



**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING AGENDA**

TIME: 12:00 p.m.

DATE: Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Pursuant to Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20, (March 18, 2020), the Executive Committee meeting will only be conducted via video conferencing and by telephone.

🌀 COMMITTEE MEMBERS 🌀

Natasha Johnson, City of Lake Elsinore – Chair
Jeff Hewitt, County of Riverside, District 5 – Vice Chair
Lesla Sobek, City of Menifee
Jonathan Ingram, City of Murrieta
Kevin Bash, City of Norco
Crystal Ruiz, City of San Jacinto
Kevin Jeffries, County of Riverside, District 1

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

www.wrc-rca.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

**12:00 p.m.
Wednesday, April 21, 2021**

Pursuant to Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-29-20, (March 18, 2020), the Executive Committee meeting will only be conducted via video conferencing and by telephone. Please follow the instructions below to join the meeting remotely.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ELECTRONIC PARTICIPATION

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://rctc.zoom.us/j/88544271916>

Call in: +1 669 900 6833

Meeting ID: 885 4427 1916

One tap mobile: +16699006833,,88544271916

For members of the public wishing to submit comment in connection with the Executive Committee Meeting please email written comments to the Clerk of the Board at lmobley@rctc.org prior to April 20, 2021 at 5:00 p.m., and your comments will be made part of the official record of the proceedings. Members of the public may also make public comments through their telephone or Zoom connection when recognized by the Chair.

In compliance with the Brown Act and Government Code Section 54957.5, agenda materials distributed 72 hours prior to the meeting, which are public records relating to open session agenda items, will be available for inspection by members of the public prior to the meeting on the RCA's website, www.wrc-rca.org.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Government Code Section 54954.2, Executive Order N-29-20, and the Federal Transit Administration Title VI, please contact the Clerk of the Board at (951) 787-7141 if special assistance is needed to participate in a Board meeting, including accessibility and translation services. Assistance is provided free of charge. Notification of at least 48 hours prior to the meeting time will assist staff in assuring reasonable arrangements can be made to provide assistance at the meeting.

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. ROLL CALL**
- 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS – *Under the Brown Act, the Board should not take action on or discuss matters raised during public comment portion of the agenda that are not listed on the agenda. The Board members may refer such matters to staff for factual information or to be placed on the subsequent agenda for consideration.*

5. ADDITIONS / REVISIONS – *The Board may add an item to the Agenda after making a finding that there is a need to take immediate action on the item and that the item came to the attention of the Board subsequent to the posting of the agenda. An action adding an item to the agenda requires 2/3 vote of the Board. If there are less than 2/3 of the Board members present, adding an item to the agenda requires a unanimous vote. Added items will be placed for discussion at the end of the agenda.*

6. CLOSED SESSION

6A. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL: EXISTING LITIGATION

Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9 (d)(1)

Case No. RIC1901547

7. CONSENT CALENDAR – *All matters on the Consent Calendar will be approved in a single motion unless a Board Member(s) requests separate action on specific item(s).*

7A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – MARCH 17, 2021

Page 1

7B. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FEE COLLECTION REPORT

Page 6

Overview

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive and file the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Fee Collection Report for March 2021; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

8. DRAFT PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN

Page 8

Overview

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive a presentation summarizing the Draft Public Outreach Plan; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

9. ROUGH STEP COMPLIANCE COMMUNICATION

Page 10

Overview

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive and file an informational item on Rough Step Compliance Communication; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

10. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Page 15

Overview

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive and file an update on state and federal legislation; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

11. BOARD OF DIRECTORS / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Overview

This item provides the opportunity for the Board of Directors and the Executive Director to report on attended meetings/conferences and any other items related to Commission activities.

- Nexus Study Implementation Update

12. ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled to be held on **Monday, May 19, 2021**, via Zoom.

AGENDA ITEM 7A

MINUTES

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Executive Committee was called to order by Chair Natasha Johnson at 12:00 p.m., via Zoom Meeting ID: 824 5814 6785, pursuant to Governor Newsom’s Executive Order N-29-20.

2. ROLL CALL

Members/Alternates Present

Kevin Jeffries
Jeff Hewitt
Natasha Johnson
Lesa Sobek
Jonathan Ingram
Kevin Bash
Crystal Ruiz

Members Absent

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board Member Hewitt.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no requests to speak from the public.

5. ADDITIONS / REVISIONS

There were no additions or revisions to the agenda.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR – *All matters on the Consent Calendar will be approved in a single motion unless a Board Member(s) requests separate action on specific item(s).*

M/S/C (Hewitt/Bash) to approve the following Consent Calendar items.

6A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 17, 2021

6B. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FEE COLLECTION REPORT

- 1) Receive and file the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Fee Collection Report for February 2021; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

7. UPDATE ON STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS FOR RESERVE ACQUISITION

Aaron Hake, Interim Regional Conservation Deputy Executive Director, provided a presentation on the current status of three state and federal grants that have been awarded to the RCA. Mr. Hake also detailed the process for the RCA team when competing for and completing grants for both the state and federal level. Future efforts will include meeting the deadlines for the State Wildlife Conservation Board to have the spending of grant funding approved, working with Assembly Member Cervantes on options for remaining funds, and preparing for the Fiscal Year 2022 Section 6 funding opportunities.

Chair Johnson thanked Mr. Hake and the right of way staff for working diligently to not lose the grant funding that was awarded.

Board Member Sobek thanked staff for putting together the letter from Anne Mayer to the new Secretary of the Department of the Interior recommending changes to the Section 6 program.

Board Member Hewitt inquired since the Jurupa Mountains Conservation grant funds would be difficult to expend, would changes go back through the legislature with the assistance of Assembly Member Cervantes or would it be possible to have administrative changes. Mr. Hake responded that based on a preliminary analysis, administratively the timeline could be extended for expending the grant. There are also other options being explored which would necessitate a legislative change to open the geography of the area where the money could be spent in the plan area.

