

# **WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, October 6, 2025**

### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Board of Directors Meeting was called to order by Chair Kevin Bash at 12:30 p.m., in the Board Room at the County of Riverside Administrative Center, 4080 Lemon Street, First Floor, Riverside, California, 92501.

### **2. ROLL CALL**

<b>Board of Directors/Alternates Present</b>	<b>Board of Directors Absent</b>
Karen Spiegel	Linda Krupa*
Chuck Washington	Bob Magee
Yxstian Gutierrez*	Dan Temple
Colleen Wallace	Ron Holliday
Julio Martinez	Kevin Bash
Jeff Cervantez	David Starr Rabb
Dale Welty	Crystal Ruiz
Tony Daddario	Jessica Alexander*
Jocelyn Yow	Joseph Morabito
	Jose Medina
	V. Manuel Perez
	Guillermo Silva
	Ulises Cabrera
	Patricia Lock Dawson

\*Arrived after the meeting was called to order.

### **3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board Member Magee.

### **4. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no requests to speak from the public.

At this time, Board Member Krupa arrived.

### **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 (Ruiz/Wallace) to approve the following Consent Calendar items.**

**Abstain: Magee on Agenda Item 6A**

**6A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – AUGUST 4, 2025**

**6B. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FEE COLLECTION REPORT FOR JUNE 2025**

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 June 2025.

**6C. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FEE COLLECTION REPORT FOR JULY 2025**

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 July 2025.

**6D. 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 August 31, 2025.

**6E. ACQUISITIONS STATUS REPORT**

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the acquisition status report as of July 31, 2025.

**6F. MONTHLY INVESTMENT REPORT FOR JUNE 2025**

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Monthly Investment Report for the month ended June 30, 2025.

**6G. MONTHLY INVESTMENT REPORT FOR JULY 2025**

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Monthly Investment Report for the month ended July 31, 2025.

**6H. QUARTERLY PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METRICS REPORT, APRIL – JUNE 2025**

This item is for the Board of Directors to Receive and file the Quarterly Public Engagement Metrics Report for April - June 2025.

**6I. CONSULTANT REPORTS – FISCAL YEAR 2025 FOURTH QUARTER**

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the consultant reports for Fiscal Year 2025, Fourth Quarter.

**6J. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Preliminary 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Financial Statements for the year ended June 30, 2025.

**6K. EXEMPT SURPLUS DECLARATION OF REAL PROPERTY**

This item is for the Board of Directors to adopt Resolution No. 2025-003 “*A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority pursuant to Government Code Section 54221 Declaring that certain Real Property along Bundy Canyon Road in the City of Wildomar (portions of APNs 366-320-008, 366-310-006 and 366-320-045) is exempt surplus land, making findings pursuant to Government Code Section 37350, authorizing the transfer of such property to the City of Wildomar, delegating authority to the Executive Director to effectuate the transfer, and finding that such declaration and transfer is not a project subject to Environmental Review under the California Environmental Quality Act*”.

**6L. STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

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

**7. AMENDMENT NO. 3 TO AGREEMENT NO. 24002 WITH ICF JONES & STOKES TO ADDRESS CROTCH'S BUMBLE BEE (*BOMBUS CROTCHII*)**

Aaron Gabbe, Regional Conservation Director, provided a presentation on Amendment No. 3 to Agreement No. 24002 with ICF Jones & Stokes (ICF) to address the Crotch's bumble bee. On June 18, 2019, the California Fish and Game Commission declared Crotch's bumble bee a candidate species for listing, by law, candidate species receive the same protection as a state-listed endangered or threatened species. This species is not covered by the MSHCP, nor was it considered for coverage during the MSHCP development process in the early 2000s. Thus, proposed projects in the county must address Crotch's bumble bee as a state-listed species and seek an Incidental Take Permit.

To prepare for the potential final listing, on November 4, 2024, the Board directed the RCA Executive Director to execute an amendment to the Strategic Implementation Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP) contract ICF to: assist RCA staff with developing an interim permitting solution; explore alternative permitting options; and conduct background analyses to prepare for a potential amendment to the MSHCP to add Crotch's bumble bee.

