

Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the RCHCA Board of Directors was called to order by Chair Lesa Sobek at 11:31 a.m., on September 16, 2021, on the Zoom platform.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board member Russ Brown led the Board members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

- City of Corona - Tom Richins
- City of Hemet - Russ Brown
- City of Lake Elsinore - Steve Manos
- City of Menifee - Lesa Sobek (Chair)
- City of Moreno Valley - David Marquez
- City of Murrieta - Lisa DeForest*
- City of Perris - Michael Vargas
- City of Riverside - Steven Hemenway
- City of Temecula - Maryann Edwards
- City of Wildomar - Joseph Morabito

*Arrived after Roll Call

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

5. CONSENT AND POLICY CALENDAR

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

MOVER: Temecula

SECONDER: Moreno Valley

AYES: Corona, Hemet, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, Wildomar

A. Summary Minutes from the May 20, 2021, Board of Directors Meeting

Action:

1. Approved the Summary Minutes from the May 20, 2021, Board of Directors meeting.

B. Status of Mitigation Fee Transfers from Member Agencies Through June 30, 2021

Action:

1. Received and filed.

C. Financial Report Through June 30, 2021

Action:

1. Received and filed.

D. Fiscal Year 2020/2021 4th Quarter Budget Amendment

Action:

1. Approved the 4th Quarter Budget Amendment for Fiscal Year 2020/2021.

E. Status Report on the Attendance Roster

Action:

1. Received and filed.

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

Action:

1. Received and filed.

G. Status Report Concerning Reserve Management Coordinating Committee

Action:

1. Received and filed.

6. REPORTS / DISCUSSION

A. Status Update on Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Recovery Efforts

Brian Shomo, Director of RCHCA, reported that in in July 2021, RCHCA staff, Chair Sobek, and Vice-Chair Morabito met with staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) Sacramento office to discuss status of the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) downlisting review and future needs for recovering the species.

Staff completed one of the largest tasks in the history of the Agency, and that was the creation of a Range-wide Management and Monitoring Plan. Hopefully this Plan will ultimately provide for the complete delisting of SKR.

RCHCA is working with the local California Department of Fish and Wildlife to apply for Section 6 grant funding to support SKR recovery efforts.

The final downlisting rule is still on schedule to publish by September 30, 2021, which is the end of the

federal Fiscal Year. Having said that, there is a backlog in the Federal Registry. RCHCA and USFWS is developing a media release for the downlisting and will begin sending meeting Soundbites to legislative representatives and regulatory agencies to keep them updated.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

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

Harry Sandoval, RCHCA Natural Resources Manager, shared a video highlighting a recent SKR monitoring event. Staff carried out SKR monitoring at the Lake Mathews Reserve on lands controlled by RCHCA. There were 38% more SKR trapped on RCHCA lands in 2021 since last monitoring in 2017. Staff are beginning to see the payoff of all the management activities.

As part of the contract with the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), staff also carried out SKR monitoring on lands controlled by MWD. SKR numbers have also increased on MWD lands in areas that were intensely managed since 2014.

Monitoring at Lake Perris was conducted in October 2020. There were 43% less SKR encountered in monitoring in 2020 when compared to the previous monitoring period in 2016. This is largely attributable to increased vegetation.

Staff installed six wildlife monitoring arrays throughout the Lake Mathews Reserve. The arrays will passively monitor for a wide variety of terrestrial species. Staff have utilized motion activated cameras which will allow staff to gather data passively, and is more cost efficient regarding staff time, and is much safer for the animals.

Staff has been carrying out inspections of RCHCA surplus lands which are not part of the SKR Reserve System. During the current inspection period, staff have identified three encroachment issues: unpermitted Cannabis growing operations, illegal grading and dumping of debris, and development of residential structures.

