

Riverside County Habitat Conservation Authority

5.A

Regular Meeting ~ Minutes ~

Thursday, February 21, 2019

2:00 PM

County Administrative Center

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by RCHCA's Executive Director, Rick Bishop, at 11:32 a.m., at WRCOG's office, 3390 University Avenue, Suite 450, Riverside, CA.

Jurisdiction	Attendee	Status	Arrived
City of Corona	Yolanda Carrillo	Present	11:30 AM
City of Hemet		Absent	
City of Lake Elsinore	Tim Sheridan	Present	11:30 AM
City of Menifee	Lesla Sobek	Present	11:30 AM
City of Moreno Valley	David Marquez	Present	11:30 AM
City of Murrieta	Christi White	Present	11:30 AM
City of Perris	Michael Vargas	Present	11:30 AM
City of Riverside		Absent	
City of Temecula	James Stewart	Present	11:30 AM
City of Wildomar	Joseph Morabito	Present	11:30 AM
County of Riverside		Absent	
RCHCA Director	Rick Bishop	Present	11:30 AM

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board member Mayor Michael Vargas led members and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

4. SELECTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS LEADERSHIP FOR 2019

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, indicated that after this year, the individual serving as Vice-Chair has historically moved up to Chair; however, it is up to the Board on how it would like to proceed.

Rick Bishop, RCHCA Executive Director, added that the obligations for the Chair and Vice-Chair positions are to facilitate the quarterly meetings of this Board, and participate in trips to Sacramento and Washington, D.C., to meet with legislative representatives to discuss the Agency and some of the initiatives it has undertaken.

Action: 1. *The Board selected Mayor Michael Vargas, City of Perris, as Chair.*

RESULT:	APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED
MOVER:	City of Moreno Valley
SECONDER:	City of Murrieta
AYES:	Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Temecula, Wildomar
ABSENT:	Hemet, Riverside, District 5

Action: 1. *The Board selected Councilmember Christi White, City of Murrieta, as Vice-Chair.*

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED
MOVER: City of Murrieta
SECONDER: City of Perris
AYES: Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Temecula, Wildomar
ABSENT: Hemet, Riverside, District 5

5. WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS / SELF INTRODUCTIONS

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, welcomed the following new Board members:

Councilmember Yolanda Carrillo, City of Corona
 Councilmember Tim Sheridan, City of Lake Elsinore
 Councilmember Lesa Sobek, City of Menifee
 Councilmember Christi White, City of Murrieta
 Mayor Pro Tem James "Stew" Stewart, City of Temecula
 Supervisor Jeff Hewitt, County of Riverside District 5

6. SPECIAL PRESENTATION: Private Francisco Gonzalez, RCHCA

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, introduced Private Gonzalez, who has been with RCHCA since 2014, and recently joined the Army National Guard as a helicopter mechanic. Mrs. Hester thanked Mr. Gonzalez for his dedication and service to his Country.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

8. MINUTES

A. Summary Minutes from the September 20, 2018, RCHCA Board Meeting are Available for Consideration.

Action: 1. *Approved the Summary Minutes from the September 20, 2018, RCHCA Board meeting.*

B. Summary Minutes from the November 15, 2018, RCHCA Board Meeting are Available for Consideration.

Action: 1. *Approved the Summary Minutes from the November 15, 2018, RCHCA Board meeting.*

RESULT: APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED
MOVER: City of Murrieta
SECONDER: City of Lake Elsinore
AYES: Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Temecula, Wildomar
ABSENT: Hemet, Riverside, District 5

9. CONSENT AND POLICY CALENDAR

RESULT:	APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED
MOVER:	City of Murrieta
SECONDER:	City of Temecula
AYES:	Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Temecula, Wildomar
ABSENT:	Hemet, Riverside, District 5

A. Status of Mitigation Fee Transfers from Member Agencies through December 31, 2018

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

B. Financial Report through December 31, 2018

This item was pulled for discussion by Board member Christi White who asked about the reason for a journal entry correction in the amount of \$62,235.

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, responded that, regarding the City of Menifee in July 2018, mitigation fees are transferred quarterly from member agencies to RCHCA. Typically, at the end of the fiscal year any item exceeding \$5,000, staff tries to post the revenues in the year in which it was collected. Having said that, for the City of Menifee, staff had not received any prior notification of when that amount would be processed so it was posted in the current fiscal year. Therefore, the journal entry was more of an audit note than a correction.

