

# **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 1<sup>st</sup>, to be able to be implemented by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

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