

Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the RCHCA Board of Directors was called to order by Chair Joseph Morabito at 11:30 a.m., on December 15, 2022, on the Zoom platform.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Morabito led the Board members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

- City of Corona - Tom Richins
- City of Lake Elsinore - Steve Manos
- City of Menifee - Lesa Sobek
- City of Murrieta - Lisa DeForest
- City of Perris - Michael Vargas
- City of Riverside - Steve Hemenway
- City of Temecula - Jessica Alexander
- City of Wildomar - Joseph Morabito (Chair)
- County of Riverside, District 5 - Jeff Hewitt

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

5. CONSENT AND POLICY CALENDAR

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

MOVER: Lake Elsinore

SECONDER: Perris

AYES: Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Murrieta, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, Wildomar, County of Riverside

A. Assembly Bill 361 Findings

Chair Morabito announced that this item was not included in the initial agenda. In order to continue with today's meeting this item requires a 2/3's majority vote to add the item to the agenda.

Action:

1. Affirmed the findings of the Board of Directors in Resolution Number 2022-04, adopted on May 19,

2022, which are:

- a. The Governor proclaimed a State of Emergency on March 4, 2020, related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which State of Emergency continues to exist today.
- b. State or local officials have recommended measures to promote social distancing.

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

MOVER: Lake Elsinore

SECONDER: Menifee

AYES: Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Murrieta, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, Wildomar, County of Riverside

B. Summary Minutes from the September 15, 2022, Board of Directors Meeting

Action:

1. Approved the Summary Minutes from the September 15, 2022, Board of Directors meeting.

C. Status Report on the Attendance Roster

Action:

1. Received and filed.

D. Status of Mitigation Fee Transfers from Member Agencies Through September 30, 2022

Action:

1. Received and filed.

E. Financial Report Through September 30, 2022

Action:

1. Received and filed.

F. Contracts and Grants Status Updates

Action:

1. Received and filed.

G. Status Report Concerning Reserve Management Committees for the Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve and the Lake Mathews Reserve

Action:

1. Received and filed.

H. Status Report Concerning Reserve Management Coordinating Committee

Action:

1. Received and filed.

I. Approval of the Schedule of Board Meetings for 2023

Action:

1. Approved the Schedule of RCHCA Board meetings for 2023.

J. Approval of an Amendment to the Agreement Between RCHCA and Southern California Gas Company Regarding Incidental Take Authorization for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat for L2001W-D Badlands Project

Actions:

1. Approved the Amendment to the Agreement between the RCHCA and Southern California Gas Company regarding incidental Take Authorization for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat and authorized the General Manager to sign the Agreement after USFWS and CDFW have approved the Incidental Take Authorization called for under the Agreement.
2. Authorized the General Manager to execute and sign the Certificate of Inclusion and collect the mitigation fee as described in the Agreement and the Certificate of Inclusion.
3. Found the approval of the Agreement exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 and 15061(b)(3).

6. REPORTS / DISCUSSION

A. Election of Leadership for Calendar Year 2023

Brian Shomo, Director of RCHCA, reported that Board member Lisa DeForest has acted in the capacity of Vice-Chair over the past year, and has expressed interest in serving as Chair for the next calendar year.

Action:

1. The Board elected Lisa DeForest, City of Murrieta, as Chair, and Steve Manos, City of Lake Elsinore, as Vice-Chair.

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

MOVER: Murrieta

SECONDER: Wildomar

AYES: Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Murrieta, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, Wildomar, County of Riverside

B. Educational Outreach Program Activities Update

Riana Fisher, RCHCA Program Manager, reported that educational outreach has been on hold since 2020. RCHCA resumed its Educational Outreach Program in October and November to celebrate the importance of the Endangered Species Act and hosted approximately 200 fifth grade students from Western Center Academy in Hemet and Good Hope Elementary in Perris.

In addition to several learning stations, the students also participated in a nature hike and wildlife presentation, presented by Wild Wonders.

