

UPPER SANTA ANA RIVER WASH LAND MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT
CONSERVATION PLAN PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING-2

MINUTES
March 18, 2015

PRESENT

Brandon Anderson
Jeff Beehler
Karin Cleary-Rose
Bill Cunningham
Geary Hund
John Kalish
Dave Lovell
Bettina McLeod

Lisa Pierce

Angie Quiroga
Shelly Zias Roe

REPRESENTING

Bureau of Land Management
SBV Water Conservation District
US Fish & Wildlife Service
Sierra Club
US Fish & Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
SBC Flood Control District
Redlands Conservancy & Tri-County
Conservation League
Redlands Conservancy & Tri-County
Conservation League
SBV Water Conservation District
University of Redlands

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The Upper Santa Ana River Wash Land Management and Habitat Conservation Plan Public Scoping meeting was called to order by Jeff Beehler at 6:45 p.m. in the offices of the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (District), 1630 West Redlands Boulevard, Suite A, Redlands, California.

2. SELF-INTRODUCTIONS

Those present introduced themselves.

3. WASH PLAN SCOPING PRESENTATION

Jeff Beehler explained Wash Plan members are looking for input and helpful information that may need to be added to the currently unfinished environmental documents that are being prepared for the Wash Plan Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to be publicly available August 2015. Mr. Beehler explained work is being done on a supplemental EIR/EIS. Both were circulated separately and are being merged. The EIR is from the District and the EIS is from US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Two aspects of the EIS are a land transfer and the HCP. Resources being addressed in the supplemental EIS/EIR were provided. Plan area is approximately Alabama Street to Greenspot Rd and south side of river to north side of river along Greenspot Rd. The area was enlarged to incorporate Santa Ana River trail and mitigation for construction of the trail. The entire boundary of the Wash Plan has been included for

completeness. Mr. Beehler provided a list of Wash Plan partners and reminded guests of Wash Plan benefits: protect and manage habitat for endangered species, critical transportation upgrades, enhanced ability to capture water, local supply of aggregate, maintain and repair civic infrastructure, plan trail, public access and expansion and completion of Santa Ana River trail. The general plan is to put activities in areas most appropriate for them and to preserve and enhance habitat resources. Mr. Beehler provided new conserved areas map noting mining areas have shrunk, driven by species and habitat issues, and flood control area, ecological channel, was added from original plan. The “additionally managed” lands are currently an ownership issue. When the HCP starts, all of that land will be managed under the Wash Plan. Lisa Pierce inquired about the new basins which also show as a newly conserved area. Mr. Beehler explained there is vegetative habitat value between the basins and when San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District builds these new spreading basins, they will be asked to control invasive grasses in that area with the District’s help. Mr. Beehler provided a list of the protected species in the HCP: Woolly Star, slender-horned Spineflower, San Bernardino Kangaroo Rat, Cactus Wren, and the California Gnatcatcher. He noted there is a parallel Upper Santa Ana River HCP going on currently that covers more of the aquatic species.

Mr. Beehler declared in the updated plan there is significant increase in habitat conservation, reduced water conservation, a reduced mining footprint, and more transparent covered activities and habitat management plan. Completion of the HCP and a land transfer between the District and BLM will allow the plan to work. The trails system is on existing roads so if project proponents can show adequate maintenance and patrol funding, they could be opened to the public. Cone Camp road will not be used. A trail connection from the Santa Ana River trail to the trails system, which crosses through the Woolly Star Preserve Area (WSPA), is being considered with permission from WSPA managers. Our intention is to open up the Wash Plan area for public use. Mr. Beehler provided a breakdown of the land exchange. We are looking to trade sections of land equal in value. Ms. McLeod inquired if the exchange is equal in monetary and/or habitat value. Consensus says both but we will clarify that in the HCP. Mr. Beehler asked attendees to provide any specific information that would be helpful or any issues that need to be covered in the environmental analysis for the HCP and land exchange. He let them know comments are open until May 3, 2015 and can be verbal, on a form, or to his email at jbeehler@sbvwcd.org.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Lisa Pierce mentioned the Woolly Star like to show up on roads and asked about the WSPA being moved. It was confirmed the Woolly Star are not to be moved but a land exchange, begun prior to establishment of WSPA, between San Bernardino County Flood Control District and miners is to take place to allow a connection of two Woolly Star preserve areas. Dave Lovell stated 19 acres on corner of mining area will be exchanged for 40 acres of better habitat. Discussion ensued. Ms. Pierce thinks it is valuable to note the Woolly Star likes to be washed and occasionally disturbed. She thinks allowing people access will be a win-win situation for the species and for educational opportunities. Mr. Beehler commented spineflower will be biggest challenge due to adaptive management

