

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 6, 2026

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

Board of Directors/Alternates Present

Jose Medina*
Karen Spiegel
Chuck Washington
Colleen Wallace
Julio Martinez
Jeff Cervantez
Dale Welty
Tony Daddario
Jocelyn Yow*

Connie Howard-Clark
Bob Magee
Dan Temple
Ron Holliday
Kevin Bash
David Starr Rabb*
Patricia Lock Dawson
Crystal Ruiz
Joseph Morabito

Board of Directors Absent

V. Manuel Perez
Yxstian Gutierrez
Veronica Sanchez
Ulises Cabrera
Jessica Alexander

*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.

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 (Wallace/Morabito) to approve the following Consent Calendar items.

6A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – FEBRUARY 2, 2026

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

6C. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN FEE COLLECTION REPORT FOR JANUARY 2026

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 January 2026.

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 February 28, 2026.

6E. ACQUISITIONS STATUS REPORT

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the acquisition status report for the months of December 2025 and January 2026.

6F. MONTHLY INVESTMENT REPORT FOR DECEMBER 2025

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

6G. MONTHLY INVESTMENT REPORT FOR JANUARY 2026

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Monthly Investment Report for the month ended January 31, 2026.

6H. CONSULTANT REPORTS – FISCAL YEAR 2026 SECOND QUARTER

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the consultant reports for Fiscal Year 2026, Second Quarter.

6I. 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. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Jennifer Fuller, Deputy Director Finance, provided a presentation on the Fiscal Year 2025/26 Local Development Mitigation Fee (LDMF) update and proposed budget adjustments. The Finance Department tracks revenues and expenditure throughout the year and reports to this Board on significant variations from expectations. The last time we discussed lowering the development fee was in FY 2021/22. We are presenting this portion of the mid-year report to you today to update you on decreasing anticipated revenues and changing costs.

At this time, Board Members Yow, Rabb, and Medina arrived.

LDMF is RCA's primary revenue source and is required by the MSHCP. The fee is charged on all developments, including public, residential, and commercial, industrial, and Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)/Additions within the plan area, unless the project meets an exemption. Member Agencies are required to impose, calculate, collect, and remit LDMF fees to RCA no later than 90 days after the fees were collected creating a lag in the receipt of revenues. The LDMF automatically adjusts July 1 by the increase in the consumer price index for the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario metropolitan area.

A graph summarizing quarterly LDMF collections from FY 2022/23 through Q2 FY 2025/26 was shown. The red trend line summarizes midyear collections over this time. The brown trendline provides fiscal year end totals for FY 2022/23 through FY 2024/25. A noteworthy highlight of this graph is the downward trend in current LDMF collections compared to previous fiscal years. FY 2025/26 LDMF revenues collected through Q2 of \$6.5 million and are approximately \$5.4 million or 45% less than the \$11.9 million collected through the same period in the prior fiscal year. While there is a revenue receipt lag from the 90-day collection window, it is important to note that the decline in LDMF does not appear to be from this lag, but rather by the decline in development activity in Western Riverside County as evidenced by the red trend line. LDMF revenues are traditionally difficult to predict because of the tie to development and other economic factors. The decline in LDMF is in alignment with the reductions in the Transportation Uniform Mitigation Fee (TUMF) revenue. Based on year-to-date collections and continued uncertainties related to the current economic climate, staff are projecting FY 2025/26 LDMF at \$18 million, down from \$25.6 million projected from when the budget was presented to you last year.

TUMF collections represent RCA's 1.47% share of development impact fees administered by Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) in Western Riverside County. The program ensures new development pays its' fair share for the increased traffic that it creates. In line with the LDMF, a graph was shown highlighting a downward trend in the current year TUMF collections in comparison to previous fiscal years. After coordinating with WRCOG, staff recommends a revision to decrease anticipated FY 2025/26 revenue projections from \$1.1 million to \$700,000, further reinforcing the underlying slowdown in development.

As a component of Finance's monitoring process, a review of revenue and expenditures for the six-month period through December 31, 2025, was conducted and Finance consulted with staff

to determine if any budget adjustments were required. As previously discussed, staff propose downward adjustments for LDMF and TUMF of \$7.6 million and \$400,000, respectively. Along with these adjustments, staff are presenting several other adjustments for consideration. Other Fee Revenue adjustment of approximately \$333,000 to offset the General Fund's additional expenditure adjustments and reflect current year collections.

