



STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

TIME: 10:00 a.m.

DATE: Wednesday, August 19, 2026

LOCATION: **MARCH FIELD CONFERENCE ROOM**
County of Riverside Administrative Center
4080 Lemon Street, Third Floor, Riverside

🌀 COMMITTEE MEMBERS 🌀

Bruce Colbert, Property Owners Association of Riverside County
Cara Lacey, The Nature Conservancy
Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League
Drew Feldmann, San Bernardino Valley Audubon Society
Juan Rosas, Hispanic Access Foundation
Laura Jamie, Shiishongna Tongva Nation Corona Band of Gabrielino Indians
Lou Monville, Building Industry Association of Southern California
Michael Linton, Vulcan Materials Company
Nicole Padron, Rivers & Lands Conservancy
Nolan King, Santa Rosa Plateau Ecological Reserve Nature Education Foundation
Pam Nelson, Santa Margarita Group/San Gorgonio Chapter Sierra Club
Rachael Johnson, Riverside County Farm Bureau
Sherli Leonard, Redlands Conservancy
Teri Biancardi, Temecula Elsinore Anza Murrieta Resource Conservation District
Tuba Ebru Ozdil, Pechanga Band of Indians



WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

www.wrc-rca.org

STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA

10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, August 19, 2026

March Field Conference Room

County of Riverside Administrative Center 4080 Lemon Street, Third Floor, Riverside, CA

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1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS - This is for comments on items not listed on the agenda. Comments relating to an item on the agenda will be taken when the item is before the Committee.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 24, 2024, SEPTEMBER 24, 2025, NOVEMBER 19, 2025, & MAY 6, 2026

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5. UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

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Overview

This item is for the Stakeholders Committee to receive and file an update on the development of the Wildfire Management Plan (WMP) and to provide feedback for consideration in the first administrative draft of the plan.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Overview

This item provides the opportunity for the Committee Members and the Executive Director to report on any other items related to Committee activities.

7. ADJOURNMENT

AGENDA ITEM 4

MINUTES

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, July 24, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Stakeholders Committee was called to order by Executive Director Aaron Hake at 9:32 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

Bruce Colbert
Dan Silver
Juan Rosas
Laura Jamie*
Nicole Padron
Nolan King
Pam Nelson*
Rachael Johnson
Sherli Leonard
Tuba Ebru Ozdil

Members Absent

Alicia Thomas
Cara Lacey
Drew Feldmann
Teri Biancardi

*Arrived after the meeting was called to order.

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no requests to speak from the public.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 23, 2023

M/S/C (Padron/Ozdil) to approve the Minutes as submitted. There were no objections to this motion.

5. PRESENTATION AND FEEDBACK – STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN (SIAAP)

Aaron Gabbe, Regional Conservation Director, provided a presentation on the Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP). The Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) could be considered a long-term programmatic land swap deal that was created and finalized in 2004. Under the California and federal Endangered Species Act, it exchanges development in certain areas of the plan for conservation of land. That

conservation in part, provides mitigation impacts to the endangered and threatened species. Before the plan was adopted in 2004, every development that could impact endangered species had to go through its' own rigorous permitting process. The MSHCP was designed to protect 500,000 acres that provides habitat for 146 covered species. The programmatic permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) allow the MSHCP to be implemented. Of the 500,000 acres, the RCA is responsible for acquiring 153,000 acres, which is an extraordinary ambitious plan. To date, RCA has acquired about 70,000 acres spending over \$500,000,000 and streamlining over 100,000 acres of development.

The plan was developed in 2004 and has over 2,000 pages in two volumes. The plan had to make some assumptions as the plan was made to be implemented over the course of 75 years. Examples of outdated assumptions that affect implementation of the MSHCP include:

- The pace of development and corresponding revenue through development fees;
- Land acquisition costs are considerably higher than anticipated in certain regions of the plan area;
- The plan assumed that some 41,000 acres would come to the RCA by way of land donated or exchanged for incentives through the development review process, which has not happened;
- Some areas described for conservation have been developed since original baseline assessments of the plan area were made; and
- The pace of state and federal funding for habitat acquisition has been less than what was expected to complete the state and federal commitments in the MSHCP.

The structure of the land acquisition process has a reserved design of cores and linkages, leaving little flexibility. There are rules on which impacts are allowed under the permits, and the cities and the county do not have control over it either. The land that is prescribed for conservation needs to be consistent with the plan, if it is not, the local jurisdiction cannot extend the permit authorization to the landowner. The Habitat Evaluation and Acquisition Negotiation (HANS) process determines which properties the RCA must acquire, and what is identified for conservation. If RCA cannot extend the permit coverage for development, RCA must acquire the property, which can result in a less effective and efficient use of resources.

These outdated assumptions are, among other issues, affecting MSHCP implementation. For example, the development HANS process and corresponding conservation strategy provides little flexibility to the RCA to make acquisition decisions based on habitat quality or cost. This is because the spatial consideration configuration and the size of the reserve system is just as important to the ecological functions as the current habitat quality on the ground. Assembling the reserve system is like putting together a 10,000-piece puzzle of parcels with each new piece dependent on the other pieces, limiting flexibility.

On January 8, 2024, the RCA Board of Directors authorized an agreement with ICF Jones & Stokes (ICF) to prepare the SIAAP. The primary objective of the study is to identify and recommend pathways that the RCA and the other permittees may take to improve MSHCP implementation flexibility while maintaining financial stewardship and permit compliance. The study focuses on the HANS process and related aspects of MSHCP implementation, though

ultimately solutions may result in other changes to the MSHCP implementation process, as many aspects of the MSHCP are interrelated. It should be clear that the SIAAP is simply a study and does not change the MSHCP. Ultimately, the study will suggest recommended alternatives to address identified problems that staff will present to the Board, with the understanding that the Board will provide direction for RCA staff on how to proceed based on the results of the study and recommendations by RCA staff. The SIAAP does not “re-open” the MSHCP or the permits issued by the wildlife agencies.

At this time, Laura Jamie and Pam Nelson arrived.

Primary activities that the consultant has already undertaken include:

- Interviews with RCA Board Chair Kevin Bash and former Board Chair Natasha Johnson, Executive Directors of the RCA past and current, RCA staff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to better understand the intricacies of the MSHCP, implementation challenges, and to identify and vet potential solutions and recommendations.
- Reviewed the MSHCP and extensive documentation and supporting materials to better understand implementation challenges and identify alternative solutions, including the Implementing Agreement, 2020 Nexus Study, RCTC/RCA Right of Way and land acquisition policies and procedures, and past appraisals among others.
- The consultant team has also been gathering and analyzing data on revenue and land acquisition costs, zoning in Western Riverside County and the cities to identify trends in costs and to compare findings with the cost estimates and assumptions from the original 2004 MSHCP and the 2020 Nexus Study.
- Identify and describe the breadth and scope of development HANS-related implementation challenges that may affect the RCA and Permittee’s ability to achieve the goals, requirements, and functions as intended by the MSHCP.

The next steps in the SIAAP process include:

- Completion of the Assessment Phase;
- An RCA staff Workshop led by the consultant team to establish and gain common understanding of the HANS-related issues and underlying mechanisms causing the issues and to begin identifying potential solutions;
- Document the findings of the assessment phase; and
- Begin Improvements Phase to identify and categorize potential types of changes that could be made to improve the HANS-related implementation processes.

