
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

Thursday, May 15, 2008 - 3:00 p.m.

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

PRESENT: Mr. Mark Yarbrough, Chairperson, City of Perris
Supervisor Bob Buster, County of Riverside
Mr. Eugene Montanez, Vice-Chair, City of Corona
Ms. Robin Lowe, City of Hemet
Mr. Mike Gardner, City of Riverside
Mr. Gary Thomasian, City of Murrieta
Mr. Bob Schiffner, City of Lake Elsinore
Ms. Maryann Edwards, City of Temecula

ABSENT: Mr. Bill Batey, City of Moreno Valley

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 meeting to order at 3:12 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call of the RCHCA Board of Directors showed six member agencies present with the Cities of Moreno Valley and Hemet, as well as the County of Riverside, absent.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments were offered.

4. BOARD MEMBER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Yarbrough introduced and welcomed new Board member Maryann Edwards to the meeting. Ms. Edwards is the new representative for the City of Temecula.

5. ADDITIONS/REVISIONS

There were no additions/revisions to the agenda.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR: Presented for Block Approval. Board Members have the option of excluding discussion items from a master motion.

6.1 Minutes from the February 21, 2008 Meeting

The minutes from the February 21, 2008, meeting was presented for approval.

6.2 Status of Mitigation Fee Transfers from Member Agencies through March 31, 2008

The fees collected as of March 31, 2008, for FY 2007/08 total \$394,861.50.

6.3 RCHCA Financial Report through December 31, 2007

The fund balance as of March 31, 2008, is \$15,713,631.36.

6.4 Report on the Attendance Roster

An Attendance Roster has been developed and will be presented at each Board meeting. The roster shows each member agency's attendance for a period of two years.

**MOTION for approval of items 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4: Mike Gardner
SECOND: Bob Schiffner**

**Motion Approved
Ayes-5
None Opposed
Abstentions-1**

7. POLICY CALENDAR:

7.1 Presentation on the Lake Mathews Reserve

Mr. Shomo discussed the Lake Mathews Reserve and shared the following:

Goals

- To provide a benefit to the species and a value to the community.
- Document and quantify results to provide a "roadmap" for future land management decisions.

Long Term Objectives

- Maintain or increase the amount of SKR and/or their habitat
 - Statistically robust and scientifically defensible
- Community involvement and outreach programs
- Education opportunities
 - Primary education
 - University

Short Term Actions

1st Year

- Security
 - Complete Phase 1 fencing
- Clean up
 - Remove excess debris and litter
- Begin baseline management practices
 - Enhance grassland habitat by removing orchards and consolidate associated debris
 - Remove obstacles for SKR movement

2nd Year

- Begin habitat restoration and management
 - Secure a vegetation management plan (VMP)
 - Allows controlled burns under CalFire
 - Grassland habitat restoration

Illegal Dumping

- Riverside County Code Enforcement coordination
- Abandoned vehicles
 - 4 vehicles already removed
 - 4 vehicles in the process of removal
- Dump sites
 - 12 out of 28 dump sites consolidated and in the process of removal

Chairperson Yarbrough welcomed Supervisor Buster to the meeting at this time.

Security

- Phase 1 fencing plan
 - Repair existing fencing and facilitate the installation of new fencing
- Increased patrols
 - R.O.V.E. Cooperation, Manager patrols, coordination with other agencies

Current Management

- CAL FIRE
 - Training exercises within Steele Peak Reserve

- Verbally agreed to begin working on the VMP this summer
- Offered to perform small (<5 acres) burns in 2009 at Steele Peak Reserve

- USFWS partners program
 - Matching funding to restore habitat in former vineyard
- Weed abatement
 - All weed abatement has been completed
- Fence removal and repair
 - RFQ submitted on May 14, 2008, to repair existing chain link fencing
 - Several thousand feet of chicken wire fencing will be removed in order to assist SKR movement within the reserve.
- Grassland restoration
 - All standing orange trees will be removed and stacked to increase grassland habitat and facilitate future burns

Mr. Shomo shared several “before” and “after” pictures of the Reserve with the Board to show them the progress that has been made in cleaning up the Reserve.