As part of this work, RCA staff and ICF developed an interim permitting process to guide Permittee planning staff on aligning the standard MSHCP permitting process with a separate Crotch's bumble bee permitting process. While this interim permitting process does not provide streamlined permitting benefits, and each applicant must secure its own permit, it will help guide planning departments and applicants to make the permitting process easier. Furthermore, the RCA will offer applicants that need to mitigate for impacts to the bee MSHCP reserve lands for habitat uplift. RCA staff will begin rolling out this interim process to planning departments this month.

At this time, Board Member Alexander arrived.

ICF also conducted due diligence to identify potential alternative long-term permitting options, in addition to a Major Amendment to assess whether there was a less time-consuming way to gain permitting streamlining for Crotch's bumble bee. ICF identified 4 permitting strategies:

1. Major Amendment – This is the most time consuming and costly but provides the most streamlining and best long-term assurances to the Permittees.
2. Full avoidance of impacts – Considering that the bee is widespread throughout Western Riverside, this is the most constraining path, with the greatest land use restrictions. ICF does not recommend this path.
3. Individual Permit Pathway – This is the current situation, where each applicant seeks its own permit. This provides little permit streamlining, but it is costly and time consuming. ICF does not recommend this path.
4. Multiple project Permit Pathway - Multiple applicants bundle their projects into a single permit application. This potentially provides some streamlining but requires extensive coordination between projects and applicants that are on different timelines. Furthermore, it would benefit only a handful of projects, with others still needing to obtain their own permits.

Ultimately, ICF recommended that the RCA and Permittees amend the MSHCP to add the bee. Although an amendment takes the longest and is most costly to process, this permitting pathway provides the best assurances to the Permittees, infrastructure agencies, and development community and permit coverage for the longest period (the MSHCP 75-year permit term).

At this time, Board Member Gutierrez arrived.

A Major Amendment can be divided into 5 steps. Depending on the complexity of the amendment and availability of Wildlife Agency staff, ICF anticipates this process will take approximately two years.

#### Step 1. Preliminary Consultation & Assessment

Early coordination with the Wildlife Agencies to confirm amendment scope and regulatory requirements.

**Step 2. Amendment Request & Documentation**

RCA and Permittees submit a Major Amendment Request with rationale, updated conservation strategy, additional biological data, and funding assurances to the Wildlife Agencies.

**Step 3. Agency Review**

Wildlife Agencies review the proposed amendments to the MSHCP, provide feedback, and may request revisions.

**Step 4. Public Notice & Environmental Review**

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review, stakeholder outreach, and a 30–60-day public comment period.

**Step 5. Permit Amendment & Findings**

Wildlife Agencies and local governments finalize environmental documents and issue amended permits with formal findings.

RCA staff recommends amending Agreement No. 24002 with ICF that was used to do preliminary MSHCP Major Amendment work and the SIAAP to amend the MSHCP to add Crotch's bumble bee. Processing a major amendment to the MSHCP requires specific expertise and worktime beyond RCA staff capabilities. ICF has the necessary expertise and staff to do this work. This work would be a reasonable amendment to this agreement because tasks already performed included necessary first steps in the Major Amendment process.

These first steps included an initial analysis to inform an amendment to the MSHCP, including developing a Crotch's bumble bee habitat model, evaluating the capacity of the MSHCP reserve system to mitigate and contribute to the conservation of Crotch's bumble bee, developing the interim permitting strategy, and identifying standardized avoidance and minimization measures. RCA staff anticipates that this work will not exceed \$575,208. If funding becomes available, RCA will apply for a Section 6 Planning Grant this fall to partially fund this work.

Board Member Holliday wondered if it made sense to add anything additional to this amendment process. Aaron Gabbe shared that that was included in the recommendations from the Board to RCA staff at the workshop. In the scope of work there is a task to explore additional items that RCA can implement during the addition of Crotch's bumble bee.

