
Riverside County Habitat Conservation Agency

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

MINUTES

Tuesday, August 4, 2009 - 1:00 p.m.

County of Riverside
4080 Lemon Street
1st Floor – Board Chambers
Riverside, CA 92501

PRESENT: Mr. Eugene Montanez, Chairperson, City of Corona
Supervisor Bob Buster, County of Riverside
Mr. Bill Batey, City of Moreno Valley
Mr. Mike Gardner, City of Riverside
Ms. Darcy Kuenzi, City of Menifee
Ms. Robin Lowe, City of Hemet
Mr. Gary Thomasian, Vice-Chair, City of Murrieta
Mr. Mark Yarbrough, City of Perris

ABSENT: Mr. Bob Cashman, City of Wildomar
Ms. Maryann Edwards, City of Temecula
Ms. Melissa Melendez, City of Lake Elsinore

STAFF: Carolyn Syms Luna, RCHCA
Gail Barton, RCHCA
Princess Hester, RCHCA
Brian Shomo, RCHCA
Karin Watts-Bazan, County Counsel

1. CALL TO ORDER

Eugene Montanez, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Roll call of the RCHCA Board of Directors showed eight member agencies present with the Cities of Lake Elsinore, Temecula and Wildomar absent.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. George Hague spoke on behalf of the Sierra Club. He stated that he has been following the SKR HCP since 1988. He read to the Board from the Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regarding the SKR HCP dated May 2, 1996. He stated that he has been following the SKR HCP and his main concern is on page 4 of the document where it talks about the California Department of Fish and Game and California Parks and Recreation providing \$212,000 on an annual basis for the management of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, which is one of the main cornerstones of the SKR, and now the Multi-Species Reserve. He stated that to date and to his knowledge, the Reserve has received no money for this purpose.

Mr. Hague stated that he would like the RCHCA to start asking for this money. He stated they are several million dollars behind in what they committed to. He stated that the document goes on to say "successful management of the Reserve will be key in avoiding the decline of the SKR populations". The main objective of their management will be to monitor SKR populations on an annual basis. Mr. Hague stated that he does not know if this is being done and that he does not see this being done. He stated that he used to know the managers at both the Wildlife Area and at Lake Perris. He stated they were trying to pull money together from other sources to be able to even come close to doing anything along this line. He stated that as proposed in the HCP, the management of core reserves like San Jacinto, Steele Peak, Potrero, and portions of Lake Mathews will depend on state and federal funding. He stated that ultimately the HCP proposes to offset the loss of half the core populations of the species within the plan area through intensive reserve management. He reported that we do not have intensive reserve management. He stated, "the Service concludes this is possible so long as adequate funding is available". He stated that if you read this document, if we don't have intensive reserve management, this species will significantly decline over time. He stated that hopefully, the RCHCA's responsibility is to make sure this does not happen and that money that is necessary for the management and intensive reserve design is there, at least for the San Jacinto Wildlife Area, which he follows quite closely and has for 20+ years. He stated that something needs to be done in that regard (i.e., asking questions and letting them know you're there watching).

Mr. Hague stated that it's very sad that from the very beginning of the San Jacinto Wildlife Area there have been two managers; both were wildlife biologists. They now have a manager who is not a wildlife biologist. Mr. Hague stated that when the first two managers were there he felt more comfortable. However, he does not feel as comfortable now with a manager that is a habitat person. He comes out to speak, he does a good job, and tries to do what he can within his ability, but Mr. Hague's concern is that there is no longer a wildlife biologist watching over the San Jacinto Wildlife Area. He stated that to simply say that a wildlife biologist is on-call and will drive an hour or two to get to the San Jacinto Wildlife Area in order to look things over is not the same as a person knowing what is happening at the reserve on a daily basis.

Mr. Hague thanked the Board for hearing his concerns regarding the San Jacinto Wildlife Area.

Chairman Montanez stated that since this item is not on the agenda the Board cannot take any action on it at this time. He stated he would like this item to be placed on the next Board meeting agenda for further discussion.

Supervisor Buster asked that when this item is brought back to the Board for further discussion, he would like staff to also bring some specific information regarding San Jacinto (i.e., its acreage, how it was formed, mitigation, dollars used to augment the reserve, etc.) Supervisor Buster stated that this is a significant reserve and that millions of dollars have been poured into it. He reported that we need to do our best to maintain the promises that have been made for the reserve.

4. POLICY CALENDAR:

4.1 Acceptance of the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (W.H.I.P.) Grant

Mr. Shomo reported that he previously applied for a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (W.H.I.P.) grant.

The grant was awarded to the RCHCA in the amount of \$170,023.00. However, after some fine tuning between Mr. Shomo and the NCRS representative, the amount of the grant was increased to \$206,369.00. The grant will allow the RCHCA to be reimbursed for management activities at the Lake Mathews Reserve. Mr. Shomo stated that any projects requiring the disbursement of RCHCA funds will be reimbursed by the USDA within 30 days of the request for reimbursement.

Mr. Shomo asked the Board to authorize the acceptance of the W.H.I.P. grant from the USDA; authorize the Executive Director to sign the contract on behalf of the RCHCA; and authorize the Executive Director to administer the terms and conditions of the grant.

Supervisor Buster asked if this grant covers work that needs to be done on the reserve for the next year or so.

Mr. Shomo stated yes, that the grant will cover grassland, sage scrub, habitat restoration, etc. The management activities that we were previously doing and will continue to do will be reimbursed with the grant monies.

MOTION to accept the W.H.I.P. grant from the USDA; authorize the Executive Director to sign the contract on behalf of the RCHCA; and authorize the Executive Director to administer the terms and conditions of the grant: Robin Lowe

SECOND: Darcy Kuenzi

Motion Approved

Ayes—8

None Opposed

5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m. The next meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on September 17, 2009, in the Board Chambers of the Riverside County Administrative Center.