Total contract adjustments of approximately \$168,000 are requested to account for:

- New RCA staff, including an MSHCP Compliance Manager and Senior Management Analyst, approved as part of January's Executive Committee meeting (\$83,400).
- Santa Ana Watershed Association (SAWA), RCA's species monitoring consultant, reclassified its Monitoring and Program Administrator position, requiring an increase to their contract (\$65,000).
- Dudek, RCA's environmental consultant assisting with MSHCP implementation, requires an increase to complete anticipated services through fiscal year end.
- These contract increases are partially offset by anticipated contract savings within the General Fund of approximately \$51,000.

Legal Services requires a transfer of approximately \$151,000 to the General Fund from the Capital Projects Fund. This proposed transfer does not increase the overall legal services budget but rather allows for the proper allocation of costs. Also, an increase of \$20,000 is also requested to account for property assessments and fees received through fiscal year end.

Board Member Magee noted that last September a contract was awarded to Jones and Stokes to amend a global criteria refinement along with including Crotch's bumble bee, but they were not listed on this agenda item and wondered if that contract would be impacted by these actions. Jennifer Fuller stated that RCA had already anticipated that contract in the budget that was presented in June and no budget adjustment was required.

Board Member Magee asked if that contract was ahead of schedule from the 3-4 years that was estimated. Aaron Gabbe, Regional Conservation Director, shared that they were currently on schedule.

Board Member Daddario asked what percentage of LDMF dollars were tied to new construction. Jennifer Fuller stated that most of the funds were tied to new construction, there is only about \$400,000 to \$500,000 that comes in from ADU builds or additions.

Board Member Daddario wanted to know where RCA was getting their data from and if the forecasting was being tied to starts or permits. Jennifer Fuller noted that RCA does not actually have all the data on permits but uses past experience to forecast. RCA knows the permit history that has been collected on but does not have any future permit data from member agencies.

Board Member Daddario wondered if RCA had considered outsourcing that as there are organizations that track permits. Jennifer Fuller stated that RCA did look at doing an RFP along with WRCOG, but they did not get any responses to their RFP looking for someone to do projections. RCA could look into just getting data as opposed to projections.

Board Member Daddario clarified that RCA has a \$7.6 million shortfall but still needs to bring on the two additional positions that were approved and if they were critical. Jennifer Fuller shared that they are critical to RCA.

Aaron Hake, Executive Director, added that RCA has already begun the hiring and recruitment process on both positions.

Board Member Daddario asked if RCA could stop the hiring process. Aaron Hake said the positions are critical, especially with all the items the Board approved at the workshop last September. The capacity is needed to take on these improvements to the Plan.

Board Member Daddario understands that there is a wish list of asks, but now that the piggy bank has been broken, should RCA reconsider some of the asks in order to remain fiscally responsible. Aaron Hake would not characterize the piggy bank as broken.

Jennifer Fuller shared that RCA is currently in compliance with both Board policies on the financial reserves. There is one in the general fund that states RCA must maintain reserves for at least in the amount in the next year's budget, RCA is covered for the next couple fiscal years in that. There is also the Board reserve policy that states the capital projects funds must maintain \$9 million, and RCA is still healthy there. RCA makes decisions based on those fund balances and maintains those reserves to make sure we do not overspend.

Board Member Daddario wanted to know how RCA would decide which projects would be funded or which would be put off, since there is money being removed from Capital Projects. Jennifer Fuller replied that in the current fiscal year, everything that RCA had funded would continue, typically what comes in LDMF this year is used in future fiscal years. It would not be until the outer years were RCA would start to see more choices having to be made on projects.

Aaron Hake added that this was expected, and RCA has decided what properties to proceed with while staggering the escrows. RCA is keeping this financial picture in mind so there is nothing unusual about this.

Jennifer Fuller noted that the reserves now are still healthy, it is just that there is a decline in the revenue right now, but this is in the forefront of your mind as we prepare the FY 27 budget.

Vice Chair Spiegel shared that this Board has always looked beyond today, also looking to cut costs and put more into reserves, for the time that the cycle does turn. It is those healthy reserves that get us through the tough times.

