

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Monday, December 1, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Executive Committee was called to order by Chair Kevin Bash at 11:46 a.m., in the March Field Conference Room at the County of Riverside Administrative Center, 4080 Lemon Street, Third Floor, Riverside, California, 92501.

2. ROLL CALL

Members/Alternates Present

Karen Spiegel
Julio Martinez
Dale Welty
Kevin Bash
Crystal Ruiz
Joseph Morabito

Members Absent

Chuck Washington

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Board Member Ruiz.

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 (Ruiz/Spiegel) to approve the following Consent Calendar items.

6A. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – OCTOBER 6, 2025

7. FISCAL YEAR 2025/2026 ORGANIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Aaron Gabbe, Regional Conservation Director, provided a presentation on the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Organization Recommendations. At the RCA Board Workshop in

September, the Board directed staff to address recommendations from the Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP) and to amend the MSHCP to add Crotch's bumble bee as a covered species. The Board also directed staff to conduct a financial and human resources analysis to determine budget, and staffing needs to implement the Board's direction on SIAAP initiatives.

RCA staff are already operating at or above capacity. Routine operations consist of:

- Processing Joint Project Reviews (JPR)/Habitat Evaluation and Acquisition Negotiation Strategies (HANS) in the required 14-day timeframe;
- Processing Participating Special Entity (PSE) applications;
- Respond to requests from Permittees and developers for assistance with their projects;
- Land acquisition;
- Land management and species monitoring;
- Coordinating with state and federal wildlife agencies and regulators; and
- Expanding support for the MSHCP and Habitat Conservation Plans (HCP), more broadly. This includes advocating for increasing land acquisition funding in Sacramento and Washington D.C. and participating on the Board for the National HCP Coalition and California HCP Coalition.

RCTC has engaged Gallagher's Human Resources & Compensation Consulting, which has previously conducted classification and compensation studies during RCTC's transition to be RCA's managing agency, to assist with the staffing analysis. New positions will need the approval of RCTC's Executive Committee, including a revised organizational chart and salary range table. Per the RCTC administrative code, RCTC's Executive Committee has authority to approve the organizational chart and classification designations. When positions are classified, the focus is on assigned job duties and the job-related requirements for successful performance, not on individual employee capabilities or volume of work performed.

Organizational changes are recommended to enable the RCA to meet the increasing demands on staff time attributable to the following causes:

- Increasing development and infrastructure project complexity, requiring in-depth JPR/HANS and PSE application review.
- A growing, in size, reserve system.
- Increasing demand for development-responsible mitigation on RCA lands, including demand to support mitigation for Crotch's bumble bee on RCA reserve land.
- Administrating the Local Development Mitigation Fee (LDMF), with administrative responsibilities shifting from the Finance Department to the RCA.
- Amending the MSHCP to add Crotch's bumble bee.
- Implementing SIAAP direction from the Board, including:
 - Conducting a three-part economic and financial analysis, including a nexus study.
 - Developing and implementing strategies, in collaboration with the Permittees to improve flexibility in reserve assembly and address factors impacting overall cost of land acquisition.

Staff operate under firm timelines wherein JPRs and HANS analysis must be processed within 14 days of final submission. Staff are required to meet this timeline regardless of the number of existing JPRs that are being processed, or other workload demands. This work is processed by a dedicated team of experts, including critical support from a consultant. Additional staff would enable staff to better manage workload when processing final JPR submittals.

To support the Board's direction on SIAAP initiatives and ensure staffing levels match workload demands, staff recommend the addition of two new positions to the FY 2025/26 organizational chart and salary range table.

MSHCP Compliance Manager

This new position is recommended to manage the processing of all MSHCP compliance evaluations and support MSHCP Compliance analysts and consultants with increasingly complex project applications. This position would ensure continued timely processing of application packages and the creation and implementation of process improvements to improve the flow of compliance documents submitted to the RCA. The MSHCP Compliance Manager will also process JPR/HANS, PSE, Criteria Refinements, and other compliance projects. Currently, the Deputy Director manages and oversees MSHCP Compliance activities. Creating this new position to shift MSHCP Compliance management activities to a new manager will enable the Deputy Director to dedicate more time to implementing Board-directed SIAAP initiatives. The MSHCP Compliance Manager will also lead administration of the LDMF Program.

Senior Management Analyst, Reserve Management/Monitoring

This new position is recommended to expand the effectiveness of the Reserve Management Team, currently a team of one comprised of a Reserve Management/Monitoring Manager, which RCA is in the process of hiring, to cover the continuously expanding MSHCP reserve system. This position will support the growing demand for development-responsible mitigation on RCA reserves, including demand to support mitigation for Crotch's bumble bee. The Senior Management Analyst will play a critical role in assisting the Reserve Management/Monitoring Manager in developing holistic mitigation plans that will be used to support developer/applicant-responsible mitigation on reserves, identifying suitable locations for restoration and enhancement projects, and tracking mitigation projects over time. The Senior Management Analyst will also be responsible for tracking increasingly common and intense wildfires and their impact on the reserve system and recommending responsive restoration actions.

A small realignment is necessary to align staff within the two primary functions under consideration in this staff report, MSHCP Compliance and Reserve Management and Monitoring. The two Senior Management Analysts, Reserve Management and Monitoring, currently under the supervision of the Reserve Management and Monitoring Manager will shift to the supervision of the proposed MSHCP Compliance Manager. These two positions have been implementing the MSHCP Compliance Program, so it is a natural shift to align them with the new MSHCP Compliance Manager. The name of this position will also change from Senior Management Analyst, Reserve Management and Monitoring to Senior Management Analyst, MSHCP Compliance, to better reflect their responsibilities and the identity of the MSHCP

Compliance Team. The Reserve Management and Monitoring Manager would supervise the new Senior Management Analyst, Reserve Management and Monitoring.