This year was the first year that RCHCA held its educational program at the Lake Mathews Reserve, allowing the students who attended to experience an actual conservation reserve where the lessons they

learned take place for SKR monitoring and land management.

The students also participate in an art contest and create drawings inspired by what they learned during their visit.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

C. Status Update on Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Recovery Efforts

Brian Shomo, Director of RCHCA, reported that over the years, staff have developed a genetic analysis tool in order to determine and track where the genetically distinct population exists. Coupled with geographical boundaries, staff determined five bio-geographical regions. Most are within Western Riverside County; however, some are within San Diego County.

During the 2022 survey period, the RCHCA evaluated 80 sample cells for SKR suitability. In addition to the RCHCA, the United States Geological Survey sampled 12 sites at Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, and U.S. Navy personnel sampled an additional three locations on Naval Weapons Station Detachment, Fallbrook, for a total of 95 evaluated sample cells.

Of the 95 sample cells evaluated, 70 demonstrated sufficient SKR activity to warrant further live trapping. Based on the results of live trapping, 57 of the 70 samples produced at least a single captured SKR. A total of 160 unique SKR were captured across all RCHCA-surveyed grids. The Navy is providing its SKR capture data at a later date.

Based on initial data analysis, SKR were found widely distributed throughout the range in sufficient numbers to support on-going recovery efforts. A second set of 100 sample cells will be evaluated and surveyed in the fall of 2023. Once sampling is completed in 2023, all 200 sample cells will begin providing a complete picture of SKR range-wide occupation and steer future recovery actions.

Lighting has an affect on SKR due to threat predation and staff have learned that in areas of lighting SKR survey numbers are low. It might be possible to work with member jurisdictions in shielding lighting from stadiums and what not. Staff have also learned that in areas of cattle grazing, SKR does not really exist because the weight of the cattle crushes the burrows. That is why RCHCA has historically used sheep for grazing.

In conclusion, SKR were found widely distributed throughout the range in sufficient numbers to support on-going recovery efforts.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

D. Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Reserve Management and Monitoring Efforts Activities Update

Harry Sandoval, RCHCA Natural Resources Manager, reported that staff have carried out approximately 20 acres of biological restorations of grassland habitat within the Lake Mathews / Estelle Mountain Reserve.

Staff have been working with Riverside County Code Enforcement to clean up illegal dumping on RCHCA lands and surrounding properties. Staff also worked with partner agencies to plan and prioritize measures for enhancing the protection of sensitive natural resources within the Lake Mathews / Estelle Mountain Reserve, and will be installing 450 feet of fencing. A land owner adjacent to RCHCA's land is also installing fencing on his property, which will hopefully cut off access points to the Reserve.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

E. Surplus Land Disposition

Brian Shomo, Director of RCHCA, reported that the Board previously directed staff to explore the opportunity to dispose of the three Nuevo surplus parcels, which were then advertised to various affordable housing developers that have registered with California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), per their requirements.

Following the required 60 days' Notice of Availability, the RCHCA received three letters of interest (5 Talents 401K Trust, Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, and Ecosystem Investment Partners (EIP)). 5 Talents 401K Trust later informed RCHCA that it is no longer interested in purchasing the properties.

Legal counsel and HCD informed staff that they must still wait out the 90-day negotiating period before negotiations with other entities can be made.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

7. REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Dr. Kurt Wilson, General Manager, reported that WRCOG has recently initiated a classification and compensation study that will likely result in a budget amendment for RCHCA regarding compensation changes. A presentation to this Board on this matter will be made in February 2023. WRCOG is also evaluating the advocacy role of the Agency, particularly on the State side, and has partnered with the California Association of Council of Governments and will be doing real time tracking of legislation.

8. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no requests for future agenda items.

9. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Morabito wished everyone a happy holiday season.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 9, 2023, at 11:30 a.m., on the Zoom platform with the option for Committee members to attend in-person at the WRCOG office.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Board of Directors was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.