Pam Nelson thought an interesting idea would be to look at the mitigation fees and have land be used in exchange for mitigation fees. Aaron Gabbe shared that there is currently a process for this in the plan. The policy does have limits on it though, as the mitigation fees are also used for long-term management and endowment.

Bruce Colbert also thought some of exchange issues was trading for land that was biologically equivalent and that the endowment funds were separate from acquisition funds.

Tuba Ebru Ozdil stated that new concepts were used in the creation of the MSHCP, and the land use and zoning did not match. Land use and zoning not matching is a big issue and creates a domino effect on open spaces. It should now be reviewed in detail within the cities and the county.

Aaron Gabbe noted that this plan was part of a three-pronged greater planning process in Western Riverside County. At the time, the region was developing very rapidly, and the infrastructure could not keep up and support the anticipated growth for the future. At the same time, the project-by-project permitting was making it even harder for infrastructure like highways and roads to keep up with the growth. The idea was that the environment and environmental regulations were inherent in the land use process itself. The three-pronged planning process, the Riverside County Integrated Project, included RCTC's Measure A, an update to the General Plan, and the MSHCP. The idea was that there needed to be an alignment between the vision of land use created by the MSHCP with the land use in the General Plan not just for the county but by the cities as well.

Dan Silver shared that over 20 years ago, the County of Riverside came close to adopting a transfer of development rights program. The program was quite developed before it was scrapped. The plan was that a developer would get to increase their density by buying it from another property. This is an idea that could be revisited, though it would be a lot of work.

Aaron Hake had not heard of this plan before but believes there is language in the MSHCP that says this would be an eligible activity to achieve conservation objectives.

Aaron Gabbe confirmed that this was one of the incentives that could be implemented to bring land to the RCA without providing the funds to purchase it. This idea has also been in the discussion of the context of Vehicles Miles Traveled (VMT) regulation that affects land use throughout the state. This is an idea that has not been fully realized, but in discussion for a long time.

Pam Nelson wanted to know how this idea would be different than a conservation easement. Aaron Gabbe explained that the easement itself would be a restriction on a parcel, precluding that land from ever being developed. That would differ from a transfer of development where it would be run by the local city or county. If a developer wanted to develop low density housing on land that was valuable for conservation, the program would require giving the land that was for conservation and in exchange they would be able to develop at a higher density in a different area.

Laura Jamie inquired whether that included the development of light industrial warehouses, or if it was strictly related to housing. Aaron Gabbe shared that it had only been presented thus far in terms of housing but could not confirm that it was the only development that was applicable.

Aaron Hake thought it would be helpful to circulate the language in the planning of the incentives, after the meeting. The language lists the possible incentives, which is a

non-exclusive list. After this committee met on the fee credit issue, it was also mentioned in the incentives section. It was discovered that the cities and the county were not fully aware of what incentives were available for implementation to developers. To remedy this, a second page was added to the Joint Project Review (JPR) form to list all the incentive options and to let the RCA know if the landowner intended to use any.

Nolan King asked what the RCA's level of engagement was with local agencies. Aaron Gabbe stated that those entities to which the incidental take permitting is extended are referred to as permittees. When there is a project, the permittees must go through the MSHCP process where the RCA provides support when needed, evaluating proposals, and helping to identify alternatives consistent with the plan. There are also Participating Special Entities (PSE) that can apply for coverage for specific projects under the permit, such as Southern California Edison.

Lou Monville, Building Industry Association, Riverside County, asked that for the benefit of the process that RCA was undertaking, what kind of work is being done with consultants to implement the MSHCP work daily and also what is being done on new emergency listings that continue to emerge in California. With the addition of the new emergency listings, developers are losing the benefit of the intended streamlining permit process.

Aaron Gabbe stated that the ICF team includes Dudek Consulting, and both have consulted for the development side as things as well as RCAs in house processes. The MSHCP already covers an exceptionally broad range of species, many of whom are not federal or state listed currently. The intent was to include them in the plan so if they were listed later there would still be coverage. One species was missed, Crotch's bumble bee. RCA is in the process of addressing this right now, as it was proposed for listing under the California Endangered Species Act and they are in the process of making the final determination.

Even though Crotch's bumble bee is only listed as a candidate, it must be treated as though it was fully listed. Now, for this single species, developers must go back to a project-by-project permitting process. This has provided a unique view in how the plan is helpful to developers. RCA is currently working on how to incorporate this species into the plan, though we have been cautioned against amending the plan too soon, as there is a chance the species might not get listed.

Aaron Hake added that there is interim guidance that was issued from the CDFW that was shared with permittees. RCA is available to assist if there are applicants that run into any issues and help to facilitate a discussion with CDFW if necessary.

Aaron Gabbe shared that RCA is also working with CDFW on how the RCA can offer already conserved lands to support mitigation. Part of the guidance that came out from CDFW included the translocation of the bumble bee; RCA is open to having that done on our lands.

Aaron Hake stated that RCA had also done this with burrowing owls on MSHCP lands.

Laura Jamie wanted to know if there was a process to add additional species to the list that is covered by the MSHCP.

Aaron Gabbe shared that there is a process for species that are formally listed in the State or Federal Endangered Species Act. Adding a species to the MSHCP would require a Major Amendment, which has never been undertaken before. While there is only one plan, there are two permits that have separate regulatory laws and processes for approving the plan and approving an amendment to the plan.

Nolan King wanted to know if you could list something that was not necessarily endangered but was a special species to the area, like the Jurupa Oak. Aaron Gabbe stated that similar concerns are often expressed to RCA, but there is a rule book for the plan. RCA has no land use authority or regulatory powers, so we are unable to do anything. We can only support and back the MSHCP.

Lily Sweikert, ICF, provided a presentation on the Approach for Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan for the Western Riverside County MSHCP. The SIAAP has been set up in three stages. The first stage is the Assessment Phase where ICF will gather as much information as possible, talking to staff members and wildlife agencies, and reviewing other plans to see how they are building their reserve system. After all the information has been collected, the team will move on to the Improvements Phase where there will be workshops and a shift to start thinking about problem solving. Once those ideas have been formulated, a recommended action plan will be presented in terms of next steps.

The Assessment Phase will include a land value analysis, and a source uses analysis looking at the cost and funding issues. This will also look at how the current economic status will affect the RCA in the future, and whether a new Nexus Study would be required.

The Improvement Phase is where we will start to look at solutions to the identified problems. Creating a common understanding of the HANS issues is of greatest concern. This phase will also look at systemwide implications and potential secondary effects to determine what could be a minor versus major amendment and prioritize the range of strategic improvement options.

The Action Plan Phase is where all the information comes together into a presentation to the Board to mesh everything, so it is digestible, and offers a clear menu of options.

Nicole Padron wanted to know how much continued education was done by the RCA to permittees to ensure they are well versed in the incentives that are available to landowners. Aaron Gabbe shared that RCA does training for permittees both for fee collection and to the planning departments for those that would be going through the HANS process. With the turnover of permittee staff, there is more that RCA could do. RCA is working on extending that same education to the public to provide value to a broad suite of stakeholders in the community.

Scott Fleury, ICF, added that the interviews conducted with Board Members and RCA staff provided candid input, including history with the plan from some of those who have been working with the MSHCP since its' inception as well as those that are new to the plan. This meeting can function as a group interview to highlight issues as seen by the Stakeholders, a place to share your thoughts on the MSHCP, and suggestions on how the plan could be improved.