issues. It is a longer term prospect and we will have an experimental approach to its management. He noted if land is conserved or managed, there is a sufficient endowment to maintain it. The habitat management plan is detailed and has been broken down into 600+ polygons of managed areas with individual management prescriptions. It will be easy to follow for those tracking progress. Ms. McLeod showed concern about the Harmony project and asked why Mill Creek and Lytle Creek are not included in this HCP. Mr. Beehler explained HCP is an applicant driven process and specific projects have been identified in the Wash Plan area. To mitigate for these projects, land is set aside and managed in perpetuity ensuring with a conservation easement or some other mechanism that the land will not be developed. We have to guarantee easements and management. We don't have the ability to do that in the Mill Creek and Lytle Creek area. Karin Cleary-Rose stated the Santa Ana River HCP is attempting to address Mill Creek and that they recognize the importance of the creek and the ecological processes it provides. Mr. Beehler explained the parallel hydrology driven SAR HCP goes from Mill Creek to Santa Ana River to Lytle Creek and down to the narrows in Riverside and we are working closely with them. Discussion ensued. Ms. Pierce asked if the new basins could be used as an artificial flush option. Mr. Beehler said probably not due to current drought conditions. Ms. Cleary-Rose added that option is present to provide scour from Seven Oaks Dam to manage WSPA, based on biological opinion, but it will be an unusual water year to make that feasible. Mr. Beehler explained the challenge in the water management aspect is that most of our basins are only used every five years or so due to rain volume inconsistencies. Many are only needed in very wet years. Mr. Cunningham asked how this affects litigation regarding liquefaction. Mr. Beehler explained the basin is managed to where we would not take water if that were an issue and the ability to take water is not changing. Ms. Pierce feels it is unnecessary for additional basins to be built so early in the project from a habitat perspective. Mr. Beehler explained the reason is we can't predict when it will be a wet year or how long until the next one. Also, from the District's perspective, we want to maximize all basins during a wet year and SBVMWD is entering into an agreement as part of the Upper SAR HCP to divert some of the additional captured flow to the basin. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Hund pointed out and discussed additional conservation areas that were added after Plan B of the Wash Plan. He stated he walked the entire Wash Plan area to complete a qualitative habitat assessment. After reviewing the draft HCP in 2010, his office suggested adding more land to conservation to provide the critical mass necessary to move the project forward. Project proponents agreed to do so. Ms. Pierce inquired about a possible archeological notation in an area that may be transferred. Mr. Beehler will review. Mr. Hund assured cultural resources will be addressed. Ms. McLeod brought awareness to the Redlands Conservancy's current efforts to obtaining a National Historic Designation for the Judson Brown Ditch: the first water conveyance to Redlands from the dam. She wants to be sure it will not be disturbed. Ms. Cleary-Rose clarified upon implementation of the plan, the District will take possession of the conservation lands. The District and the rest of the permittees will provide the management for conservation values on BLM owned lands above what BLM is authorized by Congress to manage providing added benefit to those species. Ms. McLeod showed concerns transferring land with BLM due to BLM being unable to have an easement because of their multiple use

dictate. Mr. Beehler stated providing adequate assurance to the public and FWS is being worked on. John Kalish clarified that BLM's land use plan provides a very restrictive management of those lands so you can place a right of way exclusion area as far as the management prescription for those lands. He stated the bar has been raised and short of a withdrawal, a lot higher threshold would have to be proven to get approval for the land use to be changed. Discussion ensued. Ms. McLeod showed concern land easements are not easily tracked. Mr. Beehler stated in the Implementing Agreement between District and FWS of the HCP, the easement is in a sense, already recorded. Shelly Zias Roe stated easements are not found in the Assessor's office but rather on a separate set of maps stored at the County's Land Use department and easements should be recorded with the land surveyor. Discussion ensued. Mr. Hund reassured public Wash Plan members will be getting a permit from FWS and FWS will review conservation easements, making sure they are recorded, will have copies and will be involved in continuing implementation of the HCP. Ms. Pierce wants to make sure District has GIS data from San Bernardino County Museum and additional point data that the museum may not have that she collected. Attendees agreed data should be double checked to be sure everyone has the most current data including the County who recently updated their biological resource maps. Discussion ensued. Ms. McLeod asked about sections of land that are not included in the plan. Mr. Beehler explained some sections are not our land or it is Highland lands and are already conserved. Ms. Cleary-Rose suggested, to make it more clear, adding a map to show a context of existing conservation values and then the contribution that this proposal will make to these values. Mr. Hund suggested marking flood lands and private lands on this map so people can understand the purpose of the land. Attendees wish to include Grinker and East Branch Extension areas as well on the context maps. Ms. Pierce inquired about the new spreading basins. Mr. Hund informed attendees the areas between the new basins will have habitat value and will be actively managed. The HCP has a series of minimization impact measures to protect the habitat as the basins are built including one for worker education. Ms. McLeod asked about plans for the mining pits. It was explained the miners plan to be there for thirty years and are to re-contour the pits upon completion. Reclamation of these lands will be addressed at a later time. A noted source, George Kenline from the County's Land Use Services Department, has all of the reclamation plans and manages all mining pits in the area. Discussion ensued.

5. WASH PLAN HCP:SPECIES AND HABITAT ISSUES DETAILED REVIEW MEETING

Mr. Beehler offered a sign-up sheet to go over the habitat in greater detail April 6th or 7th. Attendees will be walked through the geo-database and decision making process.

6. NEXT STEPS

Mr. Beehler reminded those in attendance they have until May 3rd to provide comments.

7. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.