

Riverside County Habitat Conservation Authority

4.A

Regular Meeting ~ Minutes ~

Thursday, May 21, 2020

11:30 AM

Zoom Platform

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Michael Vargas at 11:35 a.m., on the Zoom platform.

2. ROLL CALL

Jurisdiction	Attendee	Status	Arrived
City of Corona	Yolanda Carrillo	Present	11:30 AM
City of Hemet	Russ Brown	Present	11:30 AM
City of Lake Elsinore	Steve Manos	Present	11:45 AM
City of Menifee	Lesia 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	Steve Hemenway	Present	11:30 AM
City of Temecula	Steve Manos	Present	11:30 AM
City of Wildomar	Joseph Morabito	Present	11:30 AM
County of Riverside	Jeff Hewitt	Present	11:30 AM
RCHCA Director	Rick Bishop	Present	11:30 AM

3. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

4. CONSENT AND POLICY CALENDAR

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

A. Summary Minutes from the February 20, 2020, Board of Directors Meeting are Available for Consideration.

Action: 1. *Approved the Summary Minutes from the February 20, 2020, Board of Directors meeting.*

B. Status of Mitigation Fee Transfers from Member Agencies through March 31, 2020

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

C. Financial Report through March 31, 2020

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

D. Status Report on the Attendance Roster

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

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

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

F. Amendment to Agreement between the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency and Southern California Edison Regarding Incidental Take Authorization for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat for the Valley Ivyglen Project

Actions:

1. *Approved the Amendment to the Agreement between RCHCA Southern California Edison regarding Incidental Take Authorization for the Stephens' Kangaroo Rat and authorize the General Manager to sign 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.*

G. Steele Peak Public Access Plan Trails Concept Design Plan

Action: 1. *Approved the Scope of Work for the Steele Peak Reserve Trail Feasibility Study.*

5. REPORTS / DISCUSSION**A. Approval of the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Operating Budget**

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, reported that due to COVID-19 and the unknown potential impacts thereof, staff have taken a conservative approach to the Budget and have reduced anticipated mitigation fees revenues by approximately 25%.

The transition of RCHCA from the County of Riverside to WRCOG is complete. For the next fiscal year, program and financial services will now be provided under the WRCOG umbrella.

The proposed budget includes salary for a new Staff Analyst position which will provide assistance with many of the Agency's administrative functions.

Staff is also proposing a separation of the Lake Mathews Wasting Endowment from the Steele Peak Reserve Endowment.

Overall, the projected revenues are approximately \$1.5M against expenditures of approximately \$1.5M.

In-person educational outreach and travel expenses have been significantly reduced for the next fiscal year due to the uncertainties related to COVID-19.

Board member Lesa Sobek asked for clarification on any savings related to reducing the educational and travel line items, and addition a staff position.

Mrs. Hester responded that educational expenses are between \$15k and \$17k annually. Last year there was a Staff Technician position in the budget, which was never used. There is also additional savings in reduced planned travel for the next fiscal year. The Staff Analyst position has a salary budget of approximately \$52k.

- Actions:**
1. *Adopted Resolution Number 2020-01; A Resolution of the Board of Directors of the Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency adopting the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 Agency Budget.*
 2. *Approved the establishment of a Non-Wasting Endowment for the Steele Peak Reserve and the transfer of funds in the amount of \$1 Million from the Lake Mathews Wasting Endowment to the Steele Peak Reserve Endowment.*

RESULT:	APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED
MOVER:	City of Menifee
SECONDER:	City of Hemet
AYES:	Corona, Hemet, Lake Elsinore, Menifee, Moreno Valley, Murrieta, Perris, Riverside, Temecula, Wildomar, County of Riverside
ABSENT:	None

B. Status Update on Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Recovery Efforts

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, reported that even through the COVID-19 pandemic, staff continue to have meetings with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) to discuss the species status assessment and proposed rule recommending downlisting of Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) from endangered to threatened.

