

**COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
REGULAR MEETING
73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 115
Palm Desert, California
November 4, 2013 - 3:00 p.m.**

A P P R O V E D M I N U T E S

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jean Benson, City of Palm Desert
Buford Crites, State Assembly Appointee–(*Vice-Chairman*)
Kathy Dice, California State Parks
John Donnelly, Wildlife Conservation Board
Jim Foote, U.S. Forest Service (Non-voting Member)
Kristy Franklin, City of La Quinta
John Kalish, Bureau of Land Management
Eddy Konno, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Karin Messaros, National Park Service
Chris Mills, City of Palm Springs
Allan Muth, University of California
Larry Olinger, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Eraina Ortega, California State Department of Finance
Greg Pettis, City of Cathedral City
Mary Roche, City of Indian Wells
Joan Taylor, Governor’s Appointee
Ellen Lloyd Trover, Senate Rules Committee Appointee–
(*Chairwoman*)
Ted Weill, City of Rancho Mirage

MEMBERS ABSENT:

John J. Benoit, Riverside County Supervisor, District IV
Russell Betts, City of Desert Hot Springs
Patrick Kemp, Natural Resources Agency

STAFF PRESENT:

Jim R. Karpiak, Executive Director
Kerrie Godfrey, Associate Governmental Program Analyst
Diana Rosas, Staff Services Analyst

OTHERS PRESENT:

None

1.0 Call to Order & Introductions

Chairwoman Trover declared a quorum with 15 voting members present at 3:00 pm.

Kristy Franklin and Joan Taylor arrived after Chairwoman Trover called the meeting to order, thus bringing the quorum to 17 voting members present.

2.0 Approval of Minutes of September 9, 2013 meeting

Chairwoman Trover noted a typographical correction in the minutes under item 5.2 Executive Director Report, 4th paragraph: the Mojave Desert Land Trust was incorrectly listed as 'Mohave Land Trust'. Eddy Konno also pointed out that under Members Present, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife was listed with its former agency name of California Department of Fish and Game.

A motion was made and seconded (Pettis/Mills) to approve the September 9, 2013 Board meeting minutes with the two corrections. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the Board members present.

3.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

There were no comments on items not on the agenda.

4.0 Action Items – Public Hearing Agenda Items

4.1 Approval of Revised Acquisition Priorities.

Jim Karpiak discussed the update of the CVMC Acquisition Priorities that were developed in 2007 to guide the use of Proposition 84 funds approved by voters in November, 2006. He noted that the specific project list was dated and did not include some projects that CVMC has been working on or is seriously contemplating. In order to prepare the update, Jim met with various partners like the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC) and the Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM) to discuss their goals, which are factored into the update. Jim noted that the updated priorities are very similar to the 2007 version; most of the changes were designed to streamline the information and make it more user friendly for Board members, applicants, partner agencies, media and others who are interested in how the Conservancy operates. New factors were added to reflect efficiency in ongoing management of acquired properties and the ability to leverage other funding. The specific project list included the three new projects that were listed to reflect recent planning discussions with partner agencies.

John Kalish asked why the Paradise Valley site was removed from the projects list. Jim responded that the general area remains a priority for acquisitions, but that the proposed new development site was removed because the seller is not willing to sell and is in the process of seeking entitlements to develop the property. Nonetheless, the site could be restored to the list so that it is there should the proposed development fail. John replied that the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has been working with the developer for quite a few years but he believes it is questionable whether the project will go through. John stressed the importance of the site from a connectivity standpoint, as an important linkage of the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains with Joshua Tree National Park, as well as the fact

and that it is critical Desert Tortoise habitat. Allan Muth concurred with John and said he would like to see the area be kept on the list in case the site becomes available. Jim suggested adding it to the Thermal Canyon/Mecca Hills/Orocopia Mountains Wilderness area section on the list. Chris Mills pointed out that Palm Hills was listed as a property in the San Jacinto Mountains when in fact it is in the Santa Rosa Mountains. Jim said he would change it to be included with the Santa Rosa properties.

A motion was made and seconded (Crites/Taylor) to approve the revised Acquisition Priorities with the two changes thusly noted, and as attached in Exhibit A. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the Board members present.