Aaron Hake wanted to put it in stark terms that the RCA Board sees a great deal of urgency in this study, and it gets to the heart of RCA's ability to implement this overly ambitious plan. The plan is working, perhaps too well in some instances. We have land values that are increasing at an extremely high rate in Riverside County. It is a good thing that the economy is hot and there is a lot of demand, which also means that RCA is paying more for these lands. The process which has been set up by the MSHCP provides landowners with the ability to develop or have their land purchased, is putting RCA in a difficult situation when those lands come with a high dollar value. In a way, this also decreases RCA's ability to control the fate of the MSHCP and the ability to meet the reserve goals.

There are hundreds of acres of land in the county that would be ideal for conservation and some of them are willing sellers, but RCA has stopped all willing seller transactions in the last year because the HANS process is driving everything. RCA does not have the resources to complete those types of acquisitions. There may come a point when RCA will not even be able to commit to property owners going through the HANS process.

The purpose of the SIAAP is to figure out a solution that integrates all the points that have been mentioned, keeping the grand bargain that was this plan, together and sustainable. A lot has happened since this plan came together and with the changing circumstances, RCA needs to evaluate how to make sure the MSHCP continues to work.

Dan Silver stated this assessment was that there is a severe problem deriving from the HANS process, not that the HANS process is bad, but it has led us to a place that is creating problems. It is a surprise that 20 years ago when the plan was put together, it did not include flexibility to decide whether RCA wanted to purchase a certain property. RCA should continue to work closely with the Stakeholders Committee through this process.

Pam Nelson wanted to confirm that there was no categorization of land acquisition as far as risk was concerned for RCA and that properties must be purchased even if there is a risk. Aaron Hake explained that the plan describes certain properties for conservation and there is no priority to one over the other. If a property owner through the HANS process discovers their property is described for conservation, they cannot develop the land, and RCA must buy the property.

Pam Nelson thought that due to the lack of funding, RCA should look at land for biological diversity before it is purchased and this should be built into the process of acquisitions.

Lily Sweikert asked the committee, thinking back 20 years, how did they think Riverside County has changed today that is making the implementation of the MSHCP more difficult.

Rachael Johnson shared that Riverside County is currently the fastest growing county in the state of California.

Nolan King thought in the city of Wildomar, there are not any council members who are explicitly conservation oriented. The incentives that are available to the cities should be shared to point out the importance of not just promoting things that bring revenue to the city, but also things that may cost the city money while also improving the environment.

Aaron Hake stated that this feedback is something that RCA can act on now and include in community engagement. There is a really important element of the Riverside County Integrated Project that highlights what Nolan King was referring to. Measure A is the half-cent sales tax for transportation in Riverside County. In the sales tax ordinance, there is explicit language that any city that wishes to receive Measure A transportation dollars for local streets and roads will participate in the MSHCP, both in western county and the Coachella Valley. If cities want their money for potholes and signals, they must follow the MSHCP. This equates to millions of dollars going out to the cities.

Nolan King asked if Measure A also included money for mobility plans and non-car centric projects. Aaron Hake confirmed that Measure A also allows for transit funding and there are many other revenue sources available to RCTC for those projects as well.

Lou Monville stated that while the Measure A conversation was good, it will expire and that should be a concern. Sacramento is currently making the extension of these taxes much more difficult. This is a tool in chest that may be taken away.

Aaron Hake shared that 2039 is when the Measure A tax will expire.

Lily Sweikert explained that a conservation plan can only exist because there is take involved, and some cities may have forgotten that the MSHCP is only there to allow the cities to expand and take habitat.

Aaron Gabbe agreed that education on the incentives was important, but more importantly having champions, like the Stakeholders Committee, to share their support of the MSHCP with their peers. It is important that people are reminded of the diversity and benefits of the MSHCP.

Pam Nelson asked, money aside, would there be some way to sidestep the rising property values with mitigation and the fees RCA is currently charging are probably nowhere near the increase in prices.

Aaron Gabbe stated that it was the crux of one aspect of the challenge ICF is facing. They have a whole sub-consultant team who are responsible for evaluating costs and how RCA will be able to pay for the benefit it provides. Who should be responsible for what amount of burden of

those benefits, and how much it will ultimately cost. RCA is always looking for new sources of funding, using partners to fortify grant applications, and visiting Sacramento and Washington, D.C. to speak with leaders in the habitat coalitions.

Bruce Colbert thought right now there were a lot of great suggestions but responses to those suggestions were important.

Aaron Hake said that there is an urgency in trying to do something but the time it will take to implement the solution could take years.

This item is for the Stakeholders Committee to receive a presentation summarizing the purpose of the SIAAP and to provide feedback.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Aaron Hake, Executive Director, shared that sometime in the next month or two information on RCA's 20th Anniversary Celebration will be announced. This will be a public event to celebrate the accomplishments of the MSHCP.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Stakeholders Committee, Executive Director Aaron Hake adjourned the meeting at 11:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Director/
Clerk of the Board

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, September 24, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Stakeholders Committee was called to order by Executive Director Aaron Hake at 2:07 p.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

Bruce Colbert
Dan Silver
Juan Rosas
Lou Monville
Nicole Padron
Pam Nelson
Rachael Johnson

Members Absent

Cara Lacey
Drew Feldmann
Laura Jamie
Michael Linton
Nolan King
Sherli Leonard
Teri Biancardi
Tuba Ebru Ozdil

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no requests to speak from the public.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 24, 2024

Approval of the minutes was deferred, as there was not a quorum present.

5. PRESENTATION – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Italia Garcia, Community Engagement Manager, provided a presentation on the Community Engagement Update. The 146 Project was launched to increase student and community engagement and awareness. This program aims to have families in the community go out and visit RCA lands. The program was developed in partnership with the Girl Scouts; Katie Fuller created this fun patch program as a Gold Start Project to ensure the legacy of RCA was continued through generations. Students in kindergarten through eighth grade can participate, whether they are scout members or not, in various activities based on grade level to earn a fun patch and certificate of recognition.

RCA has reached nearly 2,000 Western Riverside County residents since 2024 and has had 14 community events. Stakeholders are asked to share with RCA staff if there are any opportunities for staff to attend community events to promote the 146 Project and the MSHCP.

RCA has joined forces with the Rivers & Lands Conservancy (RLC), and have hosted two major events thus far, in October 2024 and May 2025. In October 2024, staff went to the Teledine Reserve to restore Delhi Sands flower-loving fly habitat. Volunteers removed 1.5 tons of shrubs and collected 105 pounds of buckwheat seeds.

Aaron Gabbe, Regional Conservation Director, stated that the partnership came about as part of an Earth Day event that staff from RCA and RLC were both attending. RLC had strong community ties, while RCA had land that needed to be maintained. Together we were able to host events that used volunteers from the community to help bring about a sense of ownership to those involved.

Italia Garcia shared that the partnership has committed to having two events a year, one in the spring and one in the fall. There is an upcoming event on Saturday, October 25, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., in the Fontana/Jurupa Hills area restoring Delhi Sand Dune Habitats.

Yvonne Lam, Senior Management Analyst, External Affairs, presented a slide on the public outreach efforts for the second quarter of 2025. Even though RCA is part of RCTC, they do have their own social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as *The Vista* Newsletter. Website users mostly access the RCA website from their desktop and public sentiment is mostly positive. There was a negative comment received regarding the San Diego Horned Lizard approaching extinction due to an invasive ant species, which is not necessary negative toward RCA, but it did help shed light on the importance of the MSHCP.

