



NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Nearly \$9 Million Coming to Riverside County to Preserve Region's Habitat and Protected Species

Riverside, CA - The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) was awarded \$8.9 million in federal competitive grant funds on September 14, 2023, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The RCA, which implements the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP), will use the grant award for land acquisition efforts for the protection of 146 native animal and plant species across western Riverside County. The \$8.9 million grant award was the largest made in California this year and represented over 22 percent of the \$40 million in grants awarded nationwide.

"This grant award demonstrates the tremendous faith our federal partners have in the RCA and our habitat conservation efforts throughout western Riverside County," said RCA Chair and Lake Elsinore City Mayor Natasha Johnson. "RCA is determined to fulfill the objectives of the MSHCP, which envisions a region with integration of economic growth, infrastructure, and conservation of the biodiversity and open space that make western Riverside County an extraordinary place. Investment from our federal partners is crucial to our success and I am thankful for this step forward," she said.

This competitive grant, authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and funded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, will help the RCA continue assembly of a 500,000-acre reserve, a requirement under the MSHCP. These funds will go towards the acquisition of ecologically significant areas including key regional wildlife movement linkages, high priority conservation areas, and parcels that support key populations of MSHCP-protected species such as the Quino checkerspot butterfly, least Bell's vireo, and the coastal California gnatcatcher.

Riverside County's increasingly growing population underscores the critical importance of habitat conservation. Through this grant, conserved lands will not only benefit the 146 native animal and plant species covered by the MSHCP, but also helps to offset impacts from climate change, protect biodiversity, enhance public health, and increase equitable access to open space. Additionally, federal funds further the mission of the federal "America the Beautiful" initiative and California's 30X30 plan, efforts to conserve 30% of lands and waters across the state and nation by 2030.

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The RCA was created in 2004 to implement the MSHCP, one of the largest of such plans in the nation. In addition to protecting native species, the MSHCP streamlines the environmental permitting process for needed infrastructure like transportation and housing. Through careful and deliberate land acquisition, more than 82 percent of the 500,000-acre reserve is complete.

For a full list of awards, please visit the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service [website](#).

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