M/S/C (Ruiz/Washington) to:

- 1) Receive and File the Quarterly Financial Statements for the six months ended December 31, 2025; and**
- 2) Approve the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 budget adjustments in Attachment 2.**

8. WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY MULTIPLE SPECIES HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Aaron Gabbe provided a presentation on the RCA Annual Report 2024. The RCA prepares an annual report as part of our MSHCP implementation responsibilities. 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.

One of the RCA's primary responsibilities is creating the half-million-acre reserve system by acquiring 153,000 acres of Additional Reserve Lands (ARL). In 2024, 2,409 acres were incorporated into the MSHCP reserve system. A total of 70,502 acres of ARL has been acquired through 2024. That number today sits at 71,418 acres. A photo of the B Canyon 2 property, protected in 2024 was shown. The B Canyon property was acquired in February of 2024. It is located just south of State Route 91 in Corona. This property contributes to Constrained Linkage 1 and provides critical movement habitat adjacent to a wildlife crossing under the 91. This property helps to ensure safe passage of wildlife such as Mountain Lion under and across the highway between Chino Hills State Park and Cleveland National Forest in the Santa Ana Mountains. This 672-acre acquisition was funded by a State Wildlife Conservation Board 30x30 grant and local MSHCP funds totaling over \$21.5 million.

Pictures of two more 2024 acquisitions, Wolfskill and Gurrola were shown. The Wolfskill property, acquired in March of 2024, is located just north of Gilman Springs Road in the Badlands, north of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. The Wolfskill property contributes to the Proposed Core 3, which functions as a linkage connecting the San Bernardino National Forest to the southwest with San Bernardino County and other conserved areas to the north of the Core. The 645-acre Wolfskill Property was funded by a combination of local, State, and Federal Section 6 land acquisition grant funding for a total of \$4.2 million dollars. The Gurrola property was acquired in November 2024, located east of the city of Temecula, and contributes to Proposed Extension of Existing Core 7. This core extension consists of areas contiguous with Diamond Valley Lake. This 118-acre property was purchased with local MSHCP funds for \$910,000.

The state and federal goal combined is to protect 50,000 acres and is somewhat arbitrarily split in half at 25,000 acres each. The Plan does not state how much each entity will acquire separately. Another 6,000 acres is added to the state contribution to mitigate for Caltrans and California State Parks projects. Additional reserve assembly goals are 97,000 acres for local permittees, 31,000 for the state, and 25,000 for the federal government. Local acquisition is funded with Local Development Mitigation Fees (LDMF), donations, and other local sources. Through 2024, local sources have funded acquisition of 42,800 acres, or 45% of the 97,000-acre goal. The State has contributed 16,849 acres, or 54% of its 31,000-acre goal, and the federal government has contributed 9,853 acres, or 39% of its goal. Overall, total acquisition through 2024 is 70,502 acres, equal to 46% of the 153,000-acre goal.

Overall, over \$692 million has been spent to acquire ARL. Approximately \$485 million, or 70%, of the total, from local funding. Approximately \$134 million, 19.5% of the total, from state funding; and approximately \$72 million, or 10.5% of the total, from federal funding.

Habitat losses are reported by each land use authority 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 can occur. In 2024, 2,361 acres of new development were approved for loss within the MSHCP Plan Area, 49 acres less than in 2023. Of that, 2,040 acres of the total was for development outside of Criteria Cells, where additional reserve assembly does not occur. That leaves 321 acres of the total were for development inside Criteria Cells where the development was proposed on land within areas evaluated for conservation by the MSHCP. Because there is much more area outside of cells than inside, it is important for more development/losses to occur outside of the cells than inside the cells. Cumulative habitat losses since inception of the Plan show that 81% of the development is occurring outside of the Criteria Cells with 19% occurring within the cells.

A table was shown that summarizes the land acquisition of ARL by permittee jurisdiction through 2024. New lands were conserved for 2024 in the cities of Hemet, Jurupa Valley, Lake Elsinore, and the County of Riverside.

Habitat losses and gains are evaluated through what the MSHCP calls Rough Step Analysis. Rough Step is a performance measure used to monitor the pace of conservation of specified vegetation communities against the pace of losses of those specified vegetation communities within the discrete geographic units of the Criteria Area. This analysis is to ensure that certain permitted impacts do not exceed the pace of conservation requirements. The plan area is split into nine rough step units. The RCA takes the acquisitions and the losses provided by each permittee annually and calculates the rough step formula.

