

UPPER SANTA ANA RIVER WASH LAND MANAGEMENT AND HABITAT  
CONSERVATION PLAN PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING-1

MINUTES  
March 18, 2015

**PRESENT**

Ruth Villalobos  
Miranda Losing  
Seve Villalobos  
Lynn Boshart  
Heather Dyer  
Sean Carlson  
Brandon Anderson  
Brad Haley  
Ileene Anderson  
Al Kelley  
Steve Loe  
James Malcolm  
David Lovell

Geary Hund  
Karin Cleary-Rose  
Jane Hunt  
David E. Raley

Jeff Beehler

Athena L. Monge

**REPRESENTING**

RVA, Inc.  
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SLCW  
San Bernardino Municipal Water District  
WMD of SoCal  
Bureau of Land Management  
Ecorp Consulting  
Center for Biological Diversity  
Crafton Hills  
Biologist  
Biologist  
San Bernardino County Flood Control  
District  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
US Fish & Wildlife Service  
San Bernardino County Trails Committee  
San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation  
District  
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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 2:05 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 gave a scoping presentation via PowerPoint. The required elements of the CEQA/NEPA process include two specific actions: 1) implementing the HCP and 2) the

land exchange with BLM. The Plan area which is an estimated 4500 acre area was identified. The Wash Plan participants include: City of Highland, City of Redlands, US BLM, US FWS, SB County Flood, SB County Parks, San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District, California DFW, CEMEX, Robertson's Ready Mix, East Valley Water District and Redlands Municipal Utilities Dept. Mr. Beehler noted that all participants have what is called Covered Activities within the Wash Plan. These are specifically identified and detailed activities each participant will be performing. He noted the WSPA area is not part of the Wash Plan project and the active channel will be added as additional conservation. Mr. Beehler discussed the Wash Plan Benefits which include; protect and manage endangered species, transportation upgrades, enhanced ability for local water capture and plan trail and public access in unique wild areas to name a few. He 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. Mr. Beehler detailed the general planning area and stated that for all of the activities discussed to work there has to be a land exchange. This will allow for concentrated uses as much as possible so that all activities can occur but remain as separate as much as possible. He handed out a map of the proposed land exchange area. This will allow us to maximum connection with the WSPA and we are going to expand the water conservation areas adjacent to existing conservation areas. It is going to be a conditional permit so that public access does not result in take. Mr. Beehler stated that the land exchange consists of 315 acres of BLM Land, 310 acres of District land, 85 additional BLM acres for "make up" exchange, and 60 additional acres of District land for "make up" exchange. The land is equal value for equal value based on appraisals. The land that goes to BLM will be managed by ACEC and HCP. BLM will retain ownership but it's managed by HCP. Mr. Beehler asked the public if they have any specific information that would be helpful to perform the analysis and are there any issues that the public believes we are missing. He noted a public draft of the environmental document will be out this summer for comment. Mr. Beehler stated that a separate meeting will be held to discuss more specifically the habitat and species concepts. He provided a sign-up sheet for those who want to attend on April 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>. Comments will close on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Beehler reviewed the maps of the Wash Plan Subcomponents and Cover Activities in brief.

#### 4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Steve Low, Biologist referred to the handout of the map and asked what the area highlighted in pink is. Mr. Beehler said that it will be water conservation. Mr. Low also inquired as to the green boundaries identified on the map. Geary Hund said that it is BLM land and that after it is exchanged some will remain in conservation. Karin Cleary-Rose clarified the boundaries on map in further detail. Mr. Beehler noted that they will provide more clarity on the land exchange within their analysis. Al Kelley stated that significant appropriation of land exchange is to be done and one to one ration will not get this done. Mr. Beehler noted that the ratio will be examined in further detail. Mr. Kelley expressed his concern over the loss of SBKR habitat in both the Wash Plan and Lytle Creek area. Karin Cleary-Rose said that if there was an outright decrease it would be a

