
Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

City of Corona ◇ *City of Hemet* ◇ *City of Lake Elsinore* ◇ *City of Moreno Valley*
City of Murrieta ◇ *City of Perris* ◇ *City of Riverside* ◇ *City of Temecula* ◇ *County of Riverside*

MINUTES BOARD STUDY SESSION

Thursday, January 10, 2008 - 9:00 a.m.

City of Perris
City Council Chambers
101 North "D" Street
Perris, CA 92570

PRESENT: Mr. Mark Yarbrough, Chairperson, City of Perris
Mr. Bill Batey, City of Moreno Valley
Mr. Steve Brown, City of Temecula
Supervisor Bob Buster, County of Riverside
Mr. Eugene Montanez, Vice-Chairperson, City of Corona
Mr. Gary Thomasian, City of Murrieta
Mr. Frank West, City of Moreno Valley (Alternate)

ABSENT: Mr. Mike Gardner, City of Riverside
Ms. Robin Lowe, City of Hemet
Mr. Bob Schiffner, City of Lake Elsinore

STAFF: Carolyn Syms Luna, RCHCA
Gail Barton, RCHCA
Princess Hester, RCHCA
Brian Shomo, RCHCA
Katherine Lind, County Counsel

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mark Yarbrough, Chairperson, called the study session to order at 9:13 a.m. Chairperson Yarbrough introduced Diane Spardalati (Planner) and Brad Eckhardt (Planning Manager) to the Board. He stated that he invited them to attend the study session due to the fact that what is being presented today is an intricate part of their job duties. Chairperson Yarbrough also introduced Richard Belmudez (City Manager) to the Board.

Carolyn Syms Luna introduced RCHCA staff. They are as follows: Gail Barton (Principal Planner), Brian Shomo (Natural Resources Manager for Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain).

Mr. Shomo recently joined the RCHCA staff from Fort Irwin. Ms. Luna also introduced Princess Hester (Administrative Services Officer) and Karlene Hernandez (Executive Assistant).

Chairperson Yarbrough welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending today's study session. He stated that a multi-million dollar renovation has been done to the facility over the last few years and the City of Perris is very proud of the newly remodeled facility.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call of the RCHCA Board of Directors showed six member agencies present with the Cities of Riverside, Hemet, and Lake Elsinore absent.

3. STUDY SESSION

Meeting Outline:

- Timeline of Important Dates
- History of the RCHCA
- View of Plan Area
- Bureau of Land Management Role
- Permit Requirements
- Summary of Staff Responsibilities and Activities
- Long-Term Funding Obligations/Planning
- Achievements of the Agency

Introduction:

- The RCHCA was formed under the Joint Powers Agreement pursuant to the provisions of Article 1, Chapter 5, Division 7, Title 1 of the Government Code.
- The RCHCA was formed for the acquisition, administration, operation and maintenance of land and facilities for ecosystem conservation and habitat reserves for the Stephens' kangaroo rat and other listed or candidate threatened or endangered species.
- The Endangered Species Act was established in 1973.
- Congress declared that various species of fish, wildlife, and plants in the U.S. have been rendered extinct as a consequence of economic growth and development untempered by adequate concern and conservation.

Joint Powers Authority Member Agencies:

Original member agencies include:

- Hemet
- Lake Elsinore
- Moreno Valley
- Perris
- Riverside

- County of Riverside

Later Additions:

- Temecula
- Corona
- Murrieta

Stephens' Kangaroo Rat:

- A species of rodent in the Heteromyidae family
- Endemic to Southern California
- Natural habitat is sparse grassland and coastal sage scrub
- Listed as endangered in 1988
- Threatened by habitat loss as a result of economic growth and development

Timeline of Important Dates:

- 1988 – SKR listed as endangered
- 1990 – RCHCA was formed
- 1996 – SKR Federal Permit issued
- 2003 – Land acquisition completed
- 2004 – MSHCP Permit issued and RCA formed
- 2026 – SKR permit expires
- 2029 – RCA land acquisition to be completed
- 2079 – MSHCP Permit expires

History of the RCHCA:

- Short-Term Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)
 - Interim Program
 - ✓ Allowed development in Riverside County in spite of the SKR listing.
 - ✓ Because of limited knowledge of the SKR, biological research was needed to provide framework for a long-term HCP.
 - ✓ Nine study areas were established within a 565,000 acre Plan area.
 - ✓ Established mitigation fee of \$1,950 per acre.
 - ✓ RCHCA acquired over 8,800 acres of habitat land for preservation.
- Hierarchy of Governing Documents
 - Federal and State Permit
 - Implementing Agreement
 - SKR Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP)

Features of the SKR Plan:

- Requires the dedication of approximately 41,000 acres to conservation, of which 12,500 acres are occupied by SKR.
- Conservation allows for “incidental take” of SKR outside core reserves. “Incidental take”

is as follows:

- Capturing or killing of an endangered plant or animal.
- Harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, trapping, capturing, or collecting.
- Significantly impairing essential wildlife behavioral patterns including breeding, feeding, or sheltering.
- Allows for residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as construction of public facilities.
- Provides for ongoing management of the SKR reserve lands.