At the end of 2024, the permittees are out of rough step in Rough Step Unit 8. Rough Step Unit 8 is out of balance by 18 acres of the Riversidean Alluvial Fan Sage Scrub vegetation type and 105 acres of the Grassland vegetation type. The RCA is pursuing land acquisitions to rectify the issues in Rough Step Unit 8.

Another large part of MSHCP compliance is to manage the ARL. Eleven MSHCP Park Staff manage over 48,000 acres across 1,266 individual parcels. The RCA does not manage all ARL, entities like the Resource Conservation Districts, Rivers and Lands Conservancy, and the Center for Natural Lands Management manage the balance of ARL.

MSHCP Park Staff focus on:

- Fire abatement, property protection and security; removing invasive, non-native species and restoring natural habitats;
- Coordinating with other reserve managers that oversee non-RCA lands;
- Coordinating and supporting Responder Agencies such as CalFIRE during active fire incidents on or adjacent to RCA Lands; and
- Performing long-term management of 16 Clean Water Act/Endangered Species Act

mitigation sites.

A considerable portion of land management activities is devoted to managing unauthorized access of reserve land. In 2024, Parks staff contacted 327 Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) riders on or approaching RCA-owned reserve lands. Rangers inform the riders of property boundaries, the MSHCP, and the prohibition of OHVs in western Riverside County (County Ord. 529), then escort the riders out of the area. Contact was unsuccessful with 31 individual riders who evaded Rangers when approached. In 2024, Parks staff fabricated and installed 0.64 miles of new fences and fabricated and installed 7 gates.

Removing illegally dumped refuse and refuse from encampments is a substantial challenge for the Parks reserve staff. Parks staff removed an estimated 33.4 tons of trash, 9 tons more than in 2023. In addition to refuse hauled away for proper disposal, Parks removed three stolen or abandoned vehicles, four dumped watercraft, and 275 gallons of hazardous materials from RCA-owned Reserve Lands in 2024.

Habitat enhancement work performed by the MSHCP Parks staff in 2024 included:

- Planting Cholla cuttings salvaged from the Highland Fire in the Aguanga area into the Nixon Fire burn scar at the Wilson Creek property. Survivorship of translocated plants was low - only about 24% - but some are still alive. Cactus Wren, a covered species, relies on Cholla cacti for habitat, which is very limited in the Plan Area.
- Removing non-native aquatic animals at Spencer's Crossing property for the protection of native species like the western pond turtle. Non-native predators such as bullfrog and largemouth bass are significant predators of western pond turtle. Parks have been controlling non-native predators since the mid-2010s.
- Inspect reserves after fires to secure properties where fences and gates have been damaged and to rehabilitate habitat impacted by fire suppression activities. Parks staff discourage formation of new trails on dozer lines created during fire suppression activities by blocking access to the dozer line with logs.

The RCA contracts the Santa Ana Watershed Association to perform the biological monitoring program. With a staff of 15, plus one from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the program monitors 146 species throughout the MSHCP reserve system that includes public/quasi-public and ARL. In 2024, monitoring actions included focused monitoring for burrowing owl, coastal California gnatcatcher, grasshopper sparrow, arroyo toad, and western pond turtle. The Monitoring Team also conducted vernal pool and rare plant surveys and artificial cover and drift-fence camera surveys to detect covered reptile and mammal species.

RCA staff are busy assisting the permittees with implementing the MSHCP. Regular tasks include administering and overseeing Plan implementation, collecting and expending LDMF, acquiring land for conservation, managing and monitoring reserves, applying for grants, stakeholder outreach, legislative affairs, and preparing the annual report. At the direction of the Board and based on findings from the Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP), staff has initiated several new projects in addition to our regular, daily tasks, to improve

MSHCP implementation. We anticipate that these projects will take 1-3 years or more to complete.

Major initiatives include:

- Continuing to amend the MSHCP to add Crotch's bumble bee to the Plan and to identify and create more flexibility in the reserve assembly process. The project team identified three additional species to consider adding to the Plan, American bumble bee, monarch butterfly, and Southern California ringtail. In this amendment process, we have learned from the Wildlife Agencies that they are hopeful that we can rely on the existing conservation strategy with some additional management to meet permit issuance criteria for CBB and other species. RCA is aware of areas with reserve assembly shortfalls. Staff are working with the Wildlife Agencies to quantify these shortfalls. The Wildlife Agencies have committed to working with the RCA and other permittees to address these shortfalls.
- Completing the Master Wildfire Management Plan for our Reserve System.
- Initiating a Nexus Study to evaluate the LDMF and an economic and social benefits analysis to quantify and qualify the economic and social benefits provided by the MSHCP.
- Fill and onboard the new RCA positions, the Compliance Team Manager and a Reserve Management and Monitoring Senior Analyst.