On social media there were mixed increases and decreases, due to RCA staff trying to analyze what they put out on social media and making sure the posts are intentional, solidifying facts and accurate information. There are 5,344 email subscribers to *The Vista* newsletter, as of the second quarter. The most visited story was about the Western Pond Turtle.

Italia Garcia again emphasized that RCA staff wanted to make sure the Stakeholders were in the know on RCA's community engagement. Stakeholders were urged to share this information and inform staff of any opportunities to further connect with the community at upcoming events.

Pam Nelson shared that there was an education forum this Saturday at the De La Rosa Plateau.

Lou Monville asked how staff were leveraging community outreach and social media work to the MSHCP goals and strategies. Italia Garcia stated that social media work aimed to correlate what was happening locally with what RCA might be currently doing. The on the ground civic engagement work has been picking up with the attendance of more events. RCA branding is now being recognized, but there is still room for evaluating more messaging, demographics, or areas.

Aaron Hake, Executive Director, clarified if the inquiry was about how RCA was using social media to advance acquisitions or to let the public know about them.

Lou Monville confirmed that was where the question was leading but the answer that was given was practical and appreciated. In the long term, acquisitions are going to get better with knowledge, understanding, and appetite.

Aaron Hake added that RCA heavily focuses on the species on social media to show what is being conserved. RCA has not yet embraced the advocacy message. Staff will need to look at how to pivot from saying look what we did to look what else we could do.

Juan Rosas stated knowing that Western Riverside is predominantly Hispanic, how can RCA start engaging Spanish-translation on things and other methods to bring that advocacy to the Hispanic community.

Ariel Alcon Tapia, Public Affairs Manager, shared that to reach the Hispanic community, RCA has done Spanish-translated promotional items. It is also understood that the newer generation of Hispanic community members are not always Spanish speakers, so photos in promotions are taken to show that we are all out there in the community and on the RCA lands. When launching new programs, RCA is mindful of showing a diverse set of folks visiting reserves and Riverside County Parks lands.

Italia Garcia added that another approach that has been discussed is being culturally aware, as in Latino and Hispanic communities' access to nature spaces is not the norm.

Nicole Padron thought that children were a great way to reach the different communities in Western Riverside County.

Bruce Colbert would like to see the newsletter highlight RCA accomplishments and acquisitions.

Aaron Hake thanked the Stakeholders for the discussion. RCA has a small but mighty team and if there are other opportunities that come up, please share them with staff.

6. STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN FINDINGS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Aaron Hake shared that this presentation was a mini version of what was presented to the RCA Board of Directors earlier in the month at the Board Workshop. The Board has directed staff to share this information with the Stakeholders Committee.

Aaron Gabbe provided a presentation on the RCA Board Workshop Overview. Just over a year ago, the RCA Board was having deep discussions about high-cost acquisitions, due to how the Plan was set up, they were all acquisitions that RCA had to make. The Board wanted staff to review the issues to determine what was at the core of the problem, out of that direction came

the Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP). A consultant was hired to help conduct the study, generate a report, and provide recommendations to the RCA Board. The primary goal of the study was to identify ways to enhance the flexibility of the MSHCP implementation and more specifically to have the flexibility to make decisions on whether to purchase certain property ensuring financial stability and permit compliance.

The Development Habitat Acquisition and Negotiation Strategy (HANS) process is a tool to resolve development/conservation conflicts in the Criteria Area. The purpose of acquisitions is to create a reserve system of 153,000 acres, which is a little less than 50 percent of the entire Criteria Area. The Plan spends hundreds of pages describing what the reserve system should look like, and the HANS process facilitates the assembly of that reserve system. There is little flexibility in the HANS process, because if the land presented is conscribed for conservation, RCA must purchase it.

There is one tool the Plan provides to gain flexibility, the Criteria Refinement process. The Criteria Refinement process is a way that RCA can adjust written conservation criteria to facilitate reserve assembly. RCA can adjust where land will be protected if the replacement land is equal or better ecological value and the same size, so there is no net loss to the 153,000 required acres. This provides the landowner with the opportunity to develop their land if they can find replacement land and shift the conservation. This process is rarely used, primarily because of the challenge in finding the replacement property, not just equal in size and habitat quality, but also land that would be available from a willing seller in the right place.

One of the ways RCA evaluated whether it was possible to create more flexibility for the permittees was to identify the landscape to see if there were areas that the Plan did not describe for conservation but were adjacent to lands that were. It found that there are about 70,000 acres that were available across the landscape for future Criteria Refinements.

Another part of the Plan that was evaluated was the land acquisition costs since 2004 with a focus on purchases between 2018-2024. Between 2004 and 2017, there was a consistent average land cost of about \$14,000 per acre, adjusted to 2020 dollars. This was consistent with what the Financial Plan predicted in 2003, and what was used to calculate fees in the first Nexus Study. However, in 2018 things started to change. The consultant evaluated 179 acquisitions between 2018 and 2024 and found that the average land cost had increased to about \$25,000 an acre. This was in part because RCA had to acquire some high-cost parcels that had been zoned for development. If those high-cost acquisitions are removed, the average land value is around \$16,500 per acre.

During the 2020 Nexus Study, three challenges were discovered, that continue to this day.

1. The 2003 Nexus Study and Finance Strategy overestimated the amount of revenue that would come to the RCA. It was predicted that development would happen at a much higher pace. The Great Recession further slowed the pace of development and thus reduced fee revenue. The shift to higher density development over low-density is contrary to what the 2003 Nexus Study predicted.

2. The overestimation of non-fee revenues also played a part as it was predicted this would amount to 44 percent when it has only been 9 percent.
3. Finally, there was an under-estimation of costs. As part of the Finance Strategy, there was an assumption that of the 97,000 acres that local agencies had to acquire, it was expected that 41,000 acres would be contributed free of charge through the Development HANS process in exchange for non-monetary incentives. Only 5,000 acres have been received, increasing the land budget significantly.

The Board attempted to tackle this by approving the 2020 Nexus Study, increasing the fees quite a bit. It paid off, as RCA has had robust revenues of about \$30 million a year, and consistent non-fee revenues of about \$6.5 million per year. With these revenues, RCA has acquired close to 10,000 acres, making substantial progress. RCA has managed and monitored 70,000 acres scattered over Western Riverside. RCA has been able to build up reserves which have helped absorb high-cost acquisitions along with strong reporting and financial management. If these high-cost acquisitions continue, RCA will need more funding resources.

The third part of the SIAAP study was conducting interviews with Wildlife Agency staff, Board Members, RCA staff, and a Stakeholder Committee meeting. The themes of the interviews were consistent: rising land prices and development pressure; the inflexibility in the reserve assembly; overvaluation of land appraisals; and that fees needed to be updated.

The perceptions from the permittees and stakeholders also had consistent feedback including: a limited sense of permittee ownership in the Plan; inconsistent alignment with zoning; and the need for public communication, training, and outreach focusing not just on the process but the purpose of RCA to expand and build on public support.

The SIAAP recommendations from the consultant focused on three topics:

1. Strengthening Funding and Cost Management
 - Manage Costs - Align land use and zoning with the reserve design and expand use of non-monetary compensation.
 - Expand Funding Options - Explore new revenue sources.
 - Adapt Funding Program - Revisit cost projections and development fee through a new Nexus Study.
2. Improve Reserve Assembly Flexibility
 - Explore alternative reserve configurations.
 - Identify and acquire areas for proactive Criteria Refinements from willing sellers.
 - Invest in habitat restoration to stay in rough step.
3. Increase Support for and Commitment to the MSHCP
 - Update the cost-benefit analysis.
 - Update training and outreach programs to permittee planning departments.
 - Develop communications and outreach materials for the public.
 - Incorporate permittee-owned lands into the reserve.

