



## RCA 2026 State and Federal Legislative Platform

**OBJECTIVE:** The 2026 Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) State and Federal Legislative Platform (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 Platform declares the Board’s policy priorities while providing staff and contract lobbyists with the agility to weigh in on critical legislative and agency administrative matters in a time-effective manner on behalf of the Board, as well as providing local, tribal, state, and federal elected officials, their staff, and community stakeholders with foreknowledge of RCA’s priorities and goals.

### **Key Policy Issues for 2026**

At the **state level**, the RCA will engage on the following issues in 2026 to maximize availability of and the MSHCP’s eligibility and competitiveness for state funds for land acquisition:

- The prompt rollout of Proposition 4 (2024) climate and natural resources bond funds, specifically more than \$176 million allocated to the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) for grant programs to protect and enhance fish and wildlife resources and habitat pursuant to Assembly Bill 105 (2025).
- Opportunities to seek discretionary funding raised through the Cap-and-Invest Program, which was reauthorized in 2025 and now enables Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund expenditures for nature-based climate solutions.
- Policies and programs that support and advance the land acquisition goals of Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) and the MSHCP and their role in advancing state habitat conservation objectives.

The RCA’s engagement and advocacy at the **federal level** in 2026 will include:

- Supporting program improvements and increased funding levels and sources for Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), particularly the MSHCP, to advance land acquisition in support of habitat conservation. Specifically, RCA will continue to support increasing funding for the HCP Land Acquisition Program to \$100 million annually.
- Showcasing the habitat conservation and infrastructure project permit streamlining benefits of the MSHCP to Congressional and Administration officials.

### **Regional Control**

#### *Protect Our Authority and Revenue*

- Support efforts to preserve and increase state and federal funding for implementation of the MSHCP.
- Land acquisition and planning authority for projects and programs that utilize state and federal funds should be as local as possible, with oversight from the Board, enable maximum flexibility, and be consistent with the goals and Board responsibilities under the MSHCP.
- Preserve and protect existing statutory authorities for the RCA, in its exercise of oversight responsibility of the MSHCP.
- 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 state and federal policies and increased funding that enable them to meet their commitment to conserve or fund the acquisition of 56,000 acres, or approximately one-third of the Additional Reserve Lands (ARL), as initially intended by the MSHCP.
- State and federal rulemakings, administrative processes, program guidelines, and policy development activities should include meaningful collaboration with HCPs and NCCPs, and should be timely and predictable.
- Support provision of sufficient resources for state and federal agency field offices to process MSHCP compliance document reviews, grant applications, species monitoring, and land management to advance the implementation of the MSHCP.
- Support the increased frequency of meetings, including special meetings, as appropriate, to be held by the California Wildlife Conservation Board to facilitate more timely grant approvals.

### **The Co-Benefits of Habitat Conservation**

- Policies should recognize and promote the positive and enabling benefits that HCPs and NCCPs bring to species, habitats, ecosystems, climate, infrastructure and housing development, economic growth, and the health and wellness of surrounding communities.

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

- Support policies, programs, and increased funding that protect, expand, or streamline RCA's ability to acquire and manage reserve lands, monitor habitat loss, and review applications for infrastructure or development projects.
- Pursue regulatory and program improvements to enhance timeliness, certainty, and successful transactions in the grant-funded land acquisition process and procedures at the state and federal levels. Recommended improvements may be akin to past efforts to work with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) on Section 6 grant eligibility and criteria scoring to prioritize land acquisition, such as area-based planning, increased flexibility in real estate transactions, and recognition of single species protection and multi-benefit projects that protect habitat values such as connectivity or biodiversity.
- Support, when feasible, a block grant approach for state and federal funding for land acquisition of parcels already included within an approved HCP/NCCP boundary.
- Support Congressional action to continue and expand dedicated funding, such as increased annual appropriations to the LWCF for the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund, particularly Non-Traditional Section 6 grants such as the HCP Land Acquisition Program administered by the USFWS, to help fund local land acquisition and easements critical to the MSHCP.
- Advocate for increased allocations to funding state programs associated with "30 by 30" and other state policy priorities, with either dedicated funding to NCCPs, or guidelines that allow for NCCPs to be highly competitive for funds.
- Support policies that incentivize or fund land conservation by HCPs and NCCPs in or near disadvantaged communities to protect habitats under threat of development while expanding equitable access to open space and passive recreation.
- Closely monitor the implementation of Proposition 4 (2024) for opportunities to influence the guidelines of funding programs in a manner that either increases funding for HCPs and NCCPs or increases the competitiveness of the MSHCP for those funds. Monitor for similar opportunities from other statewide bonds such as Proposition 1 (2014).

### *Climate Action and Conservation Goals*

- Support state or federal policies that recognize HCPs and NCCPs as existing tools that may advance nature-

based solutions to bolster the long-term climate resilience of protected habitats and carbon storing landscapes, including shrubland and chaparral, through strategic land acquisition, 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 increasing biodiversity, and boosting climate resilience via initiatives such as “30 by 30” and California Executive Order N-82-20.
- Advocate that California Cap-and-Invest 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*

- Support the development, implementation, and expedited approval of HCPs and NCCPs, which serve to streamline the ESA permitting process, facilitate public infrastructure and private development, and protect endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems they depend on.
- Support efforts or initiatives that reduce redundancy in state and federal permitting requirements.
- Support state and federal policies and funding that incentivize the development of wildlife crossings in HCPs and NCCPs.

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

- Support strong collaborative partnerships with local governments, tribes, and state and federal agencies.
- Collaborate and continue to play a leadership role with regional, state, and national habitat conservation planning coalitions to inform funding and regulatory policies to support habitat conservation via the development and implementation of HCPs and NCCPs.