Board Member Ingram inquired whether the RCA was looking at the areas that were not in Rough Step to attempt to acquire the land needed with the available funds. Mr. Hake noted that when reviewing Section 6 grants the RCA does look at those areas out of Rough Step, as the Fish and Wildlife Service want to see what species objectives would be achieved with grant funds. Board Member Ingram is interested to see if the state will be willing to use more funds received from the federal government to help implement the MSHCP. Mr. Hake agreed and noted that last week there was a National Habitat Conservation Plan meeting where the outlook on the year ahead was more optimistic than previous thought.

M/S/C to:

- 1) **Receive and file an update on state and federal grants for reserve acquisition; and**
- 2) **Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.**

8. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

David Knudsen, Legislative Affairs Manager, provided a State and Federal legislative update. Part of the strategy to achieve the MSHCP is HR 972 (Calvert); this bill would establish the Western Riverside County Wildlife Refuge. This bill would also enable US Fish and Wildlife Service to fulfill its obligation as a partner in the MSHCP.

M/S/C (Ingram/Ruiz) to:

- 1) Receive and file an update on state and federal legislation;**
- 2) Adopt the following bill positions:**
 - a. HR 972 (Calvert) - Support; and**
- 3) Forward to the Board of Director for final action.**

9. BOARD OF DIRECTORS / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Chair Johnson announced the creation of an interactive dashboard on the RCA website that can be used for all jurisdictions to be able to see the exact acreage that has been conserved and a cumulative total. Philip Kang, Technical Information Program Manager, provided a demonstration of the new dashboards on the RCA website. The maps on the website are for the MSHCP Annual Report and have information on Conservation by Jurisdiction and Rough Step Balance.

Board Member Ingram thanked Chair Johnson and the RCA staff for pursuing this effort. If possible, it would be nice to include the total acreage amount that is out of Rough Step in each cell criteria.

Board Member Bash expressed excitement for the new dashboards, which have been a long time in the making. These interactive maps are being used more frequently now and are very popular. He looks forward to sharing this information with his fellow council members and the residents in his city.

Board Member Sobek echoed the previous comments and believes this will be a great benefit for the cities and developers.

Chair Johnson announced a call to action for her fellow Board Members as it pertains to the implementation of the Nexus Study update. Several jurisdictions are about to present the Nexus Study to their councils, and Board Members of the RCA should be able to speak to and educate their councils on this new update. Staff from the RCA can attend the virtual city council meetings to answer any questions and assist in any way possible. Staff has already been reaching out to community development directors, city planning departments, city managers, and stakeholders. During the formation of the Nexus Study update, there was a complaint of lack of communication, so an effort has been placed on over-communicating. Unfortunately, there are still elected officials who are not aware of the Nexus Study update, and the deadline of adoption by May 1st, to be able to be implemented by July 1st.

Board Member Ingram asked that talking points be sent to Board Members to make sure everyone was on the same page. With the Brown Act, he is only able to engage with one colleague, so that makes disseminating information difficult. Once he receives the talking points that information can be sent to the City Manager, who can pass the information on to all council members.

Anne Mayer, Executive Director, noted that the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document, sample staff report, and other templates have been sent to each of the jurisdictions. There have been meetings with individual staff and cities that are preparing to take the Nexus Study to their councils to help them prepare. The RCA staff has made presentations to all jurisdiction Planning Directors, Economic Development Directors, Public Works Directors, and the City Managers.

Board Member Ingram thought it would be important to have discussions on the Nexus Study be conveyed to Board Members in a way they could easily understand, especially those who may not be as well versed on the subject. The reasoning behind extending the permit life span was to make it affordable and not send shock waves through the industry, as well as not to harm the ability to bring in new business.

Chair Johnson concurred with Board Member Ingram and reiterated that this call to action was for exactly that purpose. She wants to make sure that all Board Members have the tools they need to work with their jurisdictions on getting the update passed.

Steven DeBaun, legal counsel, noted that as this item was not on the agenda, suggestions related to the Nexus Study implementation should be forwarded to Anne Mayer and leadership to make sure we are covering all our bases. Another alternative would be to establish a small ad-hoc committee to meet and discuss these efforts. Chair Johnson believes the timeline is too short to implement an ad-hoc but asked Board Members to email her if they felt differently.

Board Member Jeffries noted that the Board of Supervisors approved the updated fee schedule last week.

Anne Mayer, Executive Director, introduced Melonie Donson as the new Deputy Clerk of the Board for the RCA. Ms. Mayer detailed how the RCA staff is assisting Board Members and staff as they prepare for meetings to approve the Nexus Study update. When the RCA staff is notified that an item is going before a city council, every effort is made to attend the meeting and reach out to the Board Members in advance.

Ms. Mayer shared the three priorities of the RCA Board: sustainability, organizational excellence, and partnerships. On the sustainability side, the focus is the sustainability of the MSHCP which translates to funding. This includes focusing on meeting the objectives of grants, having money spent, and seeking partnerships at the state and federal level. Finding the funding to complete the MSHCP is really the key area of focus and have acquisitions completed as soon as possible. Organizational excellence has started with getting the balance of the team

filled in order to start making the improvements that are expected of the RCA by Board Members in terms of efficiency, cost effectiveness, and productivity. To help solidify and build partnerships, an effort is being made to over-communicate at the member agency level. This is an area that has been conveyed to the RCA staff as lacking, and member agencies have asked to hear more from the RCA. Communications with stakeholders in the County of Riverside as well as those at the state and a national level.

Ms. Mayer added that in addition to those three priorities, the RCA is also focused on items that Board Members have said are important. At the last Board meeting, Board Member Bash brought up the subject of tours of the RCA conservation lands; as a result the RCA staff will be looking at creative ways to accomplish this for Board Members. When Board Member Ingram had suggestions about fee collection, the RCA staff met with Western Riverside Council of Governments to go over their process. The next couple of months, focusing on the Nexus Study and supporting all Board Members at city council meetings is where attention will be placed.