Lou Monville wanted to know what the permittee's incentive was to hold on to land that had not already been added to the reserve assembly. Aaron Gabbe shared that while exact reasons are unknown, sometimes there are mitigation reasons.

Aaron Hake stated that in speaking to one city who had purchased land, it was discussed that giving that land to RCA would prohibit creation of trails or other recreational activities as its' use would be limited due to the MSHCP.

Lou Monville thought that adding that to the real estate transaction would allow those activities. Aaron Hake stated that while that was correct, it would limit how much of that land could actually be included in the reserve.

Aaron Gabbe added that it was an incorrect belief that a permittee would need to create trails prior to donating land to the RCA, as that is something that needs a permit and the Plan has already identified trails that are covered.

Aaron Gabbe then shared the RCA staff recommendations to the Board after the completion of the SIAAP and the consultant recommendations.

- 1) Receive and file the draft Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP);
- 2) Refer the SIAAP to the Stakeholder's Committee for review and input;
- 3) Direct staff to conduct an economic and financial analysis comprised of three parts:
 - 1) initiating an economic and community benefits analysis of the MSHCP; 2) initiating a study to explore new sources of revenue to fund MSHCP land acquisition; and 3) initiating a nexus study to evaluate LDMF;
- 4) Direct staff to develop strategies and report back to the Board, in collaboration with Permittees and in consultation with stakeholders, that:
 - i. Expand non-monetary compensation strategies in exchange for land dedication to the MSHCP reserve;
 - ii. Better align areas described by the MSHCP for conservation and land use zoning designations;
 - iii. Incorporate more Permittee-owned land into the MSHCP reserve;
 - iv. Explore large-scale Criteria Refinements that could be used to increase land acquisition flexibility;
 - v. Evaluate targeted changes to the MSHCP that can be strategically implemented during an amendment to the MSHCP to add Crotch's bumble bee; and
- 5) Direct staff to conduct a financial and human resources analysis to determine budget and staffing needs to implement the Board's direction on SIAAP-related initiatives.

Lou Monville wanted to know if for recommendation 4ii, staff had contemplated the continuing state intervention by usurping local land use authority. Moving forward, RCA should be assuming that the legislature will continue upzoning land for residential and stripping that from local government authority. Aaron Gabbe thought that was a great point and RCA will have to be adaptive in the implementation of the Plan.

Aaron Hake added that feedback received from some Board Members after the presentation made it clear that the consultants on this study were not land use experts. Some of the upzoning issues are being forced on permittees, but the issues that have caused high-cost acquisitions for RCA are not residential but rather commercial/industrial.

Aaron Gabbe shared that Stakeholders can contribute by helping to improve public investment in the Plan. Stakeholders were urged to review the SIAAP document and return to the next Stakeholders Committee to see how they can assist with addressing the outlined issues.

Aaron Hake stated that this was the reason that the Stakeholders Committee was written into RCA's Bylaws. This is a standing committee of the RCA that is intended to have environmental groups, developers, and property owners at the table for issues such as this. The Board has formally requested that this committee review this information and provide thoughtful feedback that will then be channeled back to the Board as staff are developing their implementation strategy. The expectation is that there is a start of the conversation today, and at the next meeting the committee can summarize or synthesize the various perspectives on these recommendations.

Bruce Colbert stated that after reviewing the document there were several thoughts that could be shared with RCA staff. Aaron Hake welcomed the comments via email and if one-on-one meetings were needed, they could be arranged.

At this time, Lou Monville left the meeting.

Bruce Colbert wanted to know why the increased support for and commitment to the MSHCP did not make it to the staff recommendation that was presented to the Board. Aaron Gabbe shared that it was the umbrella for some specifics that were mentioned in the staff recommendation. Most of the strategies to implement the recommendations require increasing permittee commitment.

Bruce Colbert asked if the economic benefit study was the same as the cost benefit study. Aaron Gabbe stated that they were similar. The cost funding analysis was used to generate the MSHCP fees. There was also an old, informal cost benefit analysis that highlighted the benefits of the MSHCP. Staff would like to update it with more current data to use it as tool to solidify that the MSHCP provides permit streamlining which equates to savings on project development.

Bruce Colbert added that the SIAAP did not mention modifying the Criteria Refinement process to allow for partial acquisitions, which the Stakeholders Committee had previously mentioned. Aaron Gabbe shared that the HANS process allows partial acquisition, as well as the Criteria Refinement process if someone is willing to sell only part of the property.

Aaron Hake confirmed that some of the recent high-cost acquisitions had landowners that were not willing to part with just a portion of their property, so RCA was required to purchase the entire property.

Pam Nelson wanted to know where the conservation easements would fit into this equation. Aaron Gabbe explained that in other parts of the state, when landowners want to keep and use their land, they can gain some money by selling a conservation easement. In Northern California, conservation plans use the easements instead of purchasing land, but this is not applicable in Western Riverside. Due to the layout of the conservation strategy, it dictates where the reserve system will be and where the permit can be extended. If there is a property that cannot be developed, and RCA is willing to buy their property for highest and best use, there is not a need for a conservation easement for only a fraction of the cost.

Pam Nelson asked if RCA were to get conservation easements if they would add to the required acreage. Aaron Gabbe confirmed it absolutely would count. This could be something to explore in the badlands, as it is not zoned for development, but there would be restrictions with those easements.

Dan Silver was initially optimistic about Criteria Refinements, but as it was pointed out the land has to be purchased first, making it harder to accomplish. Habitat restoration to maintain rough step was a good thought, if it would not require a plan amendment first. Aaron Gabbe did not think that it would be necessary, and the subject has already been broached with the Wildlife Agencies. It could be something that was memorialized as part of the Major Amendment for Crotch's bumble bee, but it could be accomplished without it as well.

Dan Silver thought that the mentioning of finding new funding sources, there are groups that have stated this time and again, and there is nothing new. A new measure or bond would be hard to achieve as you generally need a two-third vote to pass them. There is still a need for new or out-of-the-box mechanisms, and there are some thoughts to share on the subject, but this would be a long discussion.

Aaron Hake shared that it would be helpful to be pointed in the direction of other studies that have been done on the subject, so RCA can have a jumpstart on their analysis. Ultimately, the RCA Board is going to have to make some difficult decisions one way or another, so presenting them with a menu of options and the difficulty of each to accomplish would help them determine what was worth the difficulty.

Bruce Colbert likes the strategy that was proposed for the use of the Criteria Refinement, the section on it in the SIAAP, it is not set up as a land bank and it requires money upfront. Aaron Gabbe shared that there are some things in the works to purchase some land that is not currently described for conservation which may be able to be used for a land swap in the future if the conditions are right.

Bruce Colbert thought there were two main challenges from the Criteria Refinement process, the funding, and the equivalency analysis.

Nicole Padron wanted to know if the appraisal for the highest and best use would take into consideration if the property were in a streambed and would not have been able to be developed. Aaron Gabbe stated that should presumably be considered.