Board Member Krupa asked if there was a limit on how many species could be added to the Major Amendment. Aaron Gabbe stated there was not a limit and one of the tasks for RCA staff was to complete due diligence in identifying other species that we may want to add.

At this time, Board Member Ruiz left the meeting.

**M/S/C (Wallace/Spiegel) to:**

- 1) Approve Amendment No. 3 to Agreement No. 24002 with ICF Jones & Stokes (ICF) for the Strategic Implementation Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP) for a three-year**

**term to extend the agreement, for an additional amount of \$575,208, and a total amount not to exceed \$1,330,378; and**

**2) Authorize the Chair or Executive Director, pursuant to legal counsel review, to finalize and execute the amendment to the agreement, on behalf of the RCA.**

At this time, Board Member Ruiz returned to the meeting.

## **8. 2025 WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

Harry Sandoval, Regional Conservation Deputy Director, provided a presentation on the 2025 Wildfire Management Update.

The Baxter Fire located near Murrieta burned 60 acres, including approximately 43 acres of RCA-owned land. The Baxter Fire burned a portion of RCA's Anheuser-Busch property, which is occupied by Coastal California Gnatcatcher and supports several other MSHCP covered species. Ongoing restoration efforts for San Diego ambrosia were fortunately not affected by the fire; however, the burn perimeter did surround the relocation sites. Cal Fire has stated the cause of this fire remains under investigation.

The Juniper Fire burned approximately 688 acres in the Mead Valley Area. The Juniper Fire burned approximately 68 acres of RCA-owned land. Cal Fire has not published an official perimeter of the fire; therefore, fire extent maps are not currently available. Cal Fire is also still investigating the cause of this fire. The Juniper Fire burned through juniper woodland habitat. Juniper woodlands are limited within the MSHCP area and provide habitat for a variety of sensitive birds and reptiles. Juniper trees themselves are not adapted well to fire and usually juniper woodlands are permanently lost after intense wildlife events. An initial assessment of the area found that luckily most of the junipers in the fire's path were spared and will likely not be affected.

The Pyrite Fire in the northern portion of Jurupa Valley burned 150 acres, including 29 acres of RCA-owned land. Cal Fire has not published an official perimeter of the fire; therefore, fire extent maps are not currently available. Impacted RCA-owned lands included the Teledyne property. The Teledyne property contains unique sand dune habitat that is essential for the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly. The good news is that none of the Delhi Sands flower-loving fly habitat was impacted by the fire or suppression activities. Impacts were limited thanks to County Parks staff, who responded to the property immediately upon notification of the fire and coordinated with responding fire agencies from both Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Cal Fire is also still investigating the cause of this fire.

The Nichols Fire near Lake Elsinore burned 50 acres, including 25 acres of RCA conserved lands as well as an equal amount of land owned by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management. The area in which the Nichols Fire occurred contains key populations of Coastal California gnatcatcher, cactus wren, and a variety of sensitive plant species. The Nichols Fire was ignited along Interstate 15, no official cause has been released.

In September, a second fire ignited in the same area as a previous fire in July. Like the first, the second fire was also named the Pyrite Fire. The September Pyrite Fire burned approximately 550 acres, and approximately 218 acres of RCA conserved land were burned. The September Pyrite Fire burned to the east of the July fire and spared the RCA's Teledyne property. No official cause of the fire has been released; however, arson has been considered a possibility.

The Crump Fire started on private property within the Lake Elsinore City limits and quickly spread onto RCA conserved lands. The Crump Fire burned a total of approximately 55 acres and consumed approximately 46 acres of RCA conserved land. Riverside County Park Rangers were on the scene of the fire, moments after it ignited and were able to assist with clearing the area and coordinating with responding fire agencies.

There was a total of six fires that burned 420 acres of RCA owned land to date.

To reduce the potential of uncontrolled wildfires, RCA, MSHCP Parks staff, and Cal Fire coordinate to identify fuel management activities on RCA lands that are in proximity to structures and roads. The objective of fuel management activities is to lessen the potential of wildfire spreading onto adjacent lands. MSHCP Parks staff will also carry out weed abatement as directed by County or local fire agencies.