Board Member Ingram thanked Ms. Mayer and her staff for a job well done.

Board Member Ruiz thanked Ms. Mayer for the support that was offered to the City of San Jacinto in passing the Nexus Study update.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Executive Committee, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 12:59 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled to be held on **Wednesday, April 21, 2021**, via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Manager/
Clerk of the Board

AGENDA ITEM 7B

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

DATE:	April 21, 2021
TO:	Executive Committee
FROM:	Jennifer Fuller, Financial Administration Manager
THROUGH:	Theresa Trevino, Chief Financial Officer
SUBJECT:	Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan Fee Collection Report

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive and file the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Fee Collection Report for March 2021; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Western Riverside County MSHCP Local Development Mitigation Fee (LDMF) collections provide funding for the acquisition of additional reserve lands and related costs. RCA budgeted \$10.5 million in LDMF collections for FY 2020/21. Other fees are contributed by Member Agencies and other jurisdictions for civic and infrastructure projects. For FY 2020/21, RCA budgeted \$490,000 for such contributions.

Attached is the LDMF Collection and Civic/Infrastructure Contribution report for March 2021, which reflects combined collections to date of \$13,797,736.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the receipt and file of this fee collection report.

Attachment: Western Riverside County MSHCP LDMF Collection and Civic/Infrastructure Contribution Report for March 2021

**WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MSHCP LDMF COLLECTION AND CIVIC/INFRASTRUCTURE
CONTRIBUTION REPORT FOR MARCH 2021**

Amounts subject to rounding

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT MITIGATION FEE COLLECTIONS							
City/County	Month	REMITTED				EXEMPTIONS & FEE CREDITS	
		Residential Permits	Commercial Industrial Acres	Amount Remitted	Total FY Year-to-Date	Residential Permits	Amount
City of Banning	February-No Activity			\$0	\$8,936		
City of Beaumont	February-No Activity			\$0	\$355,445		
City of Calimesa	January February-No Activity	25		\$55,850	\$460,204		
City of Canyon Lake	February	1		\$2,234	\$15,638		
City of Corona	January February	15 6		\$22,254 \$8,580	\$165,403		
City of Eastvale	February		55.86	\$424,871	\$753,554		
City of Hemet	February	12		\$26,808	\$217,011		
City of Jurupa Valley	February	1	23.67	\$182,268	\$1,267,570		
City of Lake Elsinore	February	25		\$37,226	\$204,646		
City of Menifee	February	200		\$446,800	\$1,926,793		
City of Moreno Valley	February	47	0.6	\$109,691	\$774,082		
City of Murrieta	February-Pending			\$0	\$69,370		
City of Norco	February	1		\$2,234	\$2,234		
City of Perris	February-Rcvd April			\$0	\$1,058,446		
City of Riverside	Oct/Nov/Dec February-Pending	5	2.4	\$29,047 \$0	\$163,553		
City of San Jacinto	February	31		\$69,254	\$390,613		
City of Temecula	January February-Pending Roripaugh DA ¹	21		\$30,834	\$486,290	20	\$44,680
City of Wildomar	January February	1 1		\$2,234 \$2,234	\$93,828		
County of Riverside	March	167	144.02	\$1,468,510	\$5,057,789		
Total LDMF Collections		559	226.60	\$2,920,928	\$13,471,405	20	\$ 44,680

CIVIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRIBUTIONS			
		Amount Remitted	Total FY Year-to-Date
City of Menifee Community Service Facility expansion		\$532	
Total Civic and Infrastructure contributions from all Member Agencies			\$326,331
Total Civic/Infrastructure Contributions		\$532	\$326,331

TOTAL MARCH 2021 \$2,921,461 \$13,797,736

¹ Roripaugh Development Agreement dated 12/17/02. Project is exempt under Assessment District 161.

AGENDA ITEM 8

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

DATE:	April 21, 2021
TO:	Executive Committee
FROM:	Cheryl Donahue, Public Affairs Manager
THROUGH:	Aaron Hake, Interim Regional Conservation Deputy Executive Director
SUBJECT:	Draft Public Outreach Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive a presentation summarizing the Draft Public Outreach Plan; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

One of the RCA’s renewed priorities, as a result of the consolidation with the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC), is to strengthen communication and education with stakeholders, news media, and the public about the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP or Plan) and progress toward its completion. The adoption of a Public Outreach Plan provides the framework for this effort. The Public Outreach Plan uses a strategic, data-driven approach with multiple platforms to help increase awareness and support of RCA, the MSHCP, and its mission, with the pillars of Sustainability, Organizational Excellence, and Partnerships with Member Agencies embedded in all communications.

DISCUSSION:

Draft Public Outreach Plan

Educating and informing the public about the benefits of the MSHCP in western Riverside County is an important element to the success of the Plan. Public interest and support of the MSHCP help RCA’s efforts when seeking state and federal funds and establishes credibility among stakeholder groups. To accomplish these and other goals, staff has drafted a Public Outreach Plan for review and comment by the Executive Committee. Overall, the draft Public Outreach Plan is designed to communicate how the MSHCP benefits the quality of life in the region by preserving open space; protecting the region’s species; and accelerating construction of infrastructure and development projects. The Public Outreach Plan is also intended to explain how the MSHCP reduces project costs and provides permitting efficiencies that lead to economic growth.