Dan Silver shared that in an appraisal it was considered the time delay and uncertainty due to habitat and species present, so the Plan is a victim of its' own success, it has removed that uncertainty. The appraisal should be done as if the Plan does not exist and it should take into account the aforementioned uncertainty and time delay.

Aaron Hake noted that the MSHCP is a grand compromise of stakeholders, and it was made clear to the Board that the HANS process was not the problem. The HANS process is a tool to assemble the reserve being fair to the landowner with protections built in to ensure they are compensated fairly. The HANS process is essential to the MSHCP.

Aaron Gabbe added that changing the process would require a radical overhaul to the overall conservation strategy and the location of the reserves, but the land needed to do that is not available anymore.

Pam Nelson wanted to know how much land had been acquired by non-profits obtaining their own funding and donating it to RCA. Aaron Gabbe responded that it had not happened within the last three years. The challenge is everyone would be competing for the same pots of money, so it is better to partner with other agencies.

Aaron Hake added that the amount of land that has been donated to the MSHCP is considerably less than what was projected when the Plan was formulated.

Bruce Colbert wanted to expand on the statement that the MSHCP reserve design was inflexible and what the cause of that was.

Aaron Gabbe shared that there were a number of factors, but the primary one was geography. The distribution of land between the areas that are zoned for development, and rural/residential or open space have no distinct boundaries. Other plans have clear limits on where development of any kind can occur and do not include tools like the HANS process, with acquisitions only occurring from willing sellers. The Wildlife Agencies are assured that no development will occur in those areas, and no permit authorization is given by the agency. The specificity of the reserve design in the MSHCP is what limits its' flexibility.

Aaron Hake thanked the Stakeholders for their comments. The goal over the next several weeks is to receive the Stakeholders' formal feedback, answer any questions, and have one-on-one meetings if needed. There will be another Stakeholders' meeting in a couple of months to have a wrap-up discussion on the SIAAP and its' findings.

- 1) Receive the draft Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP) for review and input.**

7. COMMITTEE MEMBER / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS

There were no comments or reports.

8. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Stakeholders Committee, Executive Director Aaron Hake adjourned the meeting at 3:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Director/
Clerk of the Board

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Stakeholders Committee was called to order by Executive Director Aaron Hake at 10:05 a.m., in Conference Room E, at the County of Riverside Administrative Center, 4080 Lemon Street, Eleventh Floor, Riverside, California, 92501.

2. ROLL CALL

Members/Alternates Present

Bruce Colbert
Nicole Padron
Pam Nelson
Tuba Ebru Ozdil

Members Absent

Cara Lacey
Dan Silver
Drew Feldmann
Juan Rosas
Laura Jamie
Lou Monville
Michael Linton
Nolan King
Rachael Johnson
Sherli Leonard
Teri Biancardi

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no requests to speak from the public.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 24, 2024 & SEPTEMBER 24, 2025

Approval of the minutes was deferred, as there was not a quorum present.

5. FEEDBACK – STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN (SIAAP)

Aaron Gabbe, Regional Conservation Director, gave a brief overview of the history of SIAAP discussions. From the last Stakeholders Committee, the members were asked to review the SIAAP Executive Summary and provide feedback on how members of the Stakeholders Committee could contribute towards improving permittee, stakeholder, and public investment in the MSHCP. RCA staff also asked how the Stakeholders Committee could contribute towards MSHCP public outreach efforts to improve ownership and understanding of the Plan and reserve system.

Brue Colbert shared detailed thoughts that were emailed and included in the agenda. The gist of the first comment was that the suite of recommendations that were given to the Board needed to include the action items, increased permittee commitment. In the SIAAP on page 5-5, it was discussed that additional items that would also help with outreach were revising training and outreach strategy, which should be elevated. RCA updating the cost-benefit analysis would really be helpful to quantify not only the benefits but also the cost savings.

The last sentence regarding appraisals on page 5-3 of the SIAAP was thought to be unclear in its' reference to regulatory and biological context. Everything prior to that statement is clear and informative, but the last sentence is confusing.

The SIAAP mentions down-zoning everything to save money, but there is a limit to how much that can be done. That limit and the associated rules should be included or considered in the SIAAP. It was understood that the real issue was aligning the plan with land use.

In talking about the Criteria Refinement process, the way it was written did not provide direction on forming a land mitigation bank. This was not how the original plan was envisioned. It is possible that building a land mitigation bank would find the RCA out of balance with the habitat types available versus those needed.

Aaron Gabbe explained the reserve assembly process and the Criteria Refinement process.

Bruce Colbert highlighted some funding shortfalls that were detailed in the SIAAP, including the operating deficit.

Lisa Mobley, Administrative Services Director/Clerk of the Board, shared that as an agency, they tend to lean more toward summary/action minutes versus verbatim. If there is ever anything you want included verbatim, you can let us know, and we can attach them to the minutes. We can also correct the minutes if they are found to be in error prior to voting on them.

Nicole Padron stated that there was an item approved by the Board to incorporate more permittee owned land into the MSHCP reserve. In 2019, Rivers & Lands Conservancy entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with RCA to include their land into Public Quasi-Public (PQP) and Additional Reserve Land (ARL) into the MSHCP. It was asked to what extent other land trusts have their land incorporated into the MSHCP.

Aaron Gabbe explained that RCA does a thorough analysis of PQP lands that are not counted as part of the 153,000 acres that the MSHCP has to acquire for mitigation. That review picks up everything that is supposed to be PQP.

Aaron Hake, Executive Director, wanted to clarify if Nicole Padron was wondering if RCA would be going to ask other entities to contribute their land to the MSHCP.

Nicole Padron confirmed that was what was asked.

Aaron Gabbe thought it was a good point, and it was something that RCA had not looked into before, but staff could look at the California Conservation Easement database to see if there were any leads.

Philip Kang, Technical Information Program Manager, added that there have been ongoing efforts for easements and other lands which have led to some of the MOUs with RCA in the past. Some of the easements are located outside of criteria cells, so they cannot be included in ARL.

Nicole Padron thought that Rivers & Lands Conservancy could continue to help RCA with public outreach and partnering on joint volunteer events. There are different events that could be explored as well.

Ebru Ozdil shared that it is very important to conduct outreach to planners and developers as unfortunately, many may not know what the MSHCP is and the history of what it has done for the county.

Aaron Gabbe led a discussion on other land mitigation banks and how they work.

Ebru Ozdil suggested that there should be guidelines for cities on how to address the MSHCP in general plans.

Aaron Hake thanked the committee for their robust discussion and insights on the MSHCP and the SIAAP.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Bruce Colbert asked that corrections be made to the minutes that were included in the agenda packet, they will be sent via email.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Stakeholders Committee, Executive Director Hake adjourned the meeting at 11:22 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Director/
Clerk of the Board

From: [Bruce Colbert](#)
To: [Lisa Mobley](#)
Cc: [Melonie Donson](#); [Italia Garcia](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: RCA: November Stakeholders Committee Agenda - corrections addendum2
Date: Saturday, November 29, 2025 3:34:27 PM
Attachments: [PastedGraphic-15.tiff](#)
[image002.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.png](#)
[image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)
[image008.png](#)

Hi Lisa,

For my final comment below, I would like to add the source of my estimate of \$718,467,600 needed to fund state and federal acquisitions (56,000-acre state and federal acquisition goal - 27,794 acres acquired = 29,206 acres remaining to be acquired [SIAAP, p. 1-1] x \$24,600/acre [SIAAP, Section 4.5.1.4, p. 4-15] = \$718,467,600).