RCHCA received a grant from Bureau of Land Management (BLM), a portion of which will be used for the establishment of a Range-Wide Managing and Monitoring Program for SKR. Currently there are many other agencies which manage and monitor SKR utilizing a variety of methodologies. This grant will allow for the creation of a cohesive monitoring plan which can be used as a basis to down list SKR. The working group includes RCHCA, wildlife agencies, San Diego Institute for Conservation Leadership, BLM, USFWS, the Western Riverside County Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), and military personnel in northern San Diego County.

The first meeting of this working group is scheduled for later today. Discussion topics will include identifying the best monitoring, surveying, and the current genetic study.

The Board of Directors congratulated staff on their leadership and contributions toward the down listing of SKR.

Chairman Michael Vargas indicated that RCHCA is the first Agency in the state to down list a species.

- Action:**
1. *Received and filed.*

C. Contracted Land Management and Monitoring Activities Update

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, reported that staff are currently involved in a controlled burn at Lake Mathews. This event is a collaborative effort with the local fire agencies.

RCHCA is under contract with various agencies to provide land management and monitoring services.

Three of the six tasks for the Good Neighbor Authority Program through the Bureau of Land Management are now complete.

Contract tasks with Mariposa Biology now include biological services and species monitoring.

RCHCA also provides land management for the Metropolitan Water District at the Lake Mathews Reserve.

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

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

Harry Sandoval, Senior Ecological Resources Specialist, reported that 2,000 sheep have been utilized to graze approximately 1,200 acres of Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) habitat. CalFire conducted a prescribed bur of 125 acres of additional SKR habitat. Utilizing an aerial drone, staff documented the spatial distribution of novel weeds such as stinknet, which is invading SKR-occupied lands.

Staff applied herbicide and mechanical treatments to the novel weeds. Staff also assisted the U.S. Geological Survey in conducting a survey on the Western Spadefoot Toad. RCHCA lands contained the highest number of pools in the study.

Staff have begun coordinating access agreements with various partners to facilitate the gathering of SKR genetic materials from previously undocumented areas.

The Riverside County Fire Department and CalFire are currently conducting a prescribed burn at Lake Mathews. These events provide live-fire training for fire fighters and eliminates non-native grasses. Two of RCHCA's technicians, Francisco Gonzales and Scott Curry, were able to participate in trainings and are now certified as wildland fire fighters.

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

E. Innovation in Management and Monitoring Activities Update

Harry Sandoval, Senior Ecological Resources Specialist, reported that the Natural Reserve management staff at the University of California, Riverside, are now utilizing the Natural resource Data Collection system developed and maintained by RCHCA.

RCHCA's Geographic Information System (GIS) system will be used as the foundation and framework for keeping track of Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) data gathered by all the various agencies which are participating in SKR recovery.

Staff has been utilizing a drone for remote sensing, which has been very successful. Staff are

now able to identify a single plant located in the middle of a field surrounded by grasses. Detection rates continue to increase.

Board member Lesa Sobek expressed interest in a future presentation on how the process works.

Action: 1. *Received and filed.*

6. REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

Rick Bishop, RCHCA General Manager, reported that WRCOG has released a weekly briefing titled, “*The Briefing*.” Please contact staff if your jurisdiction is interested in featuring programs and/or activities. A Future Forward webinar series has been implemented which serves to provide information on how to innovate during times of disruption.

7. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

Board member Lesa Sobek expressed interest in a future presentation on the process of data gathering utilizing the drone.

8. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board member David Marquez announced that Mike Lee is the new City Manager for the City of Moreno Valley.

Board member Lesa Sobek announced that the City of Menifee’s Police Department goes live July 1, 2020.

Board member Christi White announced that the City of Murrieta will be handling dispatch services for Menifee’s Police Department.

9. NEXT MEETING

The next RCHCA Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 17, 2020, at 11:30 a.m., via the Zoom platform.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:19 p.m.
