

UPPER SANTA ANA RIVER WASH LAND MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT  
CONSERVATION PLAN TASK FORCE

MINUTES  
October 10, 2014

**PRESENT**

Governing Committee

Jon Harrison, Chair  
Ken Corey  
Christine Goeyvarts  
Doug Headrick  
Christine Jones  
John Kalish  
Ken Corey  
David E. Raley  
Holly Roberts  
John Timmer

Technical Committee

Jeff Beehler  
Daniel B. Cozad  
Robert Dalquest  
Heather Dyer  
Kim Freeburn  
AJ Gerber  
Geary Hund  
Dave Lovell  
Kevin White  
Ernie Wong  
Dan Silver

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE**

David Cosgrove  
Angela Aguilar  
Brandon Anderson  
Manny Aranda  
Lynn Boshart  
Scott Fleury  
Megan Irwin  
Cheryl Nabahe  
Angie Quiroga  
Charles Roberts  
Mikael Romich  
Ruth Villalobos

**REPRESENTING**

City of Redlands  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Robertson's Ready Mix  
SBV Municipal Water District  
CEMEX  
BLM (Via teleconference)  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
SBV Water Conservation District  
Bureau of Land Management  
City of Highland

SBV Water Conservation District  
SBV Water Conservation District  
City of Redlands  
SBV Municipal Water District  
CA Dept of Fish & Wildlife  
SBC Regional Parks  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
SBC Flood Control District  
County of San Bernardino Planning  
City of Highland Public Works  
Endangered Habitat League  
(Via teleconference)

**REPRESENTING**

SBV Water Conservation District  
City of Highland  
BLM, Palm Springs  
SBV Water Conservation District  
Save Lytle Creek  
ICF Consulting  
City of Highland Planning  
BLM, Palm Springs  
SBV Water Conservation District  
Highland Community News  
ICF Consulting  
RBF Consulting

## 1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Upper Santa Ana River Wash Land Management and Habitat Conservation Plan Task Force meeting was called to order by Chairman Jon Harrison at 1:00 p.m. in the offices of the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District, 1630 West Redlands Boulevard, Suite A, Redlands, California.

## 2. SELF-INTRODUCTIONS

Those present introduced themselves.

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Harrison asked if there were any items that anyone wished to address that were not on the agenda. Hearing none, the meeting preceded with the published agenda items.

## 4. WASH PLAN HCP “SCREEN CHECK” PRESENTATION

Daniel Cozad, San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (SBVWCD) began by thanking Mikael Romich and Scott Fleury for completing the HCP screen check as well as Jeff Beehler for his efforts keeping the project moving forward. Jeff commended Erin Berger, former SBVWCD intern, who helped create “one of the best” GIS databases that have ever been used in an HCP. He directed members to [www.SBVWCD.org](http://www.SBVWCD.org) to view the October Wash Plan (WP) HCP Screen Check Draft.

Geary Hund explained the new HCP started from a good foundation, but needed to be and is now more robust. Additional conservation was incorporated. With help, covered activities have been quantified so we have a very comprehensive database for analysis of impacts. Extensive work was done determining the different management for the conserved areas. He stated this draft HCP should be the basis for ultimately going to final document with some additional work.

Scott presented what has changed within the HCP. He explained the Summary section will be completed after more discussion and feedback. Introduction and background section gives idea of content and scope of HCP. The regulatory framework section was built up so everyone can better understand regulatory and environmental requirements. A more in depth treatment of covered activities section is provided. More details describe the plan area, biological resources, covered species and greater transparency in how take is calculated. Ch. 5 goes through our conservation program, biological goals and objectives, amount of conservation we are expecting, and conservation management guidelines. The overall implementation structure is not extremely different from previous draft. He explained the funding analysis and funding section will be discussed later. Geary stated a lot more scientific work was done to really understand the conservation needs. He and Tom McGill spent time in the field, did a habitat assessment, and received

additional information from SBKR biologists allowing the decisions they made to be built on a lot stronger foundation.