I would like to make to corrections to my entries in the Minutes for the RCA Stakeholders Committee Meeting on September 24, 2025.

- On page 18, on my first entry, change “a step up” to “set up.”
- On page 18, on my second entry, change “to” to “from.”

In my September 24, 2025 Comment Letter, for the third bullet item, the word “qualifiable” ought to read “quantifiable.”

For my comment at the November 19, 2025 RCA Stakeholders Committee meeting, I meant to provide the source for my estimate of a \$108 million operating funding deficit by 2044. In SIAAP Section 4.6.3.1, p. 4-21, Table 10 shows Recent Total Funding of \$32,936,646; Table 11 shows Recent Total Costs of \$38,668,237.

- $(\$38,668,237 - 32,936,646) \times 19 \text{ years} = \$108,900,229$ operating funding deficit.
- $\$108,900,229$ operating funding deficit + $\$500,000,000$ acquisition funding deficit = $\$608,900,229$ total funding deficit by 2044.

Thank you for your assistance!

Sincerely,

Bruce Colbert

Bruce Colbert, AICP | Executive Director
Property Owners Association of Riverside County
6407 Reflection Drive #205 | San Diego, CA 92124
949-689-4480 | bcolbert1@gmail.com
www.poarc.com

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Stakeholders Committee was called to order by Executive Director Aaron Hake at 10:34 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

Bruce Colbert
Dan Silver
Lou Monville
Nicole Padron
Nolan King
Rachael Johnson
Tuba Ebru Ozdil

Members Absent

Cara Lacey
Drew Feldmann
Juan Rosas
Laura Jamie
Michael Linton
Pam Nelson
Sherli Leonard
Teri Biancardi

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no requests to speak from the public.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JULY 24, 2024, SEPTEMBER 24, 2025, & NOVEMBER 19, 2025

Approval of the minutes was deferred, as there was not a quorum present.

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

Aaron Gabbe, Regional Conservation Director, provided a presentation on the 2024 RCA Annual Report. 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.

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 has been acquired through 2024. Today, that number 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.

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. 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. Cumulative habitat losses since inception of the Plan show that 81% of the development is occurring outside of Criteria Cells with 19% occurring within the cells.

Habitat losses and gains are evaluated through what the MSHCP calls Rough Step Analysis. Rough Step is a metric 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. This means that future projects would not be able to move forward if they would remove those vegetation types.

Another large part of MSHCP compliance is to manage the ARL. Eleven MSHCP Park Staff manage over 52,000 acres across the County. 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.

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 the 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. In 2024, monitoring actions included focused monitoring for the 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 reptiles and mammal species.

At the direction of the Board and based on findings from the Strategic Improvement Assessment and Action Plan (SIAAP), staff have 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 MSHCP Compliance Manager and a Reserve Management and Monitoring Senior Analyst.

Dan Silver asked who was preparing the Wildfire Management Plan. Aaron Gabbe stated that the plan was being developed under contract with Dudek. Dan Silver thought that was a red flag and emphasized that it was important for the plan to be completed using the best available scientific information, as it could have significant consequences if done incorrectly. There should be an opportunity to engage with Dudek to understand what science is being used.

Aaron Gabbe added that staff were currently in the process of drafting the plan, talking to and working with local fire agencies and CAL FIRE, and noted that the plan would also be thoroughly vetted by the wildlife agencies.

Dan Silver noted that there were other parts of the SIAAP related to reserve assembly flexibility, and that the Board had indicated a desire to see whether the criteria refinement process could be made more flexible.

Aaron Gabbe shared that the direction from the Board was to evaluate possibilities or alternatives for increasing flexibility. Aaron explained that the SIAAP found there were limited opportunities due to the nature and structure of the reserve assembly process and the Plan and noted that making progress is difficult when already behind on assembly goals, but determining where and how to catch up is part of the process. RCA staff are working on identifying lands that could be acquired to address deficits; however, this effort also requires securing adequate funding for those acquisitions.

Tuba Ebru Ozdil wanted to know what the review and approval process would be for the Master Wildfire Management Plan. It was stated that it would be important to circulate the plan to other agencies and interested parties, including Tribes. Traditional burn practices and post-fire gathering opportunities could provide valuable input. Regarding Rough Step Unit 8, it was asked which jurisdictions would be affected if some projects do not move forward and what the strategy and timeline would be for improving the situation.

Aaron Gabbe stated that every development project reviewed through the Joint Project Review Process (JPR) is evaluated for consistency with Rough Step requirements. When a project impacts a natural community, RCA screens it against the status of vegetation communities within the applicable Rough Step unit. If a unit is out of rough step and a project does not provide sufficient replacement or protection elsewhere, RCA must consider alternatives. To avoid that situation, staff have been identifying and prioritizing lands for acquisition within Rough Step Unit 8 to bring it back into compliance. It was noted that the Development Habitat Acquisition Negotiation Strategy (HANS) process often drives land acquisition priorities and determines conservation needs, but it can also divert resources from addressing areas that are currently out of rough step.

Lou Monville added that it would be important to communicate with stakeholders and cities about RCA's status in this process and how it overlaps with commitments that have already been made, there could be a potential conflict between new state housing requirements and areas that are currently out of rough step.

Aaron Gabbe thought that was a great example and said it was one of many issues staff would like additional capacity to explore. It was noted that cities are trained to evaluate projects against rough step requirements, but that local departments have many competing priorities and the Plan is highly complex.

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

At this time, Lou Monville left the meeting.

6. FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Tyler Madary, Legislative Affairs Manager, provided a presentation on federal legislative updates. RCA staff traveled to Washington, D.C. with the National Habitat Conservation Plan Coalition (NHCP) and Committee Member Dan Silver in March. During the trip, RCA and the NHCP met with Representative Mark Takano, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Director Brian Nesvik, U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) Associate Deputy Secretary Karen Budd-Falen, professional staff from the offices of Senator Alex Padilla, Senator Adam Schiff, Representative Ken Calvert, Representative Young Kim, and professional staff from the House and Senate appropriations and policy committees.

The goal of the trip was to:

- Educate Congress and federal agency officials about the benefits of programmatic Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs);
- Advocate for increased funding for HCP land acquisitions; and
- Request the status of pending FY 2025 grant awards and the FY 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity.

RCA and the NHCP's funding advocacy is built around Congress' appropriations process. RCA submitted two funding requests to the Western Riverside County delegation of Senators Padilla and Schiff. The first was the NHCP's standard request for \$100 million annually for the Section 6 HCP Land Acquisition Grant Program. This request is based on nationwide programmatic need. The grant program is currently funded at \$26 million annually and is vastly oversubscribed, with \$58 million in eligible applications that went unfunded in FY 2024.

RCA's second funding request was for \$10 million in discretionary funding for HCPs with commitments from the USFWS to plans like the MSHCP to fund a portion of their land acquisition goal. While modest, this request is intended to set a precedent for appropriating funds to HCPs with federal commitments above and beyond the current funding level from the Land and Water Conservation Fund that was mandated by the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020. This builds on past successful advocacy, including report language in the FY 2026 appropriations bill directing the USFWS to fund its commitments to plans like the MSHCP.

Overall, the priorities shared by the RCA and the NHCP were met positively, and their advocacy will continue.

Dan Silver thought that RCA and RCTC have done a great job of trying to secure funding for this Plan. It is extremely difficult and challenging, but they are pursuing every possible avenue.