reduction in the range that would list the SBKR as in jeopardy. FWS has to make findings within the HCP that identifies project proponents have mitigated the effects on the species/habitat to the maximum extent practical or that biological impacts have been offset. Ms. Cleary-Rose stated that her agency has to find that the conservation strategy has to be viable for project proponents. An internal biological opinion has to be performed by FWS. She said FWS will review the HCP and its impacts on environment including SBKR as well as other species before issuance of a permit. Ms. Cleary-Rose said that herself and Mr. Hund have combed through this Plan in great detail and are fairly comfortable with the conservation strategy. However, a thorough analysis has to be performed before permitting can be done. Both projects will have to stand or fall on their own merits. Mr. Low asked why the Wash Plan boundaries do not include Mill Creek into National Forest boundary. He indicated that we should not leave a gap between naturally functioning stream and viable habitat. Heather Dyer of SBVMWD stated that this area is included in the Upper Santa Ana River HCP. Mr. Hund said that we have companion HCP's where one is dealing with terrestrial species and the other is dealing with the aquatic environment. He said that for other projects outside the Wash Plan that will be a separate analysis brought forward by those project proponents. A baseline for SBKR for both Lytle Creek project and the Wash Plan will be reviewed. Mr. Hund stated that he walked every inch of the Wash Plan area and focused on conservation primarily where habitat was best for protected species including SBKR. Some adjustments had to be made and if you look at mining areas there are areas where mining had already occurred. Ms. Dyer voiced her support for the long term management that outlined in the Plan to manage the habitat. Discussion ensued regarding SBKR. Ms. Hunt asked why we are unable to have a Wash Plan for all wash areas. Ms. Cleary-Rose said it's an applicant driven process and has to be brought to FWS. FWS has planning grants for those who are seriously far along with planning. Mr. Malcolm expressed his concern with the incidental take permit and the effect it will have on the Woollystar habitat. Ms. Cleary-Rose said it will take them but it will also conserve them. The Plan provides for improved management and that is the accomplishment of it. Mr. Beehler noted that Woollystar habitat impacts will be reviewed in more detail to address the concern of the public. Mr. Hund indicated that FWS has extensive information on whole plan area; most Woollystar are conserved through the land exchange. Ileene Anderson requested a clear explanation of how the WSPA, Wash Plan and Upper Santa Ana HCP relate to one another. She said that a lot of various HCP's list a subsequent plan that some do not have a stake in and asked that the plans related to the Wash Plan specifically be made available for public review and comment. Ms. Cleary-Rose said she is confident that this HCP will be as detailed as any other plan out there. It is very detailed. Mr. Beehler said that the trails plan is one thing you will not see right now because they are contingent upon approval by the resource agency. He said we are covering the footprint. Ms. Cleary-Rose stated that the communities expressed interest in a trails system but no one has taken ownership as to who is going to manage them related to public access. FWS felt very strongly that public access must be managed before this plan could be approved. The cities will have to develop a detailed trails plan that will need to be made available for public review and comment. Ms. Cleary-Rose stated the importance of making conserved lands available to the public. She stated that the public will not be able to appreciate it if they are not able to interact with conserved lands. Mr.

Hund said that trails will be considered as conditionally compatible use which means there has to be certainty that they will be managed. This includes regular patrol of trails. Ms. Hunt asked if the Santa Ana River Trail is separate from the trails plan. There is a proposed connection to the Santa Ana River Trail but it crosses the WSPA area. The District does not have the ability to say whether this crossing is acceptable or not. Discussion ensued regards trails plan. Ms. Cleary-Rose stated that the Lytle Creek Project attempted to dispute whether or not the Woollystar is a listed species. Both the COE and FWS reviewed them and the listing stands. It was asked what measures were included regarding the Woollystar; whether seed collection and top soil was discussed. Mr. Beehler stated that those methods were discussed at the Spineflower Working Group, but not with the Woollystar. This will be an adaptive management exercise where there is Spineflower take; experimental treatment will be performed. The level of care has to be much greater since spineflower consists of unknowns. The vast majority of spineflower is to be conserved.

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

Mr. Beehler said that the District wants to hear from the public regarding any additional issues or concerns they may have. He can be reached at [jbeehler@sbvwcd.org](mailto:jbeehler@sbvwcd.org). Mr. Beehler stated that all biological studies have been completed. Mr. Hund said they are developing a geodatabase to develop potential management prescription. Possible for protocol surveys to be done. Ruth Villolobos said that Mr. Hund and Tom McGill walked every area of the Wash Plan area which took about a year and a half. This assisted in identifying covered activities. The detailed analysis performed by Mr. Hund and Mr. McGill has enabled us to get where we are at today. Mr. Hund said that the District has been responsive when dealing with FWS. The proposed management strategy is still being worked on. The geodatabase will be available for review at the next meeting. The polygons will be reviewed.

#### 6. NEXT STEPS

Mr. Beehler thanked all those present who provided comments. The District will contact those who signed up for the habitat and species meeting. Mr. Beehler is available for any additional questions and maps are available for viewing.

#### 7. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 3:31 p.m.