Scott listed key points they will cover today: overviewing major tasks, covered species, covered activities, impact analysis, conservation strategy, funding, and next steps. He stated we, referring to all permittees, Jeff Beehler and Daniel Cozad, and ICF's consulting team, have gotten through a lot of comments and input from the wildlife agencies over the last year and have completed tasks helping us get to a solid HCP that we want to move forward with public review. Early on to make data more available to anyone on the Task Force, an online mapping tool was provided in which GIS data layers are available to view. A new version will be out in the next couple of weeks with all updated information. This tool is set up for implementation of the plan as well and can be useful for annual reporting. Scott noted there have been quite a few changes in covered species since the last HCP draft. After review of potential endangered species, the cactus wren was added and a species account was developed. A spineflower working group of experts was also developed and met. Jeff stated of all covered species, we know the least about the spineflower so we incorporated what the spineflower experts told us into the HCP. Fortunately, they are willing to reconvene and help us preserve and expand the current population on an as needed basis. The experts confirmed what we are doing for conservation is on the right track and gave us options to expand our range. They explained the spineflower is a vegetative structure as well as a seed bank and is very tuned to particular conditions. Mr. Timmer inquired about a change in the City of Highland's boundaries. Jeff explained the City of Highland's project, like many others, was not fully within WP boundaries. The boundaries were changed so the entire project is included within the WP to prevent additional endangered species consultations in the future. Everyone's projects will be fully covered this way.

Scott continued discussing the addition of the cactus wren. He explained what they look for such as habitat requirements, habits and trends when developing a species profile. Survey data is looked at to understand where the distribution of suitable habitat lies. Cactus patches of suitable size and height to support cactus wren had to be found and mapped. He explained in the previous HCP draft, a GIS habitat suitability modeling for kangaroo rat was completed. Based on expert knowledge, the plan areas were classified into high, moderate, and low suitability and it gave us a good snapshot of where the species suitable habitat occurred. There was a lot of survey data but we had potential to do additional survey work and look at different areas, so we refined the model. Geary explained how they came up with the different classifications and determined where conservation would be most important. They located functional ecological process areas. This allowed the development of a robust conservation strategy for the animals and still allowed for all of the covered activities to take place. Scott explained the last key task completed was going back to local and regional data sources to make sure we have current species occurrence data. Next big task was updating covered activities due to key comments in last draft in order to have enough detail from a take and permitting point of view. Mike Romich explained this long process. He discussed the geodatabase created by Erin Berger, stating it was very useful for covered activities. They worked closely with Erin and their GIS to update the database to include modified or new project activities,

revising boundaries, etc., converted a lot of line and point data to polygon data which can be important when assessing impacts, cleaned up database and closed gaps along boundaries to have a clean data set, assigned a covered activities numbering system for easier tracking and added detail to the actual project descriptions. This all makes the data more manageable and cleaner. Scott noted placeholders in the HCP and requested notification if any project is not clearly described. Regarding changes in plan area, he explained when determining impact and conservation calculations you figure out how many acres to set aside to mitigate those areas. The plan area, which should be defined as a closed system, and the permit area are really one in the same. The impact analysis was updated since in several cases, covered activities overlap each other. A footprint of each activity was generated to determine the effect on biological values and merged into a single GIS layer to determine total net impact. Discussion ensued. Scott explained when mitigating, we try to optimize the conservation areas similar in overall habitat value and which is fairly nearby. The idea is to identify areas with highest biological value, which is valuable for multiple species, not just for permitting reasons but so your reserve is as concise, cohesive and manageable as possible.