Board Member Lock Dawson asked when the reserve was supposed to be completely built. Aaron Gabbe noted that it was a very ambitious plan in that it was to be completed in 25 years to compile the 153,000-acre system, which would have been in 2029.

Board Member Lock Dawson also asked when the Southern California ringtail occurs. Aaron Gabbe stated that most of the observations are in the San Jacinto Mountains and in the southwestern area of the Plan. They are probably far more common than is realized, but they are nocturnal and secretive, so they are hard to see. Board Member Lock Dawson added that they can also be confused with a domestic cat.

Board Member Morabito wanted to expand on Rough Step 8 because it was out of compliance. Aaron Gabbe explained that an equation is used to track development to make sure it does not out pace conservation, and habitat losses by mapped vegetation type. In this case, there is a lag in where losses are reported which makes it difficult to know in real-time if you are ahead or behind. Since Rough Step 8 is behind in two vegetation types, it means no further impacts are allowed on those types until it is caught up.

Board Member Morabito thought that blocking trails would only entice OHV riders, and how was the hope going that RCA would not need additional land for the amendment. Aaron Gabbe stated that the key would be quantifying the shortfalls and making them up. RCA is still early in the process, and in the quantification of identifying the shortfalls. If RCA has a reliable methodology that demonstrates that there is a process to catch up on the shortfalls in the amendment, that additional land would not be necessary.

Board Member Washington asked if there was any way to calculate a percentage of compliance for Rough Step 8. Aaron Gabbe thought that could be calculated based on the totals of what has been acquired and current progress. This rough step has been in and out of compliance and it is currently not from meeting requirements.

Board Member Lock Dawson asked if RCA works with other organizations like Rivers and Lands Conservancy on easements. Aaron Gabbe noted that RCA does partner with them, but their Board has shifted more from land conservation to outreach and other aspects of land protection.

Board Member Lock Dawson thought it bore repeating that the reason it is called Rough Step, because development is supposed to occur roughly in step with conservation.

Vice Chair Spiegel stated that looking over the list of the cities and county with targets by jurisdiction, how is RCA dealing with it if there is one that is behind. Aaron Gabbe shared that RCA has a low- and high-end goal of acreage and tracking by jurisdiction is one way to access where progress is being made and where it might be behind. The land acquisition process is driven by the development HANS process, so this table could also be a good depiction of where development is occurring.

Vice Chair Spiegel thought that the deadline looming for the reserve assembly and RCA not being on track, staff should be addressing the areas that are behind. The Board needs to be a little more in-tune with our jurisdictions and if there is a plan to meet the reserve goals. The Board should be more involved in how they can help reach the goal that was made years ago. It is also possible that jurisdictions are not aware that they are behind.

Aaron Gabbe clarified that when the Board approved the Nexus Study in 2021, they also approved a strategy extending the acquisition timeline by an additional 15 years.

Aaron Hake added that was one of the reasons staff recommended and the Executive Committee approved adding several new positions to RCA. In order to participate in that additional engagement, RCA needs the capacity to do beyond the day-to-day application processing. We hope to do exactly that once the new positions have been filled.

Board Member Magee encouraged every jurisdiction to reach out to Aaron Gabbe and the RCA team. Since Aaron Gabbe started at RCA, they have been incredibly helpful with city staff, especially with the complicated area of Lake Elsinore. Aaron Gabbe goes above and beyond with the planning department, city attorney, and city manager. It is a monumental task to get your arms around this, and there is no telling where it will be in 20 years.

Board Member Howard-Clark requested that the table listing acreage by jurisdiction would be helpful as there are administrative changes coming to the city of Hemet.

Aaron Hake noted that the table would be included in the emailed Board Summary. RCA is available to meet with cities or new city staff to discuss meeting MSHCP goals and helping to understand the city and county goals.

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive and file the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan 2024 Annual Report.