4.2 Consideration of Expansion of Board to Include East Valley Representatives.

Jim Karpiak discussed the idea of expanding the Board to include the cities of Coachella and Indio for the purpose of gaining east valley representation. He explained that in 1990, when the Conservancy was first formed, its jurisdiction did not include the two cities because they were not “mountainous” areas. He further explained that in 2008, the authorizing statute that gave the Conservancy jurisdiction to operate was amended to permit acquisitions anywhere within the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat (CVMSHCP) area, which includes the two cities along with other territory in the east valley that was not in the original jurisdiction of the Conservancy. Jim pointed out that more acquisition opportunities are becoming available in the east valley, but currently only one of 21 voting members is an East valley resident, that being Chairwoman Trover. Consequently, if the Board concurs, Jim said he would consult with the cities and ask if they are interested in obtaining board representation. He also said that the Conservancy could explore other options for increasing east valley representation.

Ted Weill stated that he is in favor of adding east valley representation. John Kalish corresponded that in recent years the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has seen substantial increase in the use of BLM lands in the east valley, and BLM has refocused its outreach in environmental education and management decisions with regard to east valley residents. He went on to say that BLM recognizes the need to incorporate the East valley so he certainly supports the expansion for the Board as well. Larry Olinger also concurred with Board expansion but asked why the tribes were not included in the expansion. Chairwoman Trover said she also had the same question. Buford Crites opined that potential new board members need to commit to participating in board meetings; Chairwoman Trover concurred that non-participation can cause quorum issues so that is something to consider before expanding the Board. Greg Pettis added that he has seen the Torres Martinez tribe actively participate in environmental issues with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) more than he has with transportation issues.

Chris Mills inquired on the representatives of the cities and whether they would be from council or someone at large. Jim replied that the current statute required city representatives to be either the Mayor or a Council Member, and he would anticipate the same requirement would apply to the new cities. Allan Muth inquired on the tribal representatives and Jim replied that he believed that a tribal representative needs to be a member of the tribal council. Kristy Franklin clarified that the City of La Quinta's board member should also be considered an east valley representative.

Jim thanked the Board for their input and direction on pursuing the expansion for East valley representation and said he would bring this item back to the Board with more information in the future.

4.3 Resolution 2013-10 Approving a Local Assistance Grant to the Friends of the Desert Mountains to Assist with the Acquisition of 5 acres in the Stubbe and Cottonwood Canyon Conservation Area.

Jim Karpiak presented a proposed grant for \$32,500 to the Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM) for the purchase of a small parcel that is adjacent to other holdings of the FODM and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). He focused on the habitat area and its importance in the wildlife corridor. Chairwoman Trover pointed out the price per acre at \$6,500.

A motion was made and seconded (Pettis/Mills) to approve Resolution 2013-10 approving a local assistance grant in the amount not to exceed \$35,000.00 to FODM to assist with the purchase of parcel APN 520-030-010, and defray closing and transaction costs. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the Board members present.

4.4 Approving Board Meeting Schedule for 2014.

Patrick Kemp said he would not be able to attend the January 13, 2014, meeting. Eddy Konno asked whether the November 10, meeting landed on a holiday. Jim Karpiak replied that the Conservancy verified with the Cities and other State agencies on which day they would observe Veterans Day Holiday and it was confirmed that it would be observed on the actual day of November 11; which falls on the Tuesday after the proposed meeting date. Jim noted that some people might take Monday off and if that looks like it will be the case, the Board could subsequently vote to reschedule the meeting.

A motion was made and seconded (Mills/Muth) to approve the proposed meeting schedule for 2014. The motion was approved by a unanimous roll call vote of the Board members present.

4.5 Planning for Board Tour of Conservancy Projects in Conjunction with January Board Meeting.

Jim Karpiak discussed the proposed Board tour of significant Conservancy project sites. He stated the purpose of the tour is to give Board members a comprehensive view of what the Conservancy and its partners have accomplished and to reflect on ongoing projects. He expressed the Conservancy's desire to have the proposed tour on January 13, 2014, either before or after the regular scheduled Board meeting. He outlined the tour as an approximate 5 hour tour with a lunch in between that would allow time for those that could only attend the first half of the tour to be shuttled back to the Conservancy office and/or pick up individuals at the Conservancy office who could only attend the second half of the tour. Jim suggested that the tour follow a short Board meeting to commence about 9:30 am, in order to allow time for the board members from Sacramento to fly down and attend, and to adjourn at around 10:00 am, and thus to start the proposed 5 hour tour at 10:30 am.

