

Wash Plan Progress

The San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District is excited to share the progress of the Wash Plan with Task Force members. Our progress toward 2018 implementation of the Wash Plan Habitat Conservation Plan is making significant progress. We currently estimate notification will go out in the Federal Register to begin the public review period early in 2018. We have spent the last few months preparing the final documents for this 90-day public review period. The lead agencies – the District, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management – will notice the availability of the:

- Wash Plan Habitat Conservation Plan;
- Implementing Agreement between the District and the FWS, and;
- Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and Environmental Impact Statement for the Project (EIS).

We anticipate receiving Incidental Take Permits under the Federal Endangered Species Act allowing covered activities to begin after the response to public comment in the fall of 2018.

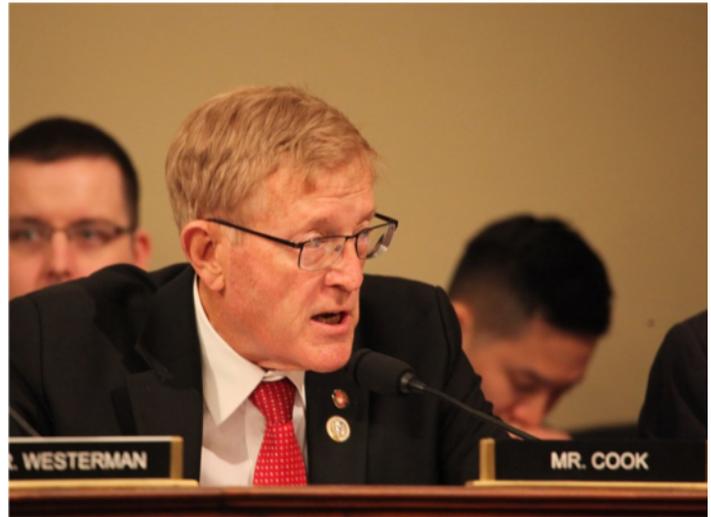
Successes

Several Wash Plan Task Force members have identified projects that will begin implementation next fall. They continue to work with District staff to ensure projects are ready to move forward. Certificate of Inclusion documents and pre-project trapping or collection efforts need to be closely coordinated, such as for Plunge Creek shown in the photo to the right. If other partners have projects to be constructed this coming fall, please reach out to District staff so we can assist in pre-project activities. The attached table summarizes “project readiness” for Task Force participants. FWS is confident that the Incidental Take Permit will be complete for all projects and the HCP implemented before construction. Staff will meet with FWS to discuss forming the Preserve Management Committee and early implementation steps in January for 2018 management actions.



Implementation

There are two land transfers required for full implementation of the Wash Plan. The first is a transfer between Robertson's and the San Bernardino County Flood Control District. The County of San Bernardino has completed its public works level review and will request consideration of the transfer by the Board of Supervisors soon. The second transfer, an exchange of land between the District and the BLM, allows Phase II Wash Plan activities to begin but requires Congressional approval.



The U.S. House of Representatives earlier this summer unanimously approved HR 497, the legislation sponsored by Congressmen Cook and Aguilar allowing the BLM and the District to exchange the lands. This action moved the bill to the Senate, which had its version sponsored by Senators Feinstein and Harris. This bill had a hearing before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources and is awaiting further action in the Senate. Full implementation of some of the new mining activities described in the HCP requires completion of the land transfer before implementation. The other covered activities will take place during Phase I of the Wash Plan and can proceed before the land exchange.

Other implementation activities are taking shape as District staff works to rehabilitate older canals. Removing invasive plants and making the facilities capable of moving high winter flows to refresh habitat areas will maximize recharge and reduce future management costs to the Wash Plan HCP. These efforts will accelerate in 2018 and ensure that a speedy and efficient start to the full implementation is possible as the plan is approved. Redlands and Highland are working with District staff to prepare to implement the Wash Plan Trails Plan.

Finally, District staff would like to thank Task Force members for providing project information in such a timely manner. The environmental documents for this project are more detailed and complete due to your efforts.

Conservation Trust

Finally, the San Bernardino Valley Conservation Trust has held several meetings to review and approve guidelines and policy to facilitate the Wash Plan. Additionally, the Conservation Trust received approval from California Department of Fish and Wildlife to hold endowments and conservation easements earlier this year.