9. I-15 RAINBOW CANYON WILDLIFE CROSSING UPDATE

Harry Sandoval, Regional Conservation Deputy Director, provided a presentation on the Interstate 15 (I-15) Rainbow Canyon Wildlife Crossing. The I-15 roadway acts as an almost impenetrable barrier to wildlife movement, severing the Santa Ana-Palomar Mountains linkage that is essential for the long-term viability of wide-ranging species, particularly mountain lions. Despite roughly 370,000 acres of largely contiguous habitat in the Santa Ana Mountains, roads and rapid urban growth have fragmented the landscape and isolated wildlife populations from the larger Palomar Mountains and eastern Peninsular Ranges. A viable linkage area has been identified south of Temecula at approximately the Riverside-San Diego County lines.

A variety of special status species are known to occur in the vicinity of the proposed Rainbow Canyon Wildlife Crossing. Mountain lions are a wide-ranging species that suffer from the lack of connectivity between the Santa Ana and Palomar Mountains. Recent genetic analysis has found that very little movement is occurring between the Santa Ana Mountains and the ranges to the south and east. Various studies have concluded that mountain lions may be extirpated from the Santa Ana Mountains within 50 years or as little as 12 years if inbreeding depression sets in. Along with mountain lions, various other species may be crossing or attempting to cross I-15, leading to potential vehicle/wildlife collisions in the area.

To enhance the connectivity between the Santa Ana Mountains and the Peninsular Ranges to the south and east, a partnership between the Temecula-Elsinore-Anza-Murrieta Resource Conservation District, known as TEAM RCD, and The Nature Conservancy are leading an effort to design and eventually build a wildlife crossing over I-15. The future crossing will connect MSHCP ARL and the Santa Margarita Ecological Reserve west of the I-15 to future ARL and the Palomar Mountains east of I-15. The resulting linkage will extend from Camp Pendleton in the west to the Anza-Borrego Desert in the east. On a greater scale, the linkage will allow for greater connectivity between areas as far north as Los Angeles County and south to the Baja Peninsula in Mexico.

On February 26, the California Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) awarded TEAM RCD, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, a grant of \$3,988,000 to fund the wildlife crossing design and permitting effort. The grant will supplement funds that have already been committed to the project by TEAM RCD and The Nature Conservancy. The WCB has been supportive of conservation efforts in our region. The WCB regularly provides grant funds to acquire properties that add to the MSHCP reserve system as ARL. Along with our partner agencies and the WCB, RCA would like to extend our gratitude to Supervisor Chuck Washington,

who was able to attend the WCB meeting virtually along with our Director Dr. Aaron Gabbe and provide comments in support of the proposed wildlife crossing project.

The RCA will continue supporting efforts to establish a wildlife crossing by participating with our partners on an advisory committee and by continuing to acquire and protect habitat that will both aid and benefit from the future crossing. The proposed crossing will support a variety of species and will help the MSHCP by improving connectivity to core areas throughout the Plan area. In addition, the crossing may enhance motorist safety as it will likely decrease vehicle/wildlife collisions. The conceptual design under consideration for the Rainbow Canyon Wildlife Crossing is a vegetated overcrossing.

Board Member Daddario wanted to know if any part of this proposed crossing would fall within San Diego County. Harry Sandoval stated that the current, though still preliminary, alignment lies entirely north of the county line.

This item is for the Board of Directors to receive an update on the Interstate 15 Rainbow Canyon Wildlife Crossing Planning Project.

10. BOARD OF DIRECTORS / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Aaron Hake welcomed the Wildlife Agencies introducing Karen Cleary-Rose from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Breanna Machuca from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, both of whom would be great resources to member agency staff. New RCA staff members Maria Garcia, Financial Budget Manager, and Cody Bear Sutton, Reserve Management/Monitoring Manager were also introduced.

11. CLOSED SESSION

At this time, Steve DeBaun, legal counsel, announced the Board will be going in to Closed Session to discuss the 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	964-160-003	Atef Karam, a Married Man as his sole and separate property	RCA
2	429-140-005	Ray N. Beeman and Betty Lou Beeman, husband and wife, as community property	RCA

11B. CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – EXISTING LITIGATION

Paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9

Case No. 5:25-cv-2008-DTB

11C. 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 2:01 p.m. The next meeting of the Board of Directors is scheduled to be held on **Monday, May 4, 2026.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Director/
Clerk of the Board