

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 7, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Board of Directors Meeting was called to order by Chair Natasha Johnson at 12:33 p.m., in the Board Room at the County of Riverside Administrative Center, 4080 Lemon Street, First Floor, Riverside, California, 92501.

2. ROLL CALL

Board of Directors/Alternates Present

Kevin Jeffries
Karen Spiegel
Jeff Hewitt
Colleen Wallace
Jeff Cervantez
Tony Daddario
Clint Lorimore*
Joe Males

Leslie Altamirano
Natasha Johnson
Kevin Bash
David Starr Rabb
Patricia Lock Dawson
Crystal Ruiz
Maryann Edwards
Ben J. Benoit

Board of Directors Absent

Chuck Washington
V. Manuel Perez
Julio Martinez
Lesa Sobek
David Marquez
Jonathan Ingram

*Arrived after the meeting was called to order.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board Member Jeffries.

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. CLOSED SESSION

At this time, Ward Simmons, legal counsel, announced the Board would be going in to Closed Session to discuss the property item on the agenda.

6A. CONFERENCE WITH REAL PROPERTY NEGOTIATORS

Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.8

Agency Negotiator: Executive Director or Designee

Item	Property Description	Property Owner	Buyer(s)
1	583-120-002	Chismaly Boonklun and Anitha Sybounheaug	RCA

6B. REPORT OUT FROM CLOSED SESSION

There were no announcements from Closed Session.

At this time, Board Member Lorimore arrived.

- 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).*

M/S/C (Jeffries/Spiegel) to approve the following Consent Calendar items.

7A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 3, 2022

7B. AB 361 DETERMINATION

- 1) Reaffirm the findings in Resolution No. 2022-003, *“A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Authorizing Virtual Board and Committee Meetings Pursuant to AB 361”*. The findings are as follows:
 - a. The Governor proclaimed a State of Emergency on March 4, 2020, related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to exist today; and
 - b. State or local officials have recommended measures to promote social distancing.

7C. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FEE COLLECTION REPORT FOR AUGUST 2022

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Fee Collection Report for August 2022.

7D. ACQUISITIONS STATUS REPORT

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the acquisition status report as of August 31, 2022.

7E. JOINT PROJECT REVIEW STATUS REPORT

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Joint Project Review (JPR) monthly status report as of September 30, 2022.

7F. SINGLE SIGNATURE AUTHORITY REPORT

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Single Signature Authority report for the first quarter ended September 30, 2022.

7G. CONSULTANT REPORTS – FISCAL YEAR 2023 FIRST QUARTER

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the consultant reports for Fiscal Year 2023 First Quarter.

7H. STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file an update on state and federal legislation.

8. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Tricia Campbell, Regional Conservation Deputy Director, provided a presentation on the RCA Annual Report for 2021. As part of RCA's responsibilities to the MSHCP an annual report is prepared. The annual report provides a formal opportunity to assess the progress of the Plan and to address potential problems. This annual report, once received and filed by the Board, will be available to all MSHCP Permittees, Wildlife Agencies, and interested public on the RCA website.

In 2021, a total of 1,321 acres was acquired (96 acres with state funding, 101 acres with federal funding, and 1,129 acres through local funding and processes). From inception of the MSHCP thru 2021, 64,123 acres of Additional Reserve Lands have been acquired. RCA's Mustang Lane property, acquired in August of 2021, located just south of State Highway 79 and east of Highway 371 in the Aguanga region of Riverside County is the first property under RCA ownership that may support Arroyo Toad and has been confirmed to support Arroyo Chub, both species are very rare to the Plan Area.

The additional reserve assembly goals for local are 97,000 acres, and state and federal sources are 56,000 acres combined. Local acquisitions are at 44% of the 97,000-acre goal. If the 56,000-acre goal for the state and feds is split equally, then thru 2021, the state is at 45% of their goal while the feds are at 33% of their goal. Total acquisition thru 2021 is at 64,123 acres which is equal to 42% of the 153,000-acre goal.

Habitat losses are reported to the RCA once a year. Losses are reported when projects go through their final processes at the City or County and the project is shovel ready and removal of habitat occurs. In 2021, 5,428 acres were approved for loss within the MSHCP Plan Area. Approximately 4,610 acres of this was for development outside of Criteria Cells, where additional reserve assembly does not occur. Approximately 818 acres was for development inside Criteria Cells where the development was proposed outside of lands needed for

additional reserve assembly. As there is much more area outside of cells, it is important for more development/losses to occur outside of the cells than inside the cells. Cumulative habitat losses since adoption of the MSHCP show that 81% of the development is occurring outside of the criteria cells with 19% occurring within the cells.

