



## RCA 2022 State and Federal Legislative Platform

### **Purpose**

The 2022 Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) State and Federal Legislative Platform is the framework that guides the advocacy efforts of the RCA for state and federal policies and funding that will advance implementation of the western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).

The 2022 RCA State and Federal Legislative Platform declares the Board's policy priorities while providing staff and contract lobbyists with the agility to weigh in on critical legislative matters in a time-effective manner on behalf of the Board, as well as providing state and federal elected officials and their staff with foreknowledge of RCA's priorities and goals.

### **Regional Control**

- Land acquisition and planning authority for projects and programs that utilize state and federal funds should be as local as possible, preferably in the hands of the Board with maximum flexibility, and consistent with its responsibilities under the MSHCP.
- State and federal rulemakings, administrative processes, program guidelines, and policy development activities should include meaningful collaboration with HCPs and NCCPs, individually and through the National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition (NHCP) and California Habitat Conservation Planning Coalition (CHCPC) and should be both timely and predictable.
- Policies should recognize the positive and enabling benefits that HCPs and NCCPs bring to species, habitats, ecosystems, air quality, infrastructure and housing development, economic growth, and the health and wellness of surrounding communities.
- Support efforts to preserve, stabilize, leverage, and increase state and federal funding for implementation of the MSHCP.

### **Protect Authority and Revenue**

- Existing statutory authorities for the RCA, in its exercise of oversight responsibility of the MSHCP, should be preserved and protected.
- Oppose efforts to infringe on the RCA's discretion in collecting and administering its revenue sources including, but not limited to: Local Development Mitigation Fees (LDMF), tipping fees, public projects, and participating special entity fees.

### **Alignment of Responsibilities**

- Support strong collaborative partnerships with state and federal agencies.
- Support efforts by the state and federal governments to meet their land conservation requirements, as initially intended by the MSHCP (one-sixth of the Additional Reserve Lands, respectively).
- Support establishment of the Western Riverside County National Wildlife Refuge to expand partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and thereby provide for public recreational access.

- Support sufficient resources for state and federal agency field offices to process grant applications and facilitate species monitoring and land management in order to advance the implementation of the MSHCP.
- Pursue opportunities for collaboration with state and federal agencies that allow for RCA to claim full or partial credit for individual ARL acquisitions.
- Support the increased frequency of meetings held by the Wildlife Conservation Board to facilitate more timely grant approvals.

## **Habitat Conservation Planning**

### *Land Acquisition, Management, and Species Monitoring*

- Support policies that streamline RCA's ability to compete for and expend state and federal grant funds in a timely and efficient manner to acquire and manage reserve lands, monitor habitat loss, and review applications for infrastructure or development projects.
- Pursue regulatory improvements to enhance timeliness, certainty, and successful transactions in the grant-financed land acquisition process and procedures at the state and federal levels, including, but not limited to, eliminating requirements or preferential application scoring for "willing seller" letters, unnecessary federal appraisal review practices, and advance approval of small parcel lists.
- Support a block grant approach for state and federal funding for land acquisition of parcels already included within an approved HCP/NCCP boundary.
- Engage in policy discussions regarding the expanded federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) trust, which now includes Section 6 and Refuge funding, as authorized by the Great Americans Outdoors Act. Oppose efforts to reduce, redirect, or delay expenditure of this funding.
- Support Congressional action to continue and expand dedicated funding, such as the LWCF, for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund (CESCF – Non-Traditional Section 6 grants) within the USFWS of the U.S. Department of Interior (USDOI).
- Increase annually appropriated discretionary funding for the Endangered Species Act Section 6 Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund land acquisition grant programs to help fund local land acquisition and easements critical to the MSHCP.
- Support policies that incentivize or fund land conservation by HCPs and NCCPs in disadvantaged communities in order to protect habitats under threat of development while expanding access to open space and recreation.

### *State and Federal Climate Action and Conservation Goals*

- Support state and federal policies that promote HCPs and NCCPs as shelf-ready tools that advance nature-based solutions to bolster the long-term climate resilience of protected habitats and carbon-sinking landscapes, including shrubland and chaparral, through strategic land acquisition, carbon sequestration, and adaptive management actions that mitigate climate impacts.
- Ensure that the MSHCP is recognized and provided commensurate resources as state and federal agencies implement strategies to use nature-based solutions to fight climate change through land conservation, preserving and growing biodiversity, and boosting climate resilience via initiatives such as "America the Beautiful," "30 by 30," and Executive Order N-82-20.

- Advocate that California Cap-and-Trade revenues be expended in a manner that enables the RCA to complete the 500,000-acre reserve of the MSHCP, as well as restore and uplift habitats.

#### *Infrastructure Planning and Delivery*

- Support policies that identify the MSHCP as mitigation for infrastructure development. Oppose efforts that would impose barriers to the MSHCP as a mitigation tool.
- Support the development and implementation of HCPs and NCCPs, which serve to streamline ESA take permitting, facilitate public infrastructure and private development, protect endangered species, and the ecosystems they depend on.
- Support efforts or initiatives that expedite the approval of HCPs, NCCPs, or Special Area Management Plans (SAMP) statewide or nationwide for the benefit of transportation projects, and reduce redundancy in state and federal permitting requirements.
- Support, on a pilot basis, that infrastructure funding programs require that projects utilizing specified funding must use existing USFWS-permitted HCPs to meet a predetermined share of their ESA-related mitigation requirements, provided that those projects be allowed to pursue biologically equivalent mitigation in any HCP within that state or region.
- Support state and federal policies and funding that incentivize the development of wildlife crossings in HCPs and NCCPs.

#### *Innovative Financing*

- Pursue enactment of a Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) amendment, to authorize loans for habitat acquisition in conjunction with otherwise eligible infrastructure projects.

#### **Regional and National Partnerships**

- Collaborate and continue to play a leadership role with regional, state, and national habitat conservation planning coalitions to impact funding and regulatory policies to support habitat conservation via the expedited and expanded use of HCPs.