The recommended changes to the organization and salary range schedule will result in an approximate \$210,000 increase in total salary for the current fiscal year, approximately five months, or an annual amount of \$550,000. Upon RCA Executive Committee approval of these recommendations, the changes will be recommended to the RCTC Executive Committee for approval and incorporated into the RCTC FY 2025/26 Budget, salary range table, and organization chart.

The Board will consider funding these positions when it considers its mid-year budget adjustment early in 2026.

Vice Chair Spiegel had questions on the organizational chart that showed there was a manager who only supervised one person and another manager who supervised two people. Staff were asked to confirm that the manager was also taking on other responsibilities. Aaron Gabbe confirmed that was correct.

Vice Chair Spiegel asked what the vision was for that position apart from managing one person.

Aaron Gabbe shared that while managing the senior analyst was important, it was ultimately a small amount of the role. The management tasks equate to only six percent of their time. This person would oversee the flow of the compliance documents as they come in, monitor who is doing what, and work to improve the system and processes for the intake of documentation. This position would also lead the administration of the LDMF program, which is shifting from the Finance Department to RCA. This would make them the point of contact for answering the complex questions that come in from Permittees. They would also be responsible for writing RCA's grant applications.

Board Member Welty wanted to confirm that with the acquisition of more land, RCA will require more management, and resources will need to go to the SIAAP program including an ongoing human resources demand based on the complexity of the changes from the SIAAP. Aaron Gabbe confirmed that the SIAAP requires a certain amount of work in addition to the day-to-day operations. The additional staff will help RCA manage the increasing workload and do some things more holistically.

Board Member Welty also wanted to confirm that the upcoming Nexus Study was going to help RCA figure out how to pay for these new positions. Aaron Gabbe stated that the Nexus Study would do that, as well as incorporating all anticipated costs and quantifying the amount needed to cover those costs.

Board Member Ruiz expressed concern with the wording stating that IF these positions were approved by the RCTC Executive Committee, meaning that RCTC is really in charge of who RCA hires and what the agency does. This is frustrating, and when RCA came into this managing agreement, we knew it would come to this, but still this word has a huge impact on how the organization is run.

Aaron Hake, Executive Director, stated that this was part of the agreement that RCTC would manage RCA, and while this existed to a certain degree when the RCA was under the County, it was a slightly different process. In this case, the request to the RCTC Executive Committee is framed as RCA is paying for these positions, we are only asking that the organization chart be changed to accommodate what the RCA Board would like to do. While not speaking on behalf of the RCTC Executive Committee, there are no foreseen concerns, and this is more of a pass-through item.

Board Member Martinez asked about the Reserve Management/Monitoring Manager that is not currently filled, and if it was currently budgeted. Aaron Gabbe shared that it was budgeted and was only vacant due to turnover.

Board Member Martinez shared a concern about the sustainability of the \$550,000 needed annually and that it must be sold to the Board, and if it would be possible to get two Senior Management Analysts and remove the manager position. Eliminating the vacant Reserve Management/Monitoring Manager and turning that into a Senior Management Analyst along with the position it supervises and having them report directly to the Deputy Director would save RCA money.

Board Member Ruiz added that removing that position and adding another senior analyst would result in a lower cost, but it would cause the Deputy Director to do more work as now there would be two directly reporting to them. The sustainability of the funding would pertain to all the items that the RCA is currently working on with the SIAAP.

Board Member Martinez stated that if this is what needs to happen, that is fine, but where is the money to cover these new positions going to come from, so the Executive Committee can sell this to the rest of the Board.

Aaron Hake shared that this was a zero-sum gain, this money would mean that there would be less money for acquisitions. This tradeoff has been evaluated prior to bringing this recommendation to the Executive Committee, how much do we add to make the work sustainable but still make sure the rest of the mission is sustainable. RCA is trying to balance on the compliance side, and the strict timeline that is laid out in the MSHCP in regard to JPRs, non-compliance is not a choice. The other part of the RCA's responsibilities is to manage the land and that is something that has not been investigated heavily. Removing the manager's position, some duties would have to be reassigned upward as the manager's classification involves higher-level, decision-making tasks.

Sergio Vidal, Chief Financial Officer, stated there would be \$60,000 annual savings downgrading the manager to a senior analyst.

Board Member Morabito wanted to clarify how many bodies the \$550,000 would be covering. Aaron Hake shared that was the fully loaded cost for two, including benefits.

Jennifer Fuller, Deputy Director Finance, added that the figure also assumes the positions are at the top step. When hired, they would most likely come in at a lower step. The top step is just used for budgetary reasons.

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

- 1) Approve the addition of two (2) proposed positions along with a revised organizational chart for FY 2025/26.**

8. BOARD OF DIRECTORS / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Aaron Hake thanked the Executive Committee for the discussion. RCA staff spent several months considering options to make this as conservative and lean as possible, while still carrying out the mission of the MSHCP. The Executive Committee will be updated on how this item goes at the RCTC Executive Committee, and staff will need to come back as part of the mid-year budget adjustment if these positions are approved.

There was a Stakeholders Committee meeting the week before Thanksgiving, where they gave their final input on the SIAAP, and staff are working to compile that information for the next Executive Committee meeting.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Executive Committee, Chair Bash adjourned the meeting at 12:19 p.m. The next meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled to be held on **Monday, January 5, 2026.**

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Director/
Clerk of the Board