Chairperson Yarbrough thanked Mr. Shomo for his presentation and stated that he is doing a tremendous job on the Reserve.

Chairperson Yarbrough welcomed Robin Lowe to the meeting at this time.

7.2 Presentation on the Mitigation Fee Audit of Member Agencies

Ms. Hester stated that the purpose of the audit is to ensure that the SKR mitigation fees are being collected, calculated and transmitted appropriately. She stated that we want to identify areas of uncertainty in the fee collection process, as well as provide training to member agency staff relating to SKR fee collection. We also want to identify areas that can be improved at each member agency and facilitate educational synergy.

Ms. Hester reported that the audit began on March 19, 2008, and to date, four (4) of the nine (9) member agencies have been audited. There are no major findings to report at this time. The anticipated completion date of the audit is May 23, 2008.

Ms. Hester stated that Mayer Hoffman McCann and RCHCA staff will present the findings of the audit to the RCHCA Board at their August 21, 2008, meeting.

7.3 Approval of RCHCA Resolution No. 2008-002 and Policy No. RCHCA-007 concerning the Access to Public Records

Ms. Hester reported that at the June 21, 2007, RCHCA Board meeting, the Board directed staff to develop an Access to Public Records policy. The policy was written in order to establish uniform procedures regarding public access to RCHCA public records. In conjunction with the policy, RCHCA staff also developed the “RCHCA Access to Public Records Request Form”. This form gives RCHCA staff a mechanism to document receipt and disposition of records requests. It also provides the information necessary to determine and collect appropriate fees.

Mr. Thomasian asked if the RCHCA already has a policy in place regarding the access to public records.

Ms. Hester stated that RCHCA does not currently have this type of policy in place.

Supervisor Buster asked how long we think it may be before public records are available via the internet for easy access by the public.

Ms. Hester stated that we are in the process of revamping the RCHCA website. Many of the records that we have and can make available to the public will be accessible through the website.

Supervisor Buster asked if the RCHCA **must** follow the laws of the city of Moreno Valley.

Katherine Lind responded by saying that the RCHCA's JPA states that we must follow the rules of Moreno Valley, but simply stated, it means that the RCHCA must follow the rules/laws of a "general law city". Moreno Valley is a general law city. It doesn't mean that we must follow exactly what Moreno Valley is doing; just the requirements of a "general law city".

Robin Lowe asked if it would be appropriate for us to substitute that verbiage in the JPA.

Ms. Lind responded by saying "yes, that it would just require an amendment to the JPA".

MOTION to approve RCHCA Resolution No. 2008-002 and Policy No. RCHCA-007 concerning Access to Public Records: Robin Lowe

SECOND: Bob Schiffner

**Motion Approved
Ayes—8
None Opposed**

7.4 Approval of the Restated and Amended Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement

Ms. Hester reported that at the February 21, 2008, RCHCA Board meeting, the Board approved the 9th Amendment to the JPA which provided:

1. The authority for the General Manager to enter into Agreements that do not exceed \$25,000 and to execute non-substantive Amendments where there is no change to the maximum obligation amount or the scope of work in the Agreement.
2. The requirement that all Board members be elected officials representing the Member Agencies.
3. In order to simplify the JPA for ease of understanding, the Agreement was incorporated into one working document inclusive of all Amendments to date.

Ms. Hester stated that the 9th Amendment was not approved by unanimous vote.

Therefore, it is now necessary to amend the document to allow for the additional provisions as outlined below:

1. The document should be entitled "Restated and Amended" because it incorporates the original document and all amendments thereto, as well as amending it with new terms.
2. Add Section 2.1, Agreement, to read as follows: This Agreement hereby restates the Agreement created on May 15, 1990, and includes all prior amendments.
3. Provides for the Board members to be compensated at \$100 per day, for any portion of the day they spend attending to the business of the RCHCA, but not to exceed \$400 in any given month, along with necessary traveling and personal expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as authorized by the Board.

Ms. Hester stated that all other changes are basic language changes and can be viewed in the Staff Report and the JPA that is included in the Board packet.