Nicole Padron asked if staff had received any insight into when additional funding would be released.

Tyler Madary stated that they had not, but they are continuing to follow up. If necessary, RCA may need to engage its congressional representatives to encourage the agencies to move the process forward. Staff have observed this across the board. Various agencies and departments, regardless of jurisdiction at the federal level, are taking a very slow and steady approach to reviewing all funding before it goes out the door.

This item is for the Stakeholders Committee to receive a federal legislative update.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE SPRING 2026

Italia Garcia, Community Engagement Manager, provided a presentation on community engagement updates. The 146 Project continues to expand through hands-on educational and community-based outreach opportunities. This spring, staff participated in the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS), Inland Empire Chapter, and ASCE Engineer's Day event where students learned about engineering disciplines and participated in interactive activities tied to conservation and the MSHCP. As part of that effort, 29 new 146 Project patches were awarded.

Additionally, four patches were awarded during the April volunteer restoration event in recognition of student participation in habitat restoration activities. To date, the program has reached a total of 47 participants. Staff will continue identifying partnership opportunities to expand participation and increase awareness of the 146 species protected under the MSHCP.

The RCA continues partnering with the Rivers & Lands Conservancy to support habitat restoration, stewardship activities, and community engagement efforts throughout western Riverside County. Most recently, on Saturday, April 11, staff participated in a post-fire habitat restoration event at the “Country Roads” conservation site in Murrieta. The event engaged more than 30 volunteers and resulted in the removal of 34 garbage bags of invasive species, estimated at approximately 680 pounds. This volunteer effort provided community members with a direct opportunity to support habitat restoration and stewardship activities on conserved lands.

The RCA continues utilizing digital communication platforms to educate the public on the benefits of the MSHCP, protected species, and regional conservation efforts.

During the first quarter of 2026:

- Facebook reach increased by 66%;
- Instagram reach increased by 48%; and
- Website sessions increased by nearly 20% compared to the same period in 2025.

One of the top-performing outreach efforts this quarter was a 146 Project social media post, which generated more than 182,000 views. Additionally, the RCA website recorded more than 18,700 sessions, with the homepage, 146 Project page, and RCA maps among the most visited pages. These metrics help staff evaluate outreach effectiveness and continue refining engagement strategies to strengthen public awareness and participation.

This item is for the Stakeholders Committee to receive and file the community engagement update for spring 2026.

8. COMMITTEE MEMBER / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Aaron Hake shared that the RCA is moving forward with its first Major Amendment to the MSHCP to add Crotch’s Bumble Bee. This is a multi-year process, and staff will keep the committee posted on its progress and whether there are any major issues.

It is budget season at the RCA, and we have begun preparing our budget for FY 2027. Some highlights of the budget that recently went to RCA’s Executive Committee include:

- The proposed budget for the next fiscal year is \$56.2 million.
- RCA is proposing to use \$16.5 million of the accumulated fund balance.
- RCA is anticipating purchasing 1,500 acres.
- Revenue is conservatively budgeted at \$18 million. Previous budgets have anticipated \$30 million, but staff are seeing a slowdown in development.
- Revenue from one grant is being incorporated. It is funding from Caltrans to purchase property for the Arroyo toad. Staff are awaiting notification on the latest Section 6 HCP Grant Program. This grant revenue budget could potentially change pending some good news.

Finally, in the fall, RCA will begin the recruitment process for the next Stakeholders Committee. These new appointments will be for a two-year term, and the application process will be open to both current members and new applicants who wish to serve. When available, the application will be emailed to members.

Bruce Colbert shared information about an app from Cornell University for ornithology called Merlin Bird ID. This app lets users identify birds by sound and picture. It is available at www.merlin.allaboutbirds.org.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for consideration by the Stakeholders Committee, Executive Director Hake adjourned the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Lisa Mobley
Administrative Services Director/
Clerk of the Board

AGENDA ITEM 5

WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY REGIONAL CONSERVATION AUTHORITY	
DATE:	August 19, 2026
TO:	Stakeholders Committee
FROM:	Cody Bear Sutton, Reserve Management/Monitoring Manager
THROUGH:	Aaron Hake, Executive Director
SUBJECT:	Update on Development of the Wildfire Management Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This item is for the Stakeholders Committee to receive and file an update on the development of the Wildfire Management Plan (WMP) and to provide feedback for consideration in the first administrative draft of the plan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) is developing a WMP to guide wildfire prevention, fuels management, and fire response coordination across RCA-managed lands within the Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) Conservation Area.

The WMP will serve as a comprehensive, program-level framework that prioritizes the protection of life and property while supporting conservation of MSHCP covered species and their habitats. The plan will guide future, more detailed wildfire management planning at the Habitat Management Unit (HMU) level and ensure consistency with applicable policies and regulatory requirements. HMUs are geographically defined subdivisions of the Conservation Area where the WMP's program-level direction will be translated into site-specific fuels management and fire response actions. Development of the WMP is being conducted in coordination with Dudek and includes collaboration with fire agencies, wildlife agencies, Tribal representatives, and other stakeholders.

DISCUSSION

Plan Development

Development of the WMP has made significant progress. A major milestone has been the completion of the core hazard and risk modeling, which serves as the technical foundation for the plan. This modeling evaluates burn probability, wildfire hazard, risks to structures, and potential impacts to sensitive species and habitats. It also assesses the potential for post-fire vegetation type conversion, a key concern for maintaining native shrubland habitats under the MSHCP. Type conversion occurs when areas dominated by vegetation such as coastal sage

scrub, which is not adapted to frequent or high-intensity fire, burn too frequently and grasses take over the burn scar rather than native shrubland vegetation recovering in its place.

The project has now entered the early administrative draft phase, where the modeling results are being translated into the management direction that will shape the plan. The WMP is intended to guide the full range of RCA's fire-related land management, not wildfire prevention alone. Building on the hazard and risk analysis, it will prioritize and recommend fuels management treatments, identify opportunities to coordinate with fire agencies so that both can meet their goals, guide how RCA responds to fires on its properties, and direct post-fire land management in a way that best supports conservation.

Stakeholder Coordination

Stakeholder coordination remains a key component of WMP development as the project progresses toward completion.

RCA has initiated and is continuing targeted coordination with Tribal governments, fire agencies, and wildlife agencies to solicit input on plan development, risk modeling, and management considerations. This outreach includes engagement with Tribal representatives and fire chiefs and will continue as the plan develops to ensure that Tribal perspectives, local knowledge, and fire and wildlife agency priorities are appropriately reflected in the plan.

During this Stakeholders Committee meeting, the Stakeholders will be provided with an update on the status of the WMP, including the wildfire hazard, risk, and vegetation type conversion modeling, and will be provided with an opportunity to offer feedback and suggestions on management approaches and implementation considerations. Input received here, along with continued engagement with wildlife agencies and other partners as drafts are developed, will help inform the first administrative draft and support a plan that balances wildfire risk reduction with conservation objectives while maintaining consistency with the MSHCP and applicable federal and state requirements.

Schedule and Next Steps

Development of the WMP will continue through the following phases:

- Summer 2026: Stakeholder engagement and preparation of the administrative draft
- Fall 2026: Agency coordination and review
- Winter 2026/2027: Release of the public draft and public review period
- Early 2027: Finalization of the plan and presentation to the Board

Staff will continue working with Dudek and coordinating with stakeholders and agencies to refine the plan and incorporate feedback throughout each phase of development.