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

RESULT:	APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED
MOVER:	City of Murrieta
SECONDER:	City of Temecula
AYES:	Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Temecula, Wildomar
ABSENT:	Hemet, Riverside, District 5

C. Status Report on the Attendance Roster

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

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

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

E. Schedule of Board Meetings for 2019

This item was pulled for discussion by Board member Lesa Sobek who indicated that the City of Menifee has scheduled its State of the City on the same date of the September meeting of this Board.

Action: 1. *Approved the Schedule of RCHCA Board Meetings for 2019.*

RESULT:	APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED
MOVER:	City of Murrieta
SECONDER:	City of Temecula
AYES:	Corona, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Temecula, Wildomar
ABSENT:	Hemet, Riverside, District 5

F. Amendment to the Appendix of the RCHCA Conflict of Interest Code

Action: 1. *Adopted Resolution Number 2019-01; A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency Amending the Conflict of Interest Code pursuant to the Political Reform Act of 1974.*

10. REPORTS / DISCUSSION

A. Overview Presentation on the RCHCA

Rick Bishop, RCHCA Executive Director, reported that there are a lot of new members on this Board, and while staff has met with each Board member individually, staff thought this would be a good opportunity to provide an in-depth presentation on what RCHCA is, how it came about, and what its projects / priorities have been for the last couple of decades and what it looks to in the future.

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, reported that the Endangered Species Act was enacted in 1973. In 1988 the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) was placed on the Endangered Species list. Development in Western Riverside County and parts of northern San Diego County was frozen, which meant each development project would have to petition the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) separately in order to move forward with their project(s); biological surveys were required to determine habitat needs for SKR.

As a result of SKR being listed as an endangered species, RCHCA was formed under a joint powers agreement for the acquisition, administration, and operations and maintenance of land, as well as activities for the ecosystem and conservation for SKR and other threatened and endangered species.

RCHCA operates under the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Habitat Conservation Plan (SKRHCP), which allowed RCHCA to apply for a 30-year federal permit under the USFWS; the permit is due to expire in 2026. The permit provides for a streamlined process for development within Western Riverside County. Under the permit, any development that occurs in the SKR Plan Area requires developers to pay a mitigation fee to offset development impacts. Mrs. Hester shared a map of lands preserved for SKR.

RCHCA is funded by SKR mitigation fees, endowment funds, and contractual agreements. RCHCA has a contract with the Metropolitan Water District to manage some of its land for SKR management as well as with the Riverside County Department of Waste Resources for biological monitoring and studies.

Since 1990, RCHCA has worked with various agencies to acquire over 40,000 acres of conserved habitat for SKR; some of these lands are owned by various entities. RCHCA is responsible for land management, species monitoring and recovery, community outreach, environmental education, as well as policy and advocacy in support of endangered species in Western Riverside County.

Harry Sandoval, RCHCA Senior Ecological Resource Specialist, reported that SKR is neither a rat nor a kangaroo, but a small mammal belonging to a group of rodents that move primarily by hopping on their hind feet. SKR's closest relative in North America is the beaver. SKR are approximately 12" in length and weigh an average of 2.9 ounces. SKR can hop between six and nine feet in a single bound. SKR are nocturnal and spend most of their time in burrows underground. SKR's primary diet is seeds.

SKR are found in arid and semi-arid lands with approximately 50% cover of grass and 50% cover of bare dirt. SKR's geographical range is Western Riverside County and northern San Diego County. Mr. Sandoval shared pictures of SKR habitat.

SKR is currently listed as endangered by the USFWS, while the State of California lists SKR as Threatened. Before SKR was listed, there was substantial loss of approximately 95% of SKR habitat. SKR are important to the eco-system because of its burrowing activity, and the fact that they are granivores and store a good amount of seeds. Burrowing actually aerates the soil, and when SKR store their seeds, they are creating natural seedbanks. Because of these characteristics, SKR are considered a keystone species, a species in which other species within that ecosystem largely depend upon. Mr. Sandoval played a video of SKR in motion, escaping snakes.

Board member Yolanda Carrillo asked of SKR live by themselves or in packs and do they drink water.

Mr. Sandoval responded that SKR live by themselves. SKR get their water intake through the vegetation they eat.