Ms. Hester asked the Board to approve the Restated and Amended JPA, and authorize the General Manager to distribute said Amendment and consolidated JPA to each Member Agency for approval.

MOTION to approve the Restated and Amended JPA, and authorize the General Manager to distribute said Amendment and consolidated JPA to each Member Agency for approval: Mike Gardner

SECOND: Maryann Edwards

Motion Approved

Ayes-8

None Opposed

7.5 Approval of the RCHCA Fiscal Year 2008-2009 Budget

Ms. Hester reported that the RCHCA Budget Subcommittee met twice in order to review and make budget recommendations for FY 2008-2009. The Subcommittee has approved the proposed budget for FY 2008-2009. Ms. Hester stated that the County has suffered from state budget cuts; therefore, the RCHCA will experience increased operational costs in the upcoming fiscal year. She also stated that the RCHCA has made a complete transition from focusing on land acquisition to focusing on habitat and species management.

Ms. Hester reviewed the pie chart that was provided to the Board members which outlines the amount of money to be budgeted for the various operating costs, along with costs associated with each reserve.

Highlights of the budget:

The budget reflects an increase in costs associated with operational expenses. These changes are reflected in the following:

- Object Number 520270 (Maintenance and Janitorial Services)
- Object Number 522310 (Maintenance and Building Improvement)

- Object Number 526700 (Rent/Lease Costs)
- Communication cost for desk phone usage is increased

The budget reflects an increase in Administrative Salaries and Benefits in Object Numbers 525440 and 525500 due to the following:

- Increased amount of the Executive Director's time allocated to the RCHCA
- Addition of the Natural Resources Manager

The budget reflects an increase in the cost of GIS services in Object Number 524900 due to the following:

- Additional mapping needs for special projects
- Additional mapping needs for management purposes

Projects carried forward:

- Staff will work to secure an approved vendor for regular refuse removal
- Weed abatement is an annual expense needed to meet the requirement of Cal Fire in an attempt to protect life and property
- The second phase of the member agency audit in which Mayer Hoffman McCann, P.C., consistent with the RFP, will randomly select two member agencies to be audited on mitigation fee transmittals

Management Cost of RCHCA owned lands at Lake Mathews:

Since the management of the RCHCA owned lands at Lake Mathews has not been assumed by the BLM, and since management of these lands is required in order to maintain the permit, the responsible action on the part of the Board is to set aside the funds needed for ongoing management. Assuming the cost of management to be approximately \$300,000 per year, it is anticipated that a \$5.5 million wasting endowment will be required to provide the funds necessary to address management through the end of the permit in 2026.

Projected mitigation fees:

The RCHCA has experienced a decrease in SKR mitigation fees as a result of the declining economy and new development projects in Riverside County. Therefore, the projection of SKR mitigation fees was decreased by 4% from the previous year. The three-year reserve fund balance is a set-aside fund to ensure the basic operation of the Agency for a three year period in the event that the SKR fee revenue is drastically decreased. This reserve fund needs to be increased to cover the additional costs that will be absorbed by the agency in FY 2008-2009.

Ms. Hester stated that the overall impact to the FY 2008-2009 budget is an increase of \$149,906.

Ms. Hester requested that the Board approve the FY 2008-2009 budget as presented.

MOTION to approve the FY 2008-2009 budget as presented: Robin Lowe

SECOND: Bob Schiffner

Motion Approved

Ayes—8

None Opposed

7.6 Report on Reserve Management Committees for the Southwest Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve and the Lake Mathews Reserve

Ms. Barton gave an update on the Reserve Management Committee (RMC) meetings as follows:

Southwestern Riverside County Multi-Species Reserve:

Discussion included the following:

