



MINUTES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE August 18, 2010

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1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Executive Committee was called to order by Chairman Gary Thomasian at 12:08 p.m. in the RCA Conference Room, 3403 Tenth Street, Suite 320, Riverside, California.

2. ROLL CALL

Committee Members Present

Marion Ashley
Bob Buster
Jim Hyatt
Melissa Melendez
Eugene Montanez
Gary Thomasian

Alternate Member Present

Ron Roberts

3. PUBLIC COMMENT*

Michael O'Donnell, Murrieta, commented on issues that property owners with 10 to 40 acre lots are faced with in subdividing their properties and how the MSHCP requirements affect their subdivision plans. He expressed they have a number of unanswered questions that need answers and would like to meet with the City of Murrieta and RCA to address their concerns.

Because this matter is not on the agenda, it was determined that the Executive Director and the RCA Chair meet with Mr. Donovan after the meeting to further discuss the matter.

4. COMMITTEE MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Committee member announcements.

*The Public Comment item was taken out of sequence (after Agenda Item No. 10) in order that Mr. Donovan may submit his public comment.

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5. ADDITIONS/REVISIONS

There were no additions/revisions.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M/S/C (HYATT/MELENDEZ) to approve the minutes of the July 19, 2010 Executive Committee meeting as submitted.

Abstain: Ashley, Roberts

7. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, PARTNERS FOR WILDLIFE, FOR RESTORATION OF HABITAT ON THE REYNOLDS PROPERTY

Brian Beck, Land Acquisition Analyst, reported that staff has applied for \$15,260 in government assistance funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Partners for Fish and Wildlife, to remove the tamarisk vegetation and plant one acre of riparian vegetation on the Reynolds property, located east of Big Canyon Road, north of I-15 and just north of the City of Lake Elsinore. The property contains approximately 4.5 acres of non-native tamarisk vegetation. To assist in the completion of the project, RCA will provide in-kind services valued at \$19,533. The proposed agreement requires that habitat restoration improvements be for at least 10 years from the date of completion. Staff and legal counsel are continuing to work with USFWS on the suggested changes to the proposed agreement.

In response to Eugene Montanez's question about the process used to improve and maintain reserved land, Dustin McLain, Natural Resources Specialist with Riverside County Parks and Open Space District, said that there is a procedure they use to slow the growth.

Jim Hyatt asked if there are live oaks on the property, and Dustin McLain acknowledged that there are live oaks in the flat area of the property.

Bob Buster questioned the cost to continue restoration. Charlie Landry said that this is a pilot program. Staff will review costs and available dollars and make a determination if this is something we want to embark upon again in the future. In addition, staff will look at ways for tamarisk vegetation removal as well as cost sharing with USFWS.

M/S/C (ASHLEY/HYATT) to:

- 1) Recommend that the RCA Board of Directors approve the Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for restoration of habitat on the Reynolds property;***

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- 2) ***Authorize the Executive Director, pursuant to legal counsel review and approval, to execute said agreement on behalf of the Authority; and***
- 3) ***Authorize staff to agendize this matter for the September 13, 2010 meeting of the RCA Board of Directors.***

8. **BURROWING OWL HABITAT ENHANCEMENT UPDATE AND POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTIVITIES AT EL SOL**

Dustin McLain reported on previous, current and future management activities to enhance the Burrowing Owl habitat at the El Sol property, located south of Lake Skinner. A total of fifteen (15) artificial burrows have been installed at the El Sol property with the Boys Scouts and the County of Riverside installing ten (10) artificial burrows in November 2007, and five (5) artificial burrows installed by Bloom Biological, Inc. and Jared Bond. He presented pictures showing installation of the artificial burrows, management of vegetation via use of cattle, and placement of cameras to detect activities at the burrows to gather data. The artificial burrows are inspected three times a year to make sure that habitat is in proper condition and the burrows are functional. Future activities include maintaining habitat requirements by on-going use of cattle for grazing, implementing other vegetation controls in conjunction with cattle, and installing additional artificial burrows in the southern flat area of the El Sol property by utilizing the services of the Boys Scouts and donations.

