

# Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

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## Regular Meeting ~ Minutes ~

Thursday, February 18, 2021

11:31 AM

Zoom Platform

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Michael Vargas at 11:31 a.m., on the Zoom platform.

### 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

### 3. ROLL CALL

Jurisdiction	Attendee	Status
City of Corona	Tom Richins	Present
City of Hemet	Russ Brown	Present
City of Lake Elsinore	Steve Manos	Present
City of Menifee	Lesa Sobek	Present
City of Moreno Valley		Absent
City of Murrieta	Lesa DeForest	Present
City of Perris	Michael Vargas	Present
City of Riverside		Absent
City of Temecula	MaryAnn Edwards	Present*
City of Wildomar	Joseph Morabito	Present
County of Riverside	Jeff Hewitt	Present
RCHCA General Manager	Rick Bishop	Present

\*Arrived after roll call.

### 4. WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Chair Vargas welcomed Tom Richins, City of Corona, and Dr. Lisa DeForest, City of Murrieta.

### 5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

### 6. ELECTION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS LEADERSHIP FOR 2021

The Board of Directors elected Lesa Sobek, City of Menifee, as Chair, and Joseph Morabito, City of Wildomar, as Vice-Chair.

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

## 7. CONSENT AND POLICY CALENDAR

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

### A. Summary Minutes from the November 19, 2020, Board of Director's Meeting are available for Consideration.

**Action:** 1. *Approved the Summary Minutes from the November 19, 2020, Board of Director's meeting.*

### B. Status of Mitigation Fee Transfers from Member Agencies Through December 31, 2020

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

### C. Financial Report Through December 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. Status Report Concerning Reserve Management Coordinating Committee

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

### G. Single Signature Authority Report

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

## 8. REPORTS / DISCUSSION

### A. Status Update on Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Recovery Efforts

Princess Hester, RCHCA Director of Administration, reported that in September 2020 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS) issued a Proposed Rule to reclassify the endangered Stephens' Kangaroo Rat (SKR) from endangered to threatened. This Rule was published with a Section 4(d) Rule that will allow RCHCA to perform management actions that support SKR and other species without having to get separate approvals from USFWS.

Staff continues legislative and advocacy efforts with the wildlife agencies to keep the project moving forward. Staff are also working on a Range-Wide Management and Monitoring Plan.

RCHCA received a second year of funding from the Bureau of Land Management in the amount of \$190,000 to support implementation of the Plan. There are approximately 30 partner stakeholders which will need to adopt this Plan.

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

## **B. Steele Peak Public Access Plan Activities Update**

Riana Fisher, RCHCA Staff Analyst, reported that the final design for the Public Access Plan for the Steele Peak Reserve has been completed. Next steps include completing a study to determine any California Environmental Quality Act action; staff are designing interactive signage for the trail. The project is on schedule for completion by March 2022.

## **C. Report on RCHCA Innovation**

Riana Fisher, RCHCA Staff Analyst, reported that millions of dollars are spent annually combating non-native weeds to reduce catastrophic wildfires, maintain road shoulders, and enhance habitat for species listed within the Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan.

RCHCA utilizes land management techniques to reduce these invasive weeds. Challenges include the ongoing maintenance of Public Works Departments and Utilities. RCHCA created an Invasive Species Management Calendar to assist land managers and public works departments in cooperatively combating invasive species. This calendar will assist with reducing fire fuel loads, infrastructure operation and maintenance costs, enhance habitats, and reduce regulatory burdens on future development projects.

The calendar tool will be made available on [rchca.us](http://rchca.us).

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

## **D. Educational Outreach Program Activities Update**

Riana Fisher, RCHCA Staff Analyst, reported that RCHCA holds Endangered Species Day event to increase awareness of threatened and/or endangered species within Western Riverside County. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, RCHCA, in collaboration with WRCOG's Energy and Environment Department, The Energy Coalition, and Eco-Hero, staff presented a virtual educational webinar to grades 4 – 8 from 4 local schools.

The event had a recycling theme, and staff presented the harmful effects that balloon trash has on wildlife, ways to repurpose trash into art, and oil recycling.

RCHCA has established a non-profit, the Riverside Communities Partnership Project, which will aid in staff's ability to provide a wide range of learning opportunities.

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

## **E. Contracted Land Management and Monitoring Activities Update**

Brian Shomo, RCHCA Director of Natural Resources, reported that RCHCA has contracted with

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the Bureau of Land Management to purchase 100 acres of SKR-preferred plant seed for \$26k. Due to lack of rainfall, planting will be postponed until more suitable conditions for germination arise.

RCHCA contracted with Mariposa Biology / Waste Management for \$16k for small mammal, herpetological, and riparian restoration.

RCHCA contracted with Metropolitan Water District for an annual work plan and budget of \$152K for management of approximately 65 species, but due to the lack of precipitation, many of the planned tasks will not be conducted; therefore, new task orders were developed, including a comprehensive SKR survey, herpetological monitoring, security fencing, and signage.

RCHCA contracted with the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service for RCHCA's third and final year of the EQIP grant requirements for restoring riparian habitat. Staff anticipates approval and sign-off by the end of Fiscal Year 2020/2021.

RCHCA contracted with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) and was awarded \$275K for CCC services to enhance rare species habitat, protect and restore wetlands, and reduce fire fuels for three separate projects. The third and final phase will remove accumulated fire fuels and habitat restoration of a major drainage near Lake Mathews Estates. The estimated completion date is March 2021.

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

#### **F.        Stephens' Kangaroo Rat Reserve Management and Monitoring Efforts Activities Update**

Harry Sandoval, RCHCA Natural Resource Manager, reported that the Endangered Habitats Conservancy, a nonprofit conservation organization, partnered with the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), California Wildlife Conservation Board, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife to conserve the 955-acre Montecito Ranch in Ramona, CA for SKR and other species of concern.

RCHCA was asked to consult on the management plan and budget for the area. Once completed, the Montecito Ranch, located in San Diego County, will provide an important step in the regional recovery of SKR.

The Riverside County Department of Waste Resources (RCDWR) needs riparian mitigation credits for impacts to streams and waterways as part of their landfill expansion. RCHCA has no obligation to restore these areas under the SKR Habitat Conservation Plan and, therefore, may sell a conservation easement to RCDWR for approximately \$3.6 million for 29 acres of mitigation credit.

Recent work included a site visit to develop a comprehensive grading plan to restore the hydrology and stabilize slopes surrounding the streams and drainages.

In cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management, RCHCA established a controlled fire line surrounding approximately 60 acres.

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Staff set out eight artificial nests for the burrowing owl in order to attract and retain the owl in this area.

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

**9. REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER**

Rick Bishop, General Manager, reported that he is retiring in March and this will be his last meeting.

The Board wished Mr. Bishop a happy retirement and presented a Proclamation for outstanding service to RCHCA.

**10. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS**

There were no item requests for future agendas.

**11. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chair Sobek announced that, in honor of the downlisting of SKR, a small memento has been prepared for each Board member, which will be delivered over the next few weeks.

**12. NEXT MEETING**

The next RCHCA Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 20, 2021, at 11:30 a.m., on the Zoom platform.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 12:43 p.m.

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