The draft plan includes multiple public outreach strategies intended to build a comprehensive approach, targeting communities across multiple demographics. Each strategy will involve

research, planning, communicating, and evaluating results. Every effort will be made to establish a two-way dialogue with the community, listen, and communicate in both English and Spanish as needed. Strategies will include:

1. Audience Identification: Prepare and maintain comprehensive database of email contacts
2. Key Messaging: Develop set of key messages for consistent use in public-facing communications
3. Social Media Engagement: Increase social media followers, reach, engagement, and impressions
4. Video Engagement: Produce brief, engaging, in-house videos for social media, web, and digital communications
5. Website Engagement: Increase website visits and align site content with key messaging
6. News Content: Publish monthly electronic newsletters and send periodic news releases with items of interest to stakeholders, the public, and news media
7. Presentations: Schedule presentations to partner agencies, environmental and private sector groups, city councils, and community/civic organizations
8. School Resources: Develop curriculum packages for multiple grade levels and initiate outreach planning
9. Recreational Opportunities: Educate the public about ways to enjoy and learn about protected lands within the MSHCP and to use proper trail etiquette

As part of the new management structure that took effect in January 2021, RCTC ended the contract with the RCA's previous public relations consultant and will use its internal Public Affairs Department resources to implement this Public Outreach Plan. RCTC has reviewed past RCA communications materials and practices for historical knowledge and to build upon previous outreach efforts.

To ensure accountability, staff will produce and present to the Board quarterly metrics reports. The reports will analyze the effectiveness of the communications strategies over time and enable staff to adjust the outreach approach as needed.

AGENDA ITEM 9

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

DATE:	April 21, 2021
TO:	Executive Committee
FROM:	Tricia Campbell, Reserve Management and Monitoring Manager
THROUGH:	Anne Mayer, Executive Director
SUBJECT:	Rough Step Compliance Communication

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive and file an informational item on Rough Step Compliance Communication; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) requires the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) to perform an annual analysis of habitat losses to gains through what is known as Rough Step. Rough Step is a measurement tool that ensures development and conservation are in balance. When take of specific vegetation communities outpaces conservation of those same communities, Rough Step is out of compliance. The RCA calculates Rough Step balances annually based on permit data from all Permittees and habitat conservation that has been achieved. Results of the Rough Step analysis is prepared in an Annual Report, available to state and federal regulatory agencies that oversee implementation of the MSHCP as well as to the public.

As presented in the 2019 Annual Report, the conservation gains and habitat losses for two vegetation communities within three Rough Step Units are out of compliance, specifically Rough Step Units 3, 5, and 7. There is a fourth, Rough Step Unit 8, that has been out of compliance since inception of the Plan, and as such is treated differently by the RCA and state and federal regulatory agencies and is not part of this communication.

On page 6-96, Section 6.7 of Volume I, the MSHCP states:

If the Rough Step rule is not met during any analysis period the Permittees must conserve appropriate lands supporting a specified Vegetation Community within the Analysis Unit to bring the Plan back into the parameters of the rule prior to authorizing additional loss of the Vegetation Community for which the rule was not achieved.

Therefore, a Permittee is not to authorize removal of a vegetation community that is out of Rough Step compliance. This would apply to any projects within a criteria cell that occurs within the Rough Step Unit that is out of compliance and which propose removal of a vegetation type that is out of Rough Step.

To ensure a Permittee with jurisdiction in Rough Step Units 3, 5, and 7 is aware and understands this MSHCP requirement, the RCA will be sending an email and letter to each Permittee with jurisdiction within Rough Step Units 3, 5, and 7. A sample letter is attached. This staff report is intended to give advance notice to the Executive Committee that Permittees will receive this communication and answer any questions.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the RCA for sending the Rough Step Compliance Communication.

Attachment: Sample Rough Step Compliance Letter to Permittees



4080 Lemon St. 3rd Fl. Riverside, CA 92502
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 12008 Riverside, CA 92502-2208
951.787.7141 • wrc-rca.org

[MM dd], 2021

[Permittee (e.g., City Manager)]

RE: Western Riverside County Multiple Species Conservation Plan Rough Step Compliance

Dear [Name]:

This letter is to inform your agency as a Permittee of the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Conservation Plan (MSHCP, the Plan) that the conservation gains to habitat losses for two vegetation communities within three Rough Step Units are out of compliance, specifically Rough Step Units 3, 5, and 7. If you are receiving this letter it means this affects your agency.

Rough Step is a measurement tool within the MSHCP that ensures development and conservation are in balance. When take of specific vegetation communities outpaces conservation of those same communities, Rough Step is out of compliance. The RCA calculates Rough Step balances annually based on permit data from all Permittees and habitat conservation that has been achieved. Results of the Rough Step analysis is prepared in an Annual Report, available to MSHCP Permittees, state and federal regulatory agencies that oversee implementation of the MSHCP as well as to the public on the RCA website.

On page 6-96, Section 6.7 of Volume I, the MSHCP states:

If the Rough Step rule is not met during any analysis period the Permittees must conserve appropriate lands supporting a specified Vegetation Community within the Analysis Unit to bring the Plan back into the parameters of the rule prior to authorizing additional loss of the Vegetation Community for which the rule was not achieved.

Therefore, a Permittee is not to authorize removal of a vegetation community that is out of Rough Step compliance. This would apply to any projects within a criteria cell that occurs within the Rough Step Unit that is out of compliance and which propose removal of a vegetation type that is out of Rough Step. Each Permittee is encouraged to consult with the RCA on current rough step allowances prior to issuing grading permits or other forms of discretionary ground disturbing activities. The RCA website provides current Rough Step Balances at <https://www.wrc-rca.org/> under the tab, "MAPS - Annual Report Dash Board – Rough Step Balance."

Table 1 below summarizes the Rough Step Units out of compliance. In addition, the RCA is providing information on the steps we are taking to achieve Rough Step balance. For Rough Step Units 3 and 5 it is likely the RCA will be able to resolve the issue soon due to pending habitat acquisitions. Conversely, resolving the Rough Step Unit 7 issue for Riversidian Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS) will need the support and collaboration between the Permittees affected and the RCA. The challenge for

Rough Step Unit 7 is that most of the RAFSS vegetation described for conservation is in Temescal Wash and not likely to become available for acquisition given existing mining operations.