In response to a question regarding the cost of an artificial burrow, Dustin McLain said that it ranges from \$15.00 to \$35.00 per artificial burrow.

Chairman Thomasian asked on the number of owls that habitat per burrow and where other areas have been identified to locate artificial burrows.

Dustin McLain stated that is usually one (1) nesting pair during the breeding season and around ten (10) to fifteen (15) during the non-breeding season that use the burrow for refuge. Three areas have been identified and supported by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and it will be installed when vegetation in those areas are cleared.

Ron Roberts inquired on the number of burrowing owls that are located in southwest Riverside County. He stated that there is an area with a number of visible burrowing owls.

Dustin McLain said that once a property is acquired by RCA, information is gathered on species and habitat.

Chairman Thomasian asked if cattle will be continued to be use to clearing brush and Dustin McLain responded that they will continue using cattle as it appears to be working and cost effective.

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M/S/C (HYATT/MONTANEZ) to:

- 1) *Recommend that the RCA Board of Directors receive and file the update regarding Burrowing Owls; and*
- 2) *Authorize staff to agendize this matter for the September 13, 2010 meeting of the RCA Board of Directors.*

9. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Charlie Landry, Executive Director, reported on the following items:

9.1 Section 6

The Section 6 local match issue is now resolved and a letter was received indicating that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has agreed to assume 20% of 97,000 acres that local permittees must conserve; thus, 19,400 acres are considered to be non-federal mitigation land. RCA can utilize local fees as match up to 19,400 acres. In addition, Congressman Ken Calvert has included language in the Appropriations bill to make certain that this matter is resolved. The next step is implementation.

Bob Buster asked Charlie Landry to explain the funding available through the Section 6 program. Charlie Landry stated that nationwide, the annual Section 6 program is short about \$100 million. Of this amount, approximately \$60-65 million is for acquisition. RCA has been competitive in the past and continues to do so. \$5 million worth of projects will be going to Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) next week using Section 6 funds. The remaining Section 6 funds will be used for acquisition next year. When the Request for Proposal is released, RCA will apply for additional Section 6 funds for next year. There is a \$6 million allocation cap for each recipient.

Dave Kennett, RCA Lobbyist, will provide a report to the RCA Board on September 13, 2010.

9.2 Loan Program

Staff continues to work with the offices of Senator Dianne Feinstein, Congressman Ken Calvert and the Senate Appropriations Committee on the loan program legislation.

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9.3 Personnel Update

RCA has hired Emad Gewaily to assume the Administrative Services Manager position and Laurie Dobson Correa for the Director of Reserve Management and Monitoring position.

Jim Hyatt asked about the Director of Land Acquisition position that Ken Graff held prior to retirement. Charlie Landry stated that there is no plan to fill the position in the near future. Brian Beck will continue to be the lead staff member to work on acquisition matters.

10. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

In response to Jim Hyatt about a report from Doug Wheeler, Washington Lobbyist, Charlie Landry said that a quarterly report to RCA is part of his agreement, which will be in October.

Jim Hyatt asked for a progress report on cell criteria refinement that is in the process as well as a model that Calimesa can use.

At this time, Chairman Thomasian adjourned the meeting to Closed Session.

11. CLOSED SESSION ITEM

11A. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION Pursuant to Subdivision (a) of Government Code Section 54956.9

- VAIL LAKE RANCHO CALIFORNIA, LLC
CASE NUMBER RIC 10015716
- WILHELM RANCH FAMILY LIMITED PARTNERSHIP
CASE NUMBER RIC 37-2009-00094633

After the Closed Session, Chairman Thomasian reconvened the meeting. There were no announcements from the Closed Session.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Executive Committee will be held on Wednesday, September 15, 2010, at 12:00 p.m., at the Riverside Centre, 3403 Tenth Street, Suite 320, Third Floor, RCA Conference Room, Riverside, California, 92501.

Respectfully submitted,



Honey Bernas
Clerk of the Board