The Riverside County Survey Department has surveyed parcels where encroachment issues exist and staff is developing an encroachment policy to deal with any current or future issues.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

C. Contracted Land Management and Monitoring Activities Update

Brian Shomo reported on the following contracts:

- U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM): BLM exercised its option to renew the existing contract for a second year for additional SKR monitoring and genetic sampling. Revenue received equals \$190,000.
- Mariposa Biology / Waste Management, Inc., at the El Sobrante Landfill Conservation Area: Mariposa contracted with RCHCA to assist with restoration of upper Olsen Canyon Creek, and to

conduct small mammal and reptile surveys on Phase 10 & 11 berms of the El Sobrante Landfill.
Expected revenue is \$18,097.

- MWD: MWD approved several task orders for RCHCA to provide biological and land management services to manage 6,000 acres and 65 covered species. Expected revenue is \$109,870.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

D. Approval of an Agreement Between RCHCA and the Conservation Biology Institute for Implementation of a Range-Wide Management and Monitoring Plan for Stephens' Kangaroo Rat

Brian Shomo reported that RCHCA is working closely with Conservation Biology Institute (CBI) to begin implementation of the Range-wide Management and Monitoring Plan. This Agreement will allow for facilitation review of the Data Management Strategy, Implementation phases for years 1 – 5 of the Plan, and Data Management and Maintenance for years 2 – 5 of the Plan. The period of performance for the Agreement is through June 30, 2027, and the total cost of this Agreement if all Option Years are exercised is \$1,085,000.

The first two years of implementation for the project will be entirely funded by an award and grant from the BLM through the Good Neighbor Authority Program. RCHCA has the option to extend or terminate this agreement based on available funding, and will actively seek funding for Option Years 3 – 6.

Actions:

1. Approved the Professional Services Agreement between RCHCA and the Conservation Biology Institute for implementation of Range-Wide Management and Monitoring Plan for Stephens' Kangaroo Rat.
2. Authorized the General Manager to execute and administer the terms of the Agreement.
3. Authorized the Executive Director to execute any future amendments to the Agreements, if necessary, so long as such amendments do not result in an overall monetary increase, and as long as such amendments are approved as to form by legal counsel.

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED

MOVER: Perris

SECONDER: Hemet

AYES: Corona, Hemet, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, Wildomar

E. Steele Peak Public Access Plan Activities Update

Riana Fisher, RCHCA Program Manager, reported that RCHCA has completed its CEQA evaluation with Ruth Villalobos & Associates and is finalizing the document. When finalized, the document will be sent out for public comment for 30 days. Pre-construction surveys of the trail are planned for January – March 2022. Construction of the trail is anticipated in late May 2022.

Board member David Marquez inquired about the type of access for this Plan.

Mrs. Fisher responded that it will be a pedestrian walking trail.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

F. Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Annual Review and Financial Analysis

Riana Fisher reported that at the start of Fiscal Year 2020/2021, RCHCA presented a conservative based budget due to the unknown effects that COVID-19 would have on the Agency.

The total revenue collected through June 30, 2021, was a total of \$1,845,346 against \$1,497,706 in expenditures. The mitigation fee revenue collected through June 30, 2021, totaled of \$1,178,110. RCHCA endowment funds earned \$12,895 in interest and \$654,341 in revenues for contracted services.

Action:

1. Received and filed.

7. REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Dr. Kurt Wilson, WRCOG's newly hired Executive Director, provided personal background information. Dr. Wilson applauded staff and the Board for their passion and work in downlisting the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat.

8. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

There were no requests for future agenda items.

9. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board member Marquez announced that there will be night time closures on State Route 60 through Moreno Valley throughout the next year due to the Moreno Beach Overpass project.

Board member Joseph Morabito announced that the City of Wildomar is hosting a Mariachi night on Saturday, September 18, 2021, at the Marna O'Brien Park. A Rooted in Nature Craft Brew Festival will be held at the Santa Rosa Plateau on October 16, 2021.

Chair Sobek announced that the City of Menifee State of the City is scheduled for October 21, 2021.

Brian Shomo introduced new RCHCA staff, Collin Stratz and Angelina Cabral. In honor of Patriot's Day, Mr. Shomo informed the Board that RCHCA's Francisco Gonzalez is currently serving in Kuwait.

10. NEXT MEETING

The next Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 18, 2021, at 11:30 a.m., on the Zoom platform.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Board of Directors was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.