Table 1. Out of Rough Step Compliance Summary

ROUGH STEP UNIT OUT OF COMPLIANCE	VEGETATION OUT OF COMPLIANCE	OUT OF ROUGH STEP AMOUNT (AC.)¹	AMOUNT TO GET BACK INTO COMPLIANCE (AC.)	PERMITTEE JURISDICTION WITHIN ROUGH STEP UNIT²	RCA UPDATE
Rough Step Unit 3	Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS)	-2.36	+2.92	Moreno Valley, Riverside, Perris, Menifee, San Jacinto, Hemet, County of Riverside, Riverside County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, Riverside County Regional Park & Open Space District, Riverside County Department of Waste Resources, RCTC, Caltrans, and California Depart. of Parks & Recreation	In escrow on properties that would rectify the issue
Rough Step Unit 5	Riparian Scrub, Woodland, Forest	-1.00	+5.67	Wildomar, Murrieta, Temecula, Lake Elsinore, County of Riverside, Riverside County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, Riverside County Regional Park & Open Space District, Riverside County Department of Waste Resources, RCTC, Caltrans, and California Depart. of Parks & Recreation	In escrow on properties that would rectify the issue
Rough Step Unit 7	Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub (RAFSS)	-4.26	+26.35	Lake Elsinore, Perris, Riverside, Corona, County of Riverside, Riverside County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, Riverside County Regional Park & Open Space	RCA is in escrow on a property and actively pursuing

¹ A negative Rough Step balance indicates that development has outpaced conservation.

² Refer to Attachment Figure 6-6 – Rough Step Analysis Units with Criteria Area.

ROUGH STEP UNIT OUT OF COMPLIANCE	VEGETATION OUT OF COMPLIANCE	OUT OF ROUGH STEP AMOUNT (AC.)¹	AMOUNT TO GET BACK INTO COMPLIANCE (AC.)	PERMITTEE JURISDICTION WITHIN ROUGH STEP UNIT²	RCA UPDATE
				District, Riverside County Department of Waste Resources, RCTC, Caltrans, and California Depart. of Parks & Recreation	willing sellers

The RCA will be reaching out to your Community Development Department to discuss this further. Please contact me at (951) 787-7141 or amayer@rctc.org if you have any questions. In the meantime, please share this information with your Community Development Department to ensure compliance with the MSHCP.

Sincerely,

Anne Mayer
 Executive Director
 Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority

Attachments:
 Figure 6-6 Rough Step Analysis Units with Criteria Area

AGENDA ITEM 10

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

DATE:	April 21, 2021
TO:	Executive Committee
FROM:	David Knudsen, Interim External Affairs Director
THROUGH:	Aaron Hake, Interim Regional Conservation Deputy Executive Director
SUBJECT:	Legislative Update

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

This item is for the Committee to:

- 1) Receive and file an update on state and federal legislation; and
- 2) Forward to the Board of Directors for final action.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

State Update

The California State Legislature returned to Sacramento from its week-long spring recess on April 5, 2021. Legislators have an extremely busy month ahead as they work through policy committee hearings and facing deadlines to advance bills introduced in their house of origin. Simultaneously, Governor Newsom is preparing his budget revision to be released in May, which will take into account any adjustments to state revenue or any changes he wants to make to his 2021-22 budget proposal. June 15, 2021, is the Constitutional deadline for the Legislature to pass a budget.

In partnership with the California Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition (CHCPC), staff is working to setup a workshop with the California Department of General Services (DGS) in order to better understand their policies, practices, and procedures related to land acquisition appraisals associated with grant awards. RCA and other Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP) are advocating for improvements within the DGS appraisal review process.

Legislation

SB 45 (Portantino) – Support, if amended (support letter based on platform)

Senate Bill (SB) 45, authored by Senator Anthony Portantino, is a \$5.5 billion bond measure titled, the Wildfire, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act. The measure proposes funds to reduce fire risk and restore areas that are already damaged; restore and protect impacted wetlands, watersheds, and waterways; reduce impacts on

vulnerable populations; and improve the resiliency of the State’s water supplies and agricultural lands. The bond measure calls for \$600 million to be allocated to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). HCPs would be one of several programs that would qualify for this competitive funding to be administered by the WCB. However, this funding is not guaranteed to be awarded to HCPs.

SB 45 represents an opportunity for HCPs to gain access to much-needed funding. However, staff is recommending an amendment to the legislation to add funding specifically for HCPs. This would better position the RCA to compete for funding, should the bond be adopted by the voters in the future. In support of this effort, the CHCPC is advocating for \$100 million to be set aside for HCPs.

Based on the Senate Governance and Finance Committee’s deadlines, staff submitted a “support, if amended” letter on behalf of the RCA, to ensure our input was part of the legislative process.

Action taken on this bill was consistent with the Board adopted 2021 State and Federal Legislative Platform, including:

- Policies should recognize the positive and enabling benefits that HCPs and National Community Conservation Planning (NCCP) bring to the environment, infrastructure development, economic growth, and quality of life to the surrounding communities.
- Support efforts to preserve, stabilize, leverage, and increase state and federal funding for implementation of the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

AB 1500 (Garcia) –Support, if amended (support letter based on platform)

Assembly Bill (AB) 1500, authored by Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia, is the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparation, Flood Protection, Extreme Heat Mitigation, and Workforce Development Bond Act of 2022. AB 1500 calls for \$6.7 billion to be used to achieve the State’s climate action goals, mitigate climate impacts, improve disaster response, and prevent future catastrophes. The bond would make investments in various adaptation activities throughout the State, ranging from wildfire risk reduction, to drought preparation, to protection against sea-level rise. AB 1500 includes \$400 million in funding to the WCB. HCPs and NCCPs are one of several eligible uses of the funds. HCPs would have to compete for this funding with other agencies without any guarantee of funding award.

