant Surveys

There are 63 covered plant species with species objectives that require conserving and monitoring known populations within the Conservation Area. Surveys for rare plants in FY 2009-10 will continue efforts that began over three years ago to determine the status of each species at known recorded sites on accessible lands within the Conservation Area. The focal species are dependent on weather conditions and accessibility of recorded sites.

6.5.2 Engelmann Oak Study

The species objectives for Engelmann oak require maintaining recruitment of seedling and sapling oaks within conserved populations as measured across any consecutive five-year period. Surveys for Engelmann oaks in FY 2009-10 will continue efforts that began in FY 2005-06 to measure recruitment within accessible lands in the Conservation Area.

6.5.3 Vegetation Surveys

Vegetation surveys are a part of every project conducted by the Monitoring Program. The purpose of vegetation surveys is to quantify the habitat within survey areas to gain a better understanding of where species do and do not occur.

6.5.4 Coastal Sage Scrub and Chaparral Surveys

The MSCHP requires the Monitoring Program to assess the condition of vegetation communities within the Conservation Area (Vol. 1, Sec. 5.2.3). In FY 2009-10 we will expand a pilot effort that began in 2008 to sample coastal sage scrub and chaparral communities. This study is being done in cooperation with Dr. Deutschman of San Diego State University and the San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Plan and Central Orange County Natural Communities Conservation Plan.

6.6 Fish

6.6.1 Arroyo Chub and Santa Ana Sucker

The species objectives for arroyo chub require documenting the presence of this fish in 75 percent of its identified Core Areas in the Santa Ana and Santa Margarita watersheds. In FY 2009-10, the Monitoring Program will conduct surveys in the Core Areas in the Santa Margarita watershed. In the Santa Ana watershed, the Monitoring Program will complement the work of other local groups conducting native fish surveys.

7.0 SCHEDULE OF MONITORING EFFORTS FOR FY 2009-10

Below is a tentative calendar of when surveys are planned for FY 2009-10. The “biological year” or “survey season” does not match the fiscal year, thus the calendar represents two different survey seasons. The first half of the calendar continues many of the activities commenced in FY 2008-09 (e.g., Delhi fly surveys begin in June 2009).

Survey	Jul09	Aug09	Sep09	Oct09	Nov09	Dec09	Jan10	Feb10	Mar10	Apr10	May10	Jun10
Quino Checkerspot Survey												
Delhi Fly Survey												
Fairy Shrimp Survey												
Loggerhead Shrike Survey												
Golden Eagle Survey												
Amphibian Stream Survey ^a												
Western Pond Turtle												
Los Angeles Pocket Mouse												
Carnivore Survey												
Rare Plant Survey												
Engelmann Oak Study												
Vegetation Survey												
CSS Monitoring Study ^b												
Native Fish Survey												

a = Conducted in conjunction with the U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. Forest Service

b = Conducted in conjunction with San Diego State University

8.0 BIOLOGICAL MONITORING PROGRAM COST ESTIMATE FOR FY 2009-10

The FY 2009-10 proposed Biological Monitoring Program Budget is similar to previous budgets submitted to and approved by the RCA Board of Directors. The CDFG funds a portion of the Biological Monitoring Program based on the availability of the State's budget. The RCA has primary responsibility for funding the Biological Monitoring Program. The majority of funding is allocated to contracts for monitoring staff.

ALLOCATION	COST
CDFG Funded Labor & Supplies	
Monitoring Program Administrator	94,072
Biologist	53,004
General Field Crew (Scientific Aides)	99,620
Vehicle Usage (Fuel & Maintenance)	68,000
Field Supplies & Equipment	62,000
Subtotal CDFG Funded Labor & Supplies	\$376,696
USFWS Funded Labor	
Monitoring Program Coordinator	71,834
Subtotal USFWS Funded Labor	\$71,834
RCA Funded Contracts	
Agency Contract – SAWA (Staff)	858,930
Monitoring Program Coordinator	87,637
Subtotal RCA Funded Contracts	\$946,567
RCA Funded Operating Expenses & Equipment	
Rent – Lease Buildings	83,761
Office Equipment & Misc. (Non-fixed Assets)	8,000
Office Supplies	4,000
Communications (Phones/DSL)	3,500
Maintenance – Computer Equipment	1,000
Training – Other	3,000
Subtotal RCA Funded O&E	\$103,261
Total Program Cost	\$1,498,358
Minus Total CDFG Cost	- \$376,696
Minus Total USFWS Cost	- \$71,834
Grand Total RCA Cost	\$1,049,828

9.0 Contact Info

The FY 2008-09 Work Plan and Cost Estimate was prepared by the Monitoring Program Administrator and was submitted to the Regional Conservation Authority for approval. For more information, contact:

Western Riverside County MSHCP
Monitoring Program Administrator
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