Losses and gains are evaluated through what the MSHCP calls Rough Step Analysis. The plan area is split into nine rough step units. The RCA takes the acquisitions and the losses data provided by each permittee annually and runs it through the rough step formula.

The analysis shows that at the end of 2021, RCA is out of rough step in three units. As provided in the staff report, Rough Step Units 3, 7, and 8 remain out of balance. Through focused acquisition efforts, Rough Step Unit 5 is now in balance and Rough Step Unit 3 is only marginally out of balance by 0.03 acre. RCA is currently pursuing land acquisitions to rectify the issues in Rough Step Units 7 and 8, as soon as feasible.

A considerable portion of land management activities is devoted to gate/fence installation/repairs, unauthorized activities including OHV riders, illegal dumping, homeless encampments, target shooting, unauthorized trail creation by mountain bikers and OHV riders, and the interdiction of illegal marijuana grows on RCA lands. In 2021, RCA contacted 121 OHV riders or groups of riders. An estimated 5.5 tons of trash was removed from RCA lands; a decrease from the 14.9 tons of refuse removed in 2020.

Part of the passive recreation allowed on RCA lands is equestrian use. The Parks staff worked with equestrian riders of the Rancho California Horseman's Association on OHV access controls/horse-step over designs to better keep OHV riders out but allow horse riders in. Parks staff also accommodated the Inland Empire California Conservation Corps women's crew who needed an area for chainsaw training. There has been routine coordination with California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the County Sheriff on illegal cannabis grows on RCA properties. Weed abatement as well as coordination with local fire department and Cal Fire staff has also occurred.

RCA continues to perform the stinknet exotic plant removal study at the Hemet Vernal Pool complex. Five pairs of burrowing owls were welcomed to the El Sol property. And in 2021, a native plant grow operation began to help with restoration/rehabilitation efforts.

The RCA contracts the Santa Ana Watershed Association (SAWA) to perform the monitoring program. With a staff of fifteen, the program monitors 146 species throughout the MSHCP reserve system that includes both Public Quasi-Public (PQP) and Additional Reserve Lands (ARL) lands. In 2021, the activities included: focused monitoring for the Burrowing Owl, California Spotted Owl, California Gnatcatcher, Purple Martin, and Tricolored Blackbird; Quino checkerspot butterfly and Delhi Sands Flower-loving Fly surveys were conducted; and rare plant surveys were conducted that included the Engelman oak tree recruitment analysis at the Santa Rosa Plateau. Although not found during a focused survey, the first-time detection of Parish's Brittle scale in the MSHCP Plan Area also occurred in 2021 where MSHCP parks staff found it and it was confirmed by specialists at the UC Riverside herbarium and SAWA botanists.

The monitoring program also performs monitoring of the Clinton Keith Road overcrossing that was built in support of the Clinton Keith Road Realignment project. Completion of the overcrossing was in fall 2018. The year 2021 marked the third year of monitoring that is to go for a total of five years. This monitoring is supported by the Riverside County Transportation Department. The purpose of the overcrossing was to support movement of Quino checkerspot butterfly as well as providing movement habitat across the roadway by the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher, a small bird that does not migrate from the area. Several species of butterflies have been detected but no Quino Checkerspot yet. The MSHCP covered species most regularly detected were coyote, bobcat, and black-tailed jackrabbit.

Chair Johnson thanked staff for the presentation and asked that a copy be sent to Board Members to be shared.

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan 2021 Annual Report.

9. PRESENTATION – FAIRVIEW FIRE UPDATE

Tricia Campbell, Regional Conservation Deputy Director, provided a presentation on the Fairview Fire update. The Fairview Fire burned roughly 6,300 acres of RCA-owned reserve lands. The majority of the RCA-owned lands is comprised of two large properties known as Bautista Canyon and Goodhart, with the Bautista Canyon property supporting Bautista Creek.

Flood control has reached out to the RCA to place a rain gauge on the Bautista property to monitor high rainfall activities. After the first real rainfall, you could see the level of sediment that was transported downstream. This can have negative effects on both people and species. RCA has met with the County Emergency Management Department (EMD) and have additional follow ups with staff there to ensure they have an up to date GIS of RCA lands and other reserve lands. Cal Fire is still investigating the cause of the fire. It is known there was high electrical activity in the existing power lines, but nothing is definitive yet as to the cause.

SAWA has performed an assessment of the Bautista and Goodhart properties. The RCA burned lands support several rare species and their continued presence is needed to meet the MSHCP species objectives. For plants this includes Jaeger's milk vetch, Parry's spineflower, peninsular spineflower, slender-horned spineflower, and Plummer's mariposa lily. Some of these species may benefit from the fire in that they are "fire following species". Most of the Engelmann oaks on the properties were spared, but control of exotic plants will be critical.