- Office Facility
 - The Committee agreed to use the body of the Alamos Schoolhouse as the Reserve Office.
 - It is possible to utilize the west end of the building, which can be separated from the body of the building, to provide a public display area.
 - Riverside County Regional Parks and Open Space District (RCRPOSD) will procure a shop facility. Once that facility is in place, the existing structure will be removed.
- Management Plan
 - The RMC is chaired by the representative of RCRPOSD, who, at this time is Paul Frandsen. He has made a concerted effort to make personal contact with all other Committee members in order to maximize the productivity of the RMC. This is particularly evident in the work products provided by members that are essential to the completion of the Management Plan.
 - With a few outstanding items, it is anticipated that the next draft will be out before the next meeting, which is scheduled for July 2, 2008.
- Special use of the Alamos Schoolhouse
 - At its next meeting, the Committee will consider appropriate fees and uses to be implemented at the Alamos Schoolhouse.
- Conservation and Research for Endangered Species (CRES)
 - The proposed project was evaluated by the Research Subcommittee and approved by the full committee.
- Budget
 - The Committee discussed the proposed budget for FY 2008-2009.

Lake Mathews Reserve:

Discussion included the following:

- Management Plan Update
 - The Committee is moving ahead with the preparation of a RFP for a management plan for the MWD lands that include the RCHCA held

- conservation easement.
- The Committee agreed to move forward, utilizing the RCHCA Table of Contents template with no further modification at this time.
- Wendy Picht (of MWD), will proceed with the RFP process.
- Management Activities
 - The contract security person on MWD land discussed her activities and pointed out how she and Brian Shomo communicate and work cooperatively to achieve mutually beneficial goals with regard to the Reserve.

7.7 Report Concerning the RCHCA Sponsored National Endangered Species Day Event

Ms. Barton discussed the recent ESA Day event at the Sycamore Canyon Reserve. She stated that both RCHCA staff, as well as Environmental Programs Department staff, truly had a wonderful time with the children that attended this year's event.

Ms. Barton stated that this year's event was expanded to a two-day event (April 24th and 25th). Sixth grade students from three schools attended the event. Dr. Glassey, an entomologist from Ft. Irwin, attended and brought with him several animals (i.e., a red-tailed hawk, a barn owl, a desert cottontail rabbit, numerous different types of rattle snakes, a millipede, a tarantula, etc.). The students had the opportunity to be up close and personal with the animals and left the event with increased knowledge about animals and the habitat in which they live.

Three of the Environmental Programs Department biologists set up individual stations for the children to visit along the walking path at the Reserve. Each station was an interactive learning session for the students.

To thank the Board members for their continued support of this event, they were each presented with a "Soaring Eagle" paperweight, along with the same backpack and updated Field Guide that each child received.

Mike Gardner reported that he attended the ESA Day event and talked about what a worthwhile event it was. He stated that he highly recommends that the other Board members attend the event next year, if their schedules permit.

Please note that Mike Gardner left the meeting at this time.

7.8 Direct RCHCA Staff to Explore Green Technology Opportunities for the RCHCA Facility to be Placed at the Lake Mathews Reserve

Chairman Yarbrough stated that he recently spoke with Ms. Luna regarding exploring green technologies for the RCHCA facility that will be placed at the Lake Mathews Reserve.

Ms. Edwards discussed the environmental experimenting station at the Santa Margarita Reserve that is a part of UCSD. She stated that this station houses the largest streaming data source west of the Mississippi River. They measure everything from air quality to water quality to animal movement, etc. She stated that Cal Fire uses it for tracking smoke. She suggested that we possibly explore a

partnership with UCSD in setting up an environmentally friendly station at the Lake Mathews Reserve.

Ms. Luna stated that she knows Matt Rahn and that she would be happy to talk with him about the possibility of a partnership.

Ms. Barton asked the Board to direct staff to explore green technology opportunities for the facility at Lake Mathews.

MOTION to instruct RCHCA staff to explore green technologies for the facility that is to be placed at the Lake Mathews Reserve: Gary Thomasian

SECOND: Maryann Edwards

Motion Approved

Ayes—8

None Opposed

7.9 Verbal Report on Status of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

Ms. Luna stated that she believes we are very close to having acceptable permit conditions that can be forwarded to Sacramento for federal processing.

8. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Luna thanked the staff for the incredible job they did with the recent ESA Day event.

9. CLOSED SESSION

No items were scheduled for closed session.

10. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

No items were suggested for the next meeting.

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m. The next meeting will be held on August 21, 2008. The Board agreed to hold the meeting at the Perris City Council Chambers, beginning at 3:00 p.m.