Scott discussed the Conservation strategy, the outcome that is trying to be achieved in terms of mitigating and benefitting species, of the Wash Plan. Stated he is working with Geary to develop the goals, objectives and actions. Scott explained biological goals are the broad, overall achievements of the plan and the objectives should be more specific in terms of location, size, quantity, and time based. They need to be things that can be monitored, quantified, and are feasible. Jeff reminded the Task Force that they adopted the biological goals and objectives in June and that he and Geary worked together to develop the actions, new in the plan, required to meet these goals and objectives. Scott stated what's important in tracking and relating this back, and needs a little more work before public review, is directly linking what the effect is of the covered activities back to what your management objectives and actions are and showing that direct relationship. Scott described two new key categories to achieving the conservation strategy: newly conserved lands and the additionally managed lands, HCP Figure 2. He explained how some of the species that are already protected like the WSPA preserve area are helping to fill in important gaps and make connections between newly conserved lands and additionally managed lands. Neutral lands are areas where we are not setting aside for conservation or for any covered activity there so it is not counting as impact or conservation credit. A key element of conservation strategy is the management and monitoring which has several different levels: maintaining signage and fencing, prevent trespassing, littering, dumping, etc., maintaining habitat value or implementing actions to enhance habitat value, and species status within the plan area and the overall trend. Some of the key issues have to do with invasive plant species that are competing with listed covered plants or those that reduce habitat for SBKR. Areas have been identified that may need spot treatment for non-native grasses. Manual thinning or mowing may be necessary as well. Jeff stated we have 600 shape files of all areas listed as additional managed lands or newly conserved lands aligned with habitat type taken from aerial photographs. We were looking primarily for invasive grass and looked for the cheapest, cost effective treatments relative to the species present. The system is tiered and reflects the level of effort. Within that, we will use the most appropriate method we can to not

have an impact on the species. Geary stated permittees will be able to keep costs down after the initial treatments with a good maintenance plan. Scott continued with conservation analysis calculations, Section 5 of the HCP screen check. Here you can see the vegetation data layer, acreage impacts and overall conservation. By adding in the existing conservation, we can determine total net acreage that will be conserved and managed within the WP. 4,816 acres is the total acreage of our entire plan area footprint. Species habitats conserved and managed are also charted. Mining areas were discussed in terms of impact and reclamation areas. Geary stated it is important to include the ongoing O&M of the mining areas in the calculations due to small take possibilities. Jeff stated strategy was to cover the miners as a permanent impact. No credit is given to miners for reclamation areas. Scott stated it is implicitly covered but not explicitly so it can be added to the HCP. Discussion ensued.

Scott explained, in Table 5-2, how the overall net effect of HCP can be seen in an acre per acre point of view. This is what you are getting your take permit for and what you are using for mitigation. Scott stated the way they approached this plan overall was by focusing on where the most important, higher value areas for conservation sites are and where the areas for necessary impacts are located. They tried to optimize the two to come out with the right overall balance. Graphical views for each species are shown in the screen check and each gives a clear picture, everything within the colored outlines, of what will be conserved and managed.

Jeff discussed the preliminary cost estimates from Chapter 7: Funding, which are substantially lower than the last numbers presented but still significant. Three key areas for funding include land acquisition, land management, monitoring and reporting. There will be no land acquisition cost per se, but a value of \$25,000 was assigned for the land from SBVWCD and others that is being converted into conservation easements in which the right to do anything else on it is being given up. Land stewardship costs and habitat management costs estimated at \$240k/yr will cover an employee, a truck, equipment and some seasonal field staff to do the vegetation management, signage, patrolling and also to possibly have a ranger patrol on the weekends a couple times a month. Monitoring and reporting costs were developed using a staggered approach since we won't have to report and monitor on all species every year. Plan to use the database to store information so everyone will have access to it. Rough step process and Jump start: primarily for ongoing O&M activities to really get a jump on invasives in the high value habitat areas such as along the ecological process areas and the breakout areas. This can get us some funding to do significant work. Endowment establishment and management is required by the Center of Natural Lands Management in order to guarantee these activities will occur in perpetuity. When we narrow down costs, by using the PAR process, an endowment structure will be developed adjusting for the rough step process. We will need to ensure a sufficient endowment is in place to cover all ongoing costs. Jeff explained determining everyone's portion of costs is a two-step process. The first step is figuring out what we are going to do that mitigates our activity and step two is to divide up amongst ourselves how we are going to pay for it. Some agencies are in step one and some are already in step two. Discussion ensued. Annual costs are currently estimated at \$360k/yr.