History of the RCHCA BLM Role:

In the SKR HCP and the Implementation Agreement, BLM agreed to the following:

- Hold and manage 12,974 acres for SKR or exchange or sell the acreage to purchase the RCHCA land in the Lake Mathews-Estelle Mountain Core Reserve.
 - *This action was not completed. RCHCA maintains ownership and is responsible for the management of these lands.*
- In the annual budget, request dedicated and earmarked funding for SKR management of federal lands.
 - *This action was not completed. There are no dedicated funds to manage BLM lands for SKR.*
- Complete the core reserves using 8,200 acres of BLM land through land trades resulting in an additional 2,500 acres of SKR occupied habitat.
 - *This action was not completed.*
- Request that Congress appropriate \$3.3 million to acquire SKR habitat.
 - *\$3.3 million purchased land at Lake Mathews.*

Permit Requirements:

- Annual Report
 - Provides financial update on mitigation fees collected.
 - Provides status of reserve endowments.
 - Provides a summary of expenses and revenues for the RCHCA and certain reserves.
 - Identifies habitat which has been disturbed.
 - Identifies habitat land acquired.
 - Identifies problems encountered with the implementation of the HCP and any corrective measures that may have been taken.
 - Summarizes the activities of the Reserve Managers Coordinating Committee.
 - Summarizes management activities within each core reserve.
- Management and Monitoring
 - Manage lands to ensure the survival of the species.
 - Determine the impacts of "incidental take" on the long-term survival and recovery of the SKR.
- Mitigation Fee
 - Originally \$1,950 per acre.
 - In 1996, the fee was reduced to \$500 per acre.
 - The mitigation fee is used to acquire and manage land.

Staff Overview and Activities:

- Administration
 - Budgetary oversight and financial analysis
 - Annual Report
 - Purchasing and contract management
 - Asset management
 - Insurance oversight and monitoring
 - Fee collection oversight and monitoring
 - Policy and procedure development
 - Meetings, correspondence and Agency communication
 - RCHCA website
- Management
 - Policy and procedure implementation
 - Management Plan oversight
 - Reserve Committee participation
 - Natural Resource Manager supervision
 - Management of reserve operations
 - Contract oversight
 - National Endangered Species Day
 - Educational outreach
- Administrative Monitoring
 - Attend meetings and disseminate information
 - Oversee SKR Monitoring Program
 - Participate in other management activities as required
- Field Monitoring
 - Implement the SKR Monitoring Program
 - Utilize data to identify long-term trends in SKR populations
 - Coordinate with other SKR monitoring efforts

RCHCA Long-Term Funding Obligations and Planning:

The Fund balance is currently at \$15.4 Million

- Dedicated Funds
 - \$49,122 for Land Acquisition
 - \$361,004 for Motte-Rimrock Reserve (this is a non-wasting endowment)
 - \$561,399 for Sycamore Canyon Reserve (this is a non-wasting endowment)
 - \$704,455 for Lake Skinner (this is a non-wasting endowment)
- Unreserved Funds
 - \$5.5 is slated as a wasting endowment for ongoing management of Lake Mathews & Steele Peak Reserves
 - \$.8 Million is slated for the Lake Mathews & Steele Peak start-up costs
 - \$4.5 Million slated for "other" costs

SKR Reserves:

- Lake Mathews/Estelle Mountain Reserves
 - Multi-owned and operated via consortium management by Metropolitan Water

District, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the RCHCA

- Sycamore Canyon Reserve
 - Owned and managed by the City of Riverside
- Steele Peak Reserve
 - Encompasses BLM and RCHCA lands and is independently managed by each entity
- Motte-Rimrock Reserve
 - Owned and managed by the University of California, Riverside
- San Jacinto/Lake Perris Reserves
 - Owned and managed by State Parks and California Department of Fish and Game Management
- Potrero ACEC Reserve
 - Owned and managed by the Bureau of Land Management
- Southwest Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve
 - Multi-owned and operated via consortium management by Metropolitan Water District, California Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the RCHCA, and Riverside County Regional Parks and Open Space District
- Potrero Reserve
 - Owned and managed by California Department of Fish and Game

RCHCA Achievements and Best Practices:

- Completion of the SKR land acquisition obligations within 10 years
- Financial solvency
- Completion of Management Plan that has become a model for other reserves
- Institution of active management at two reserves
- Educational outreach through the Endangered Species Act Day
- Improved public relations

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

5. ADJOURNMENT

This being the conclusion of the study session and there being no further business to discuss, the session was adjourned at 10:44 a.m. The next regular meeting of the RCHCA Board will be held on February 21, 2008.