Brian Shomo, RCHCA Director of Natural Resources, reported that there are eight reserves set up in Western Riverside County, ranging from 15,000 acres near Diamond Valley Lake and Lake Skinner, known as the Southwest Multi-Species Habitat Reserve, to the smallest reserve, Motte Rimrock, owned by the University of California, Riverside (UCR), and is approximately 600 acres. In total there are approximately 46,000 acres of land within the SKR reserve system. Within that, according to the permit, RCHCA has to maintain approximately 15,000 acres of occupied SKR habitat.

Some RCHCA Reserves have endowments which range from \$600,000 up to \$5.5M that specifically support land management activities in perpetuity.

The Core Reserves (Lake Perris, Lake Mathews, Potrero, Potrero ACEC, Lake Skinner, Sycamore Canyon, Steele Peak and Motte Rimrock) are scattered throughout Western Riverside County and have their own land management plans.

Reserve activities are overseen by the Reserve Management Committee (RMC). The RMC is comprised of various agencies. RMC adopts its own budget, develops and approves work plans, creates infrastructure and mitigation for projects, and dictates mitigation for projects.

The Reserve Management Coordinating Committee (RMCC) is comprised of managers from all eight reserves. The RMCC meets quarterly and discusses regional matters which affect or impact the reserves, such as eradicating non-native vegetation species such as stink net. The RMCC also develops protocols on how to monitor and manage habitat for SKR.

The RMCC developed an ArcGIS Collector app in coordination with ESRI to collect real-time data to see managing techniques, map areas of new weeds threatening SKR, and determine where SKR are, to name a few.

Board member James Stewart asked about the total acreage the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA) is supposed to acquire and recreational activities.

Mr. Shomo responded that RCA is still in the acquisition phase to link all the reserves. As far as recreational activities, for those that allow public access, RCHCA is actively promoting recreational activities.

Board member Lesa Sobek asked if staff are concerned with non-native plants and species once public access occurs.

Mr. Shomo responded that staff is always concerned about non-native plants and species invading SKR habitat. There are many reserves which do not have dedicated trails, so when people travel over the lands, there is an affect.

Mrs. Hester reported on recent actions to increase cost effectiveness, agency goals, and objectives for the next year. In 2015, RCHCA entered into a management services contract with the Western Riverside Council of Governments (WRCOG) for the purpose of streamlining governmental processes and reducing redundancy of efforts. While the RCHCA remains a separate joint powers agreement, it has fully transitioned into WRCOG in 2018; staff are now employees of WRCOG.

One of the RCHCA objectives for 2019 include identifying areas for public access for trails and paths that the community can benefit from. The Steele Peak Reserve, located in unincorporated County adjacent the City of Perris, is the current focus. Staff are working to identify funding sources.

RCHCA is responsible for demonstrating species recovery to support potential downlisting and eventually delisting of SKR, which is an action that done by the federal government. Staff have had conversations with USFWS in Washington, D.C., Sacramento, and the local office in Carlsbad, and have shared all the efforts RCHCA has taken to demonstrate species recovery. Advocacy trips have been very successful and resulted in staff from the Carlsbad office being dedicated to work with RCHCA.

Reserve lands will be protected in perpetuity. Having said that, there needs to be a funding source to support land management activities. RCHCA is a very resourceful organization and gets a lot of work done with its partner agencies.

Mrs. Hester shared the Agency organizational chart with the Board members as well as examples of cost efficiencies which have occurred since merging with WRCOG.

Mrs. Hester indicated that reserve tours will be organized throughout the year.

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

11. REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rick Bishop, RCHCA Executive Director, reported that WRCOG is required, per its Bylaws, to hold a General Assembly every year. This year's speaker is Josh Earnest, White House Press Secretary under President Barak Obama. This year's event will be held at Pechanga Resort Casino and will include a Future of Cities Conference which will occur from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., followed by the General Assembly beginning at 4:00 p.m.

WRCOG has a series of COGCast episodes on the various WRCOG and RCHCA programs and activities which can be accessed at <http://wrcog.us/283/WRCOGCast>, Apple, Spotify, or Google Play.

12. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Board member White requested a presentation on the wild fire mitigation plan, urban / wild lands interface, and accessible lands.

Board member Sobek requested a presentation on the process of a builder or homeowner on paying mitigation fees.

Board member Carrillo requested a presentation on master trails planning.

13. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board member Marquez announced an upcoming Daisy Walk in April to support Veterans; a flyer was distributed.

14. NEXT MEETING

The next RCHCA Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 16, 2019, at 11:30 a.m., at the County of Riverside Administrative Center, 1st Floor Board Chambers.

15. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.