Like SB 45, AB 1500 represents an opportunity for HCPs to gain access to much-needed funding. However, staff is recommending the legislation be amended to add funding specifically for HCPs. This would better position the RCA to compete for funding, should the bond be adopted by the voters in the future. In support of this effort, the CHCPC is advocating for \$100 million to be set aside for HCPs.

Based on the Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee’s deadlines, staff submitted a “support, if amended” letter on behalf of the RCA, to ensure our input was part of the legislative process.

Action taken on this bill was consistent with the Board adopted 2021 State and Federal Legislative Platform, including:

- Policies should recognize the positive and enabling benefits that HCPs and NCCPs bring to the environment, infrastructure development, economic growth, and quality of life to the surrounding communities.
- Support efforts to preserve, stabilize, leverage, and increase state and federal funding for implementation of the MSHCP.

Federal Update

On March 31, 2021, President Joe Biden unveiled his American Jobs Plan, a \$2.3 trillion proposal including \$1.3 trillion for infrastructure spending. Congress will consider this plan as surface transportation reauthorization legislation as crafted in the House and Senate.

Section 6 Notice of Funding Opportunity

As a follow-up to the virtual D.C. advocacy trip in March and RCA’s February 22, 2021 letter to Department of the Interior (DOI) regarding recommendations on the administration of the Non-Traditional Section 6 Grants, staff and other California Habitat Conservation Plans met with United States Fish and Wildlife Services staff regarding the next Section 6 Notice of Funding Opportunity. Meetings like this help further RCA’s efforts to provide greater flexibility to the grant program.

Community Project Funding

Congressional offices across the country, including those in Riverside County, are accepting applications for community projects to receive federal dollars under new Community Project Funding (CPF), which allows members of Congress to request funding for as many as ten projects within their home districts. The ten projects selected by Members will go to the House Appropriations Committee for review, and there will be a public database of all requests received by the committee.

In order to achieve decision-making transparency and reduce potential abuse, several guardrails have been set, including: requiring Members to certify that they and their families do not have a financial interest in any request made by the Member; creating a searchable online database of all CPF requests; banning for-profit recipients; and requiring each Member to demonstrate

community benefit and support for each request. Each congressional office required each applicant to answer a series of questions to vet the legitimacy of the project and the request.

Staff have been working diligently to prepare community project funding requests that will assist with the implementation of the MSHCP. In particular, the RCA applied for CPF to Representatives Calvert, Takano, and Ruiz seeking land acquisition funds. Each application requested \$3 million to leverage local funds to acquire prioritized lands.

While this is the process for the House, the Senate is expected to craft its own process for including CPF in its appropriations process, but neither a timeline nor a formal agreement between the chamber's leaders have been announced. In the meantime, staff will continue to identify additional funding resources to help achieve the goals of the MSHCP.

Attachment:

- 1) AB 1500 Support Letter to Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia
- 2) SB 45 Support letter to Senator Anthony Portantino
- 3) RCA Community Project Funding Support letter – Eden Hot Springs Project, Badlands
- 4) RCA Community Project Funding Support letter – Sage Project, East of Lake Skinner
- 5) RCA Community Project Funding Support letter – Kelvar and Wolfskill Project, Badlands



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March 30, 2021

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 4140
Sacramento, California 95814

Re: AB 1500 – Support If Amended

Dear Assemblymember Garcia:

On behalf of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), thank you for taking the time to meet with our Executive Director Anne Mayer and representatives of the California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition (CHCPC) on March 8, 2021 regarding our conditional support for AB 1500, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparation, Flood Protection, Extreme Heat Mitigation, and Workforce Development Bond Act of 2022.

We appreciate your steadfast leadership in climate resiliency, as well as your thoughtful engagement regarding how the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP or Plan) and other Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) across the state may contribute to the success of this measure.

AB 1500 includes \$400 million in funding to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). HCPs and NCCPs are one of several eligible uses of the funds. We are pleased to see this amount, but we believe that HCPs and NCCPs would be best positioned to partner with the state to meet climate resiliency goals if you ensure that at least \$100 million of the funding allocated to WCB per § 80562 is reserved specifically for HCPs and NCCPs. We request the following language to be amended into Assembly Bill 1500:

Remove § 80562 (5) and add § 80562 (b) to read:

~~*80562. (5) Projects for the protection of threatened and endangered species, including projects within natural community conservation plans adopted pursuant to the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act (Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 2800) of Division 3 of the Fish and Game Code) or habitat conservation plans. Projects may include land acquisition through either easement or fee title.*~~

80562. (b) Of the funds made available by Section 80562 (a), not less than \$100 million dollars shall be available for the acquisition, including fee title and easement; development; rehabilitation; and restoration of habitat that furthers the implementation of both Natural Community Conservation Plans and Habitat Conservation Plans.

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia

March 30, 2021

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As you know, the MSHCP is a 75-year plan established in 2004 to protect 500,000 acres of habitat for 146 species (33 of which are listed as endangered or threatened) while expediting infrastructure project delivery, particularly transportation facilities, as well as commercial and residential development to support population and economic growth in western Riverside County.

Executive Order N-82-20 set California's goal to conserve 30 percent of the state's lands and coastal waters by 2030 and protect the biodiversity of California's unique plants and animals. The MSHCP and other HCPs and NCCPs across the state are indispensable partners in this endeavor and recognize that with the appropriate resources, HCPs and NCCPs can advance carbon sequestration, promote biodiversity for the wellness of ecosystems and society alike, and support environmental justice principles of developing sustainable and equitable communities that preserve access to natural resources.

The state was a principal partner in establishing the MSHCP and agreed to acquire one-sixth of the acres of the Plan's wildlife preserve. AB 1500, if amended would enhance RCA's partnership with the state to meet the land acquisition goals and fulfill the shared vision of aligning environmental conservation, infrastructure, and economic growth. With the amended language, this bond proposal would enable the California Natural Resources Agency to fulfill its obligation as a partner in the MSHCP.