During active fire incidents, MSHCP Parks staff respond to RCA properties. MSHCP Parks staff will coordinate with the Incident Command daily, help with orienting, providing access, and relay information about sensitive species and plants that occur withing the property.

Once a fire has been extinguished and it is safe to enter the burn area, MSHCP Parks staff will perform an assessment. Parks staff will continue to coordinate with the fire agencies to clean up the area. Clean up activities typically include some recontouring of bulldozer fire lines and securing the property if necessary. Burn areas are particularly vulnerable to the establishment of invasive species because there are lots of open areas and little competition from native species. Burn areas are evaluated to determine if any mitigation activities are required to ensure the success of any sensitive species that inhabit the area. In some cases, the RCA will seek assistance from restoration ecologists to help determine what the next steps should be after a fire.

Last year, Dudek was awarded a contract to develop a comprehensive Wildfire Management Plan for RCA owned and managed lands. The plan will provide directions for wildfire prevention, fuels management, and support for first responder agencies. The development and employment of a Wildfire Management Plan will allow the RCA to better prepare, respond, and mitigate any potential impacts from wildfire while simultaneously helping to protect our neighbors. The wildfire management methods will prioritize human safety and the protection of MSHCP-covered species and their associated habitats. Since last year, significant progress has been made on the Wildfire Management Plan.

Work completed to date includes:

- Creation of a Geographic Information System Database;
- Extensive field assessments of conserved lands;
- Wildfire hazard modeling; and
- Completion of community risk assessment and habitat type conversion risk modeling.

The next steps in the development of the Wildfire Management Plan include:

- Continued analysis of risk modeling that has been completed;
- Initial preparation of plan content;
- Gathering input from local fire agencies; and
- Preparation of a draft plan for review.

The RCA will begin to reach out to local fire agencies in early November to begin coordinating meetings so that we may gather as much input as possible.

Board Member Daddario recalled that former Board of Supervisor Kevin Jeffries was very instrumental in being concerned about different jurisdictions being able to enter RCA owned properties in an expeditious manner. With the recent fires Dudek should take the opportunity to debrief with some of the agencies that fought the fires to see what went well, and what did not. They should really take advantage of this real time information to help form the plan moving forward.

Harry Sandoval stated that Dudek did not conduct interviews like that yet, but it would be something they would be looking into and part of the meetings that would be scheduled in November. So far this year, RCA has not been informed of any fire agency having trouble getting into RCA owned lands.

**This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file an update on wildfires that have affected RCA conserved lands and an update on the progress that has been made on the Wildfire Management Plan during 2025.**

## **9. RATIFICATION OF CHAIR'S APPOINTMENT FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE VACANCY**

Chair Bash appointed Board Member Welty to the Executive Committee vacancy.

**M/S/C (Spiegel/Krupa) to:**

**This item is for the Board of Directors to ratify the RCA Chair's appointment of Dale Welty to the Executive Committee to fill the current vacancy.**

## **10. BOARD OF DIRECTORS / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Aaron Hake, Executive Director, formally introduced Harry Sandoval, the Regional Conservation Deputy Director, who joined RCA about two months ago. Harry is an expert in Habitat

Conservation Plans and spent a lot of time on the Kangaroo Rat Plan, working at the County of Riverside's Planning Environmental Division.

**11. CLOSED SESSION**

At this time, Steve DeBaun, legal counsel, announced the Board will be going in to Closed Session to discuss the property items on the agenda.

**11A. 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	365-210-003 & 365-210-004	William B. Bessette, Etc. Et Al	RCA
2	583-140-005	Dave and Lori Fenton	RCA

**11B. REPORT OUT FROM CLOSED SESSION**

There were no announcements from Closed Session.

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business for consideration by the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority Board of Directors, Chair Bash adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled to be held on **Monday, November 3, 2025**.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Mobley  
Administrative Services Director/  
Clerk of the Board