Scott explained the next steps will be to spend time working out the details of conservation and the monitoring management piece, requesting feedback from all permittees for any issues and/or clarification of how the covered activities are described and integrated, to move forward with the EIR/EIS and then on to public review, finalizing permits and implementation. Jeff requested the Task Force members to go online, review the plan, and provide comments to District by October 24<sup>th</sup>. If you are going to provide more detail and it changes the footprint of your covered activities, you will have changed all of the tables and figures listed. So if you are going to, please do it on a time and materials basis. It will slow down the schedule and cause a cascade of changes throughout the entire HCP and since there have already been several deadlines, agencies will have to pay for any changes. The next step will be to get the document to the Fish & Wildlife Service and to CA Fish & Wildlife so they can determine if what we are proposing is adequate to cover those impacts.

## 5. UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS SUPPORTING WASH PLAN

EIR/EIS: Ruth Villalobos discussed the EIR/EIS stating a supplemental EIR and EIS will be done and combined into one joint document which will ensure consistency and moving forward through the CEQA and NEPA requirements process. The revised HCP allows the rest of their analysis to move forward as well. A number of meetings have been held and are scheduled for things working internally. Drafts of letters have been circulated in which a composite will be put together for tribal consultation. By next week, we should have a draft that covers both CEQA and NEPA. An agreement on time frames has been set up for reviewing specific pieces of documents for the admin draft with the agencies, subject to scoping comments. When completed, that information will be distributed for review in an early stage. Jeff added there will be a number of public meetings so we need to take care of problems here before those meetings and have a tight document to present to CEQA and NEPA. It is important to advance forward together as a unified group. This is your document, your permit.

LAND TRANSFER: Holly Roberts introduced Brandon Anderson, BLM's new Lands and Realty Specialist, who will take over the transfer. Brandon explained that after he reviewed what has been done so far, we can keep moving forward. The mineral potential report is ready to go and the title report is next which will give us a picture as we move forward into the appraisal process to see of any encumbrances that affect value. In tandem with the EIS, a decision will be made, which will lead to the closing process and accepting title.

RECOMMENDATION: Jeff reiterated to all members to download the HCP and get comments back to District within two weeks. This is the last chance to make any changes so we can move forward. Discussion ensued.

## 6. NEXT STEPS/SCHEDULE

Ruth stated a fairly detailed schedule for the EIS/EIR has been worked on and provided a summary of the timeframe. She explained due to multiple agencies with different mandated review times, it is still being fine-tuned. She noted the key thing to take away from this meeting is that the EIR and EIS's approval date will be November 10th, 2015. There are about 3 ½ months for all of the analysis and any technical studies to be completed and a 90 day public review process. CEQA and NEPA will not go out of sync this way. Public hearings will take place during this time period and Daniel stated an implementing agreement which states what each agency will pay, for what and how it's all going to be implemented will be distributed during this time as well. This legal agreement will be reviewed by each member and their own legal counsel.

Jeff stated three things that will allow Fish & Wildlife service to issue the permits are the record of decision for the environmental documents, the implementing agreement and the HCP. David Cosgrove added the documentation for the land exchange. Geary stated a biological opinion on the HCP is an internal process they need to do as well with findings, recommendations, and terms and conditions.

Daniel requested for everyone who has had a part in putting together the HCP to stay for a picture to recognize their time and efforts.

## 7. NEXT MEETING

Next Meeting of the Task Force – Late November (review of EIR/EIS materials)

## 8. ADJOURN MEETING

Meeting adjourned at 2:57 P.M.