As was discussed in your meeting with RCA, AB 1500 presents a great opportunity and, if amended, will not only equip HCPs and NCCPs with the resources needed to take immediate action to tackle climate change, but ensure the long-term success of the MSHCP and provide certainty that the collaboration with our state partners will remain strong. Should you have any questions, please reach out to Anne Mayer, Executive Director, at (951) 787-7141. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Natasha Johnson

Chair

CC: The Honorable Sabrina Cervantes, Assembly District 60
The Honorable Chad Mayes, Assembly District 42
The Honorable Jose Medina, Assembly District 61
The Honorable Kelly Seyarto, Assembly District 67
The Honorable Randy Voepel, Assembly District 71
The Honorable Marie Waldron, Assembly District 75



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April #, 2021

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino
 California State Senate
 State Capitol, Room 5050
 Sacramento, California 95814

Re: SB 45 – Support If Amended

Dear Senator Portantino:

The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) writes in conditional support of SB 45, the Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2022, and offers an amendment for your consideration. The introduction of this legislation is commendable and, if amended, would represent a critical investment from the state to the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP or Plan) and other Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) across the state.

SB 45 includes \$600 million in funding to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB). HCPs and NCCPs are one of several eligible uses of the funds. We are pleased to see this amount, but we believe that HCPs and NCCPs would be best positioned to partner with the state to meet climate resiliency goals if you ensure that at least \$100 million of the funding allocated to WCB per § 80241 is reserved specifically for HCPs and NCCPs. We request the following language to be amended into Senate Bill 45:

Remove § 80241 (g) and add § 80243 to read:

~~*80241. (g) Projects for the protection of threatened and endangered species, including projects within natural community conservation plans or habitat conservation plans. Projects may include land acquisition through either easement or fee title...*~~

80243. Of the funds made available by Section 80241, not less than \$100 million dollars shall be available to the Wildlife Conservation Board for grants for the acquisition, including fee title and easement; development; rehabilitation; and restoration of habitat that furthers the implementation of both Natural Community Conservation Plans and Habitat Conservation Plans.

Established in 2004, the MSHCP is a 75-year plan to protect 500,000 acres of habitat for 146 species (33 of which are listed as endangered or threatened) while expediting infrastructure project delivery, particularly transportation facilities, as well as commercial and residential development to support population and economic growth in western Riverside County.

The Honorable Anthony J. Portantino
April 8, 2021
Page 2

Executive Order N-82-20 set California's goal to conserve 30 percent of the state's lands and coastal waters by 2030 and protect the biodiversity of California's unique plants and animals. The MSHCP and other HCPs and NCCPs across the state are indispensable partners in this endeavor and recognize that with the appropriate resources, HCPs and NCCPs can advance carbon sequestration, promote biodiversity for the wellness of ecosystems and society alike, and support environmental justice principles of developing sustainable and equitable communities that preserve access to natural resources.

The state was a principal partner in establishing the MSHCP and agreed to acquire one-sixth of the acres of the Plan's wildlife preserve. SB 45, if amended, would enhance RCA's partnership with the state to meet the land acquisition goals and fulfill the shared vision of aligning environmental conservation, infrastructure, and economic growth. With the amended language, this bond proposal would enable the California Natural Resources Agency to fulfill its obligation as a partner in the MSHCP.

SB 45 presents a great opportunity and, if amended, will not only equip HCPs and NCCPs with the resources needed to take immediate action to tackle climate change, but ensure the long-term success of the MSHCP and provide certainty that the collaboration with our state partners will remain strong.

Please contact Anne Mayer, Executive Director, at (951) 787-7141 if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Natasha Johnson
Chair

CC: The Honorable Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh, Senate District 23
The Honorable Melissa Melendez, Senate District 28
The Honorable Richard D. Roth, Senate District 31



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April 8, 2021

The Honorable Ken Calvert
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Support for the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority's Community Project Funding Request

Dear Congressman Calvert:

On behalf of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), I am pleased to request Community Project Funding of \$3 million for the Eden Hot Springs Acquisition Project to acquire eight parcels in Congressional District 42 and the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) area for purposes of habitat conservation.

The Eden Hot Springs properties include 821 acres located in the Badlands east of Mystic Lake and north of Gilman Springs Road in unincorporated Riverside County. These lands would contribute to a proposed habitat linkage connecting the San Bernardino National Forest in the San Jacinto Mountains to the southwest with San Bernardino County and other conserved areas to the north, west, and south. This linkage would provide habitat protection and movement for Bell's sage sparrow, loggerhead shrike, cactus wren, Stephens' kangaroo rat, Los Angeles Pocket Mouse, southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, and mountain lion, which have key populations in the Badlands.

The MSHCP calls for the acquisition and conservation of 500,000 acres of habitat reserves in western Riverside County for the protection of 146 species, 33 of which are listed as threatened or endangered. The federal and state governments are each responsible for acquiring one-sixth of the land, and the RCA is to acquire the remaining two-thirds. Thanks to this partnership, 410,034 acres of land have been conserved since the MSHCP's inception in 2004, accounting for 82 percent of the reserve goal.

This project is instrumental to the success of the Endangered Species Act and it offers broad local benefit to be enjoyed for generations. Not only does habitat conservation bolster biodiversity for a healthy ecosystem, but it also protects open space in underserved communities for potential recreational use, and it preserves and expands natural carbon sequestration to improve local air quality.

However, Riverside County continues to rapidly develop as its population is expected to grow to 3.2 million by 2040. As the real estate market becomes more competitive the value of land left to be acquired and conserved will only rise.

The Honorable Ken Calvert
April 8, 2021
Page 2

To minimize taxpayer burden in our community and maximize benefit for the residents and protected species of western Riverside County, it is critical that RCA maintain momentum to acquire prioritized lands before they further appreciate in value. If funded, this acquisition would constitute a leap in progress toward fully implementing the MSHCP and could one day be included in the proposed Western Riverside County Wildlife Refuge.