There are several areas that burned where the Quino checkerspot butterfly was documented and just like for the plants, it will be important to support native plants to repopulate the burn areas so that invasive nonnative plant species don't. The rare arroyo toad occurs in Bautista Creek and relies on sandy and cobbly washes and the amount of sediment that has moved downstream is worrisome. Most of the creek on the RCA lands is now covered in silt. Western spadefoot toad is another species that may be adversely affected by the fire due to the sediment washing down the Creek. RCA will be reaching out to burn and restoration

ecologists to determine best steps and what grant opportunities may support the rehabilitation needed.

Board Member Spiegel wanted to know with the rains coming, what could RCA do to deter the growth of exotic plants. Ms. Campbell noted that the heavy rains can work to cover the sediment or push it further downstream causing emergency issues. Bautista creek is not actually on RCA's property, but Riverside County Flood Control has already been investigating and placing mechanisms to keep track of the rainfalls. The concern for RCA lands is that after a burn and rainfall the first plants to come out are typically non-native and exotic.

At this time, Board Member Jefferies left the meeting.

10. PRESENTATION - GETTING TO KNOW THE MSHCP

Leslie Levy, Senior Management Analyst Management and Monitoring, provided a presentation on minor amendments. Minor amendments are a formal process to make changes to the MSHCP or Implementation Agreement that are of a minor or technical nature where the effect on MSHCP covered species, level of take, and permittees' ability to implement the plan are not significantly different than what was originally adopted. Examples of minor amendments include changes in species survey protocols, annexations, and minor adjustments to the location of a MSHCP covered road.

Any Permittee can propose a minor amendment by performing the necessary analysis and providing documentation that follows what is provided in Section 6.10.2 in Volume I of the MSHCP. Essentially, the documentation presents the modification and performs an equivalency analysis demonstrating the change is equivalent in nature to what the MSHCP states. RCA recommends that if a Permittee is interested in pursuing a minor amendment that preliminary discussions occur with the RCA and/or Wildlife Agencies to ensure everyone understands what is needed and wanted.

Once the documentation is completed, it is provided to the RCA to submit to the Wildlife Agencies. The Wildlife Agencies then have 60 days to comment or to determine whether the proposed amendment is not minor and that a major amendment would be needed. A major amendment would open the MSHCP including its permits with the Wildlife Agencies, which is no small matter.

11. BOARD OF DIRECTORS / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Board Member Spiegel reminded everyone that tomorrow is election day, we have a responsibility, and it is a privilege to take it seriously and vote.

Board Member Ruiz wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Chair Johnson shared that RCA had an opportunity and was invited by Congressman Ken Calvert two weeks ago to participate in a roundtable discussion about the struggle for federal

permitting and infrastructure projects. This discussion wasn't argumentative or defensive, it was more about having an opportunity for a discussion and air the successes. The outcome of the upcoming election will determine the support and federal positioning the RCA will have.

Aaron Hake, Deputy Executive Director, shared a flyer for Board Members about an opportunity to tour the RCA Lands on Friday, December 9th. The Board Members are asked to RSVP to Lisa Mobley, Clerk of the Board, by December 2nd.

A few weeks ago, on a trip to Washington, D.C., RCA met with the Director of Fish and Wildlife Service and the Assistant Secretary of the Interior who were very pleased and gave strong affirmation of the federal governments' commitment to the MSHCP. It seemed helpful to remind them of the federal commitment to the MSHCP, while also thanking them for the recent \$4 million Section 6 grant. Other meetings in Washington included discussions on the wildlife refuge legislation.

Mr. Hake also introduced two new staff members.

Zackry West is the new Regional Conservation Management and Monitoring Manager, which gives RCA an opportunity to start focusing more on once land is acquired, how they are managed for the species in the MSHCP. Zackry comes to RCA with 18 years of experience in this field, with a bachelor's in environmental studies, working in both the public and private sector and 15 years with the MSHCP.

Dr. Aaron Gabbe is the new Regional Conservation Director. Dr. Gabbe comes to RCA with a PhD in environmental studies from UC Santa Cruz, and a BS in wildlife psychology. While Dr. Gabbe has not served in a public agency, he has worked in the private sector assisting in the establishment of other Habitat Conservation Programs (HCPs) and Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCP).

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Board of Directors, Chair Johnson adjourned the meeting at 1:21 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled to be held on **Monday, December 5, 2022.**

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Manager/
Clerk of the Board