The project will be funded with \$2.3 million in local funding with the balance from the Community Funding Project.

The Eden Hot Springs Acquisition Project is deserving of this funding because of the long-term positive effect it will have on the wellbeing and prosperity our community's residents, protected species, and land that we call home. RCA values the federal government as an integral partner, and I encourage you to give it full and fair consideration.

Please contact Executive Director Anne Mayer at (951) 787-7141 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Natasha Johnson
Chair



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April 8, 2021

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, M.D.
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Support for the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority's Community Project Funding Request

Dear Congressman Ruiz:

On behalf of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), I am pleased to request Community Project Funding of \$3 million for the Sage Acquisition Project to acquire six parcels in Congressional District 36 and the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) area for purposes of habitat conservation.

The Sage properties include 1,070 acres located 10 miles east of Lake Skinner in unincorporated Riverside County, immediately east of Sage Road. The proposed large intact habitat preserve provides live-in habitat and movement for species connecting to other conserved areas located in the Agua Tibia Wilderness, San Bernardino National Forest, and Beauty Mountain Management Area. This habitat supports Quino checkerspot butterfly, coastal California gnatcatcher, Stephens' kangaroo rat, least Bell's vireo, bobcat, mountain lion, and several rare plant species.

The MSHCP calls for the acquisition and conservation of 500,000 acres of habitat reserves in western Riverside County for the protection of 146 species, 33 of which are listed as threatened or endangered. The federal and state governments are each responsible for acquiring one-sixth of the land, and the RCA is to acquire the remaining two-thirds. Thanks to this partnership, 410,034 acres of land have been conserved since the MSHCP's inception in 2004, accounting for 82 percent of the reserve goal.

This project is instrumental to the success of the Endangered Species Act, as well as state and federal conservation and climate action goals. And it offers broad local benefit to be enjoyed for generations. Not only does habitat conservation bolster biodiversity for a healthy ecosystem, but it also protects open space in underserved communities for potential recreational use, and it preserves and expands natural carbon sequestration to improve local air quality and combat climate change.

The Honorable Raul Ruiz, M.D.
April 8, 2021
Page 2

However, Riverside County continues to rapidly develop as its population is expected to grow to 3.2 million by 2040. As the real estate market becomes more competitive the value of land left to be acquired and conserved will only rise.

To minimize taxpayer burden in our community and maximize benefit for the residents and protected species of western Riverside County, it is critical that RCA maintain momentum to acquire prioritized lands before they further appreciate in value. If funded, this acquisition would constitute a leap in progress toward fully implementing the MSHCP and could one day be included in the proposed Western Riverside County Wildlife Refuge.

The project will be funded with \$1.6 million in local funding with the balance from the Community Funding Project.

The Sage Acquisition Project is deserving of this funding because of the long-term positive effect it will have on the wellbeing and prosperity our community's residents, protected species, and land that we call home. RCA values the federal government as an integral partner, and I encourage you to give it full and fair consideration.

Please contact Executive Director Anne Mayer at (951) 787-7141 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Natasha Johnson
Chair



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April 7, 2021

The Honorable Mark Takano
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Subject: Support for the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority's Community Project Funding Request

Dear Congressman Takano:

On behalf of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), I am pleased to request Community Project Funding of \$3 million for the Kelvar and Wolfskill Acquisition Project to acquire six parcels in Congressional District 41 and the Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) area for purposes of habitat conservation.

The Kelvar and Wolfskill properties include 745 acres located in the Badlands of unincorporated Riverside County, between State Route 60 and the intersection of Gilman Springs Road and Alessandro Boulevard. These lands would contribute to a proposed habitat linkage connecting the San Bernardino National Forest in the San Jacinto Mountains to the southwest with San Bernardino County and other conserved areas to the north, west, and south. This linkage would provide habitat protection and movement for Bell's sage sparrow, loggerhead shrike, cactus wren, Stephens' kangaroo rat, Los Angeles Pocket Mouse, southern California rufous-crowned sparrow, and mountain lion, which have key populations in the Badlands.

The MSHCP calls for the acquisition and conservation of 500,000 acres of habitat reserves in western Riverside County for the protection of 146 species, 33 of which are listed as threatened or endangered. The federal and state governments are each responsible for acquiring one-sixth of the land, and the RCA is to acquire the remaining two-thirds. Thanks to this partnership, 410,034 acres of land have been conserved since the MSHCP's inception in 2004, accounting for 82 percent of the reserve goal.

This project is instrumental to the success of the Endangered Species Act, President Biden's 30x30 goal to conserve 30 percent of public lands by 2030, as well as state and federal climate action efforts, such as California's goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 40 percent of 1990 levels by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. Not only does habitat conservation bolster biodiversity for a healthy ecosystem, but it also preserves and expands natural carbon sequestration to combat climate change and improve the quality of life for all.

The Honorable Mark Takano
April 8, 2021
Page 2

However, Riverside County continues to rapidly develop as its population is expected to grow to 3.2 million by 2040. As the real estate market becomes more competitive the value of land left to be acquired and conserved will only rise.

To minimize taxpayer burden in our community and maximize benefit for the residents and protected species of western Riverside County, it is critical that RCA maintain momentum to acquire prioritized lands before they further appreciate in value. If funded, this acquisition would constitute a leap in progress toward fully implementing the MSHCP and could one day be included in the proposed Western Riverside County Wildlife Refuge.

The project will be funded with \$1.85 million in local funding with the balance from the Community Funding Project.

The Kelvar and Wolfskill Acquisition Project is deserving of this funding because of the long-term positive effect it will have on the wellbeing and prosperity our community's residents, protected species, and land that we call home. RCA values the federal government as an integral partner, and I encourage you to give it full and fair consideration.

Please contact Executive Director Anne Mayer at (951) 787-7141 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Natasha Johnson
Chair