Greg Pettis said he supported the idea and suggested inviting alternate members as well so that they too are involved and aware of voting matters as they fill in for the delegate members. John Donnelly said he was very interested in attending but unfortunately he will be on the road with the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) doing a strategic plan workshop. Chairwoman Trover and Jim both responded that they would be happy to arrange a tour for John or other board members at a later date should they not be able to attend the January proposed tour. Eraina Ortega said she would check her schedule and contact the Conservancy as soon as possible. Chairwoman Trover and Jim both thanked everyone for their input and encouraged everyone to call the Conservancy office with any new suggestions, comments, or questions.

5.0 Reports

5.1 Written Reports from Staff.

Joan Taylor inquired on how much of the section 5 parcels, in La Quinta, had been acquired. Kerrie Godfrey responded that about 50% been acquired and one parcel is currently being appraised but that there are still landowners that are not interested in selling.

5.2 Executive Director Report.

Jim Karpiak said next spring he plans to update the Strategic Plan which focuses not only on acquisitions but more broadly on activities of the conservancy; and that he also plans to focus more on the status of the Trail Plan. Jim also acknowledged that Diana has become a notary, so the Conservancy now has two notaries on staff, which will allow for a more swift process when closing multiple projects.

5.3 Board member comments and reports from Conservancy member agencies.

John Donnelly reported that the Wildlife Conservation Board's (WCB) strategic plan workshop would be on the road in January with a stop in Ontario either on

the 14 or 16 of January and encouraged anyone who is interested to visit their website for more information. He discussed the status of the plan and said the ultimate goal is to have the plan completed and adopted by WCB's Board in March or early April 2014. In the meantime, he welcomed any comments via the WCB's website, email, or phone.

Buford Crites thanked, on behalf of the Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM), Chairwoman Trover, Executive Director Karpiak and all other Board members who attended FODM's 'Thank You to Partnership' event on Friday, November 1, at Whitewater Preserve.

6.0 Adjourn to the January 13, 2014.

The meeting was adjourned without objection at 3:46 p.m.

EXHIBIT A

Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy Acquisition Priorities 2013

The Conservancy's mission under state law is to protect lands with "open-space, wildlife, scenic, environmental, anthropological, cultural, scientific, educational and recreational resources", including both mountainous lands surrounding the Coachella Valley and natural community conservation lands as identified in the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan ("CVMSHCP"). The priorities set forth here update and revise the Acquisition Priorities set by the Conservancy Board in March, 2007. The priorities also seek to establish initial criteria for evaluating potential acquisitions, with the understanding that ranking particular properties can be a subjective exercise and that the circumstances surrounding the availability of willing sellers or funds to support purchases will necessitate careful analysis of each site.

All acquisitions properties must be within a CVMSHCP Conservation Area and preserve or promote one or more of the following conservation objectives:

- Biological resources, such as important plant or wildlife habitat or hydrologic features
- Cultural resources
- Recreational options consistent with habitat values
- Significant scenic attributes.

In general, properties that fulfill more than one of the conservation objectives will be preferred for acquisition to those that meet only one objective. However, each potential acquisition site is unique and the ultimate decisions on acquisition will rest with the Conservancy's board.

Other attributes or factors in establishing priority:

- Likelihood of imminent or future development
- Partnership or fund leveraging opportunities
- Potential for future transfer to federal or local agency or non-profit organization
- Complements adjacent or nearby public or nonprofit holdings
- Availability of public agency or nonprofit entity to take and hold title
- Funding options for future management and monitoring
- Ease of monitoring and low risk of interference from adjacent or nearby uses
- Rising land values in area
- Other special circumstances, e.g., seller motivation, foreclosure or tax sale offering, property condition, presence of improvements or hazardous materials.

Applying the conservation priorities above in light of the progress the Conservancy and its partners have made since 2007 in acquiring conservation lands yields the following updated list of project areas in which will be the focus of most acquisition work in the coming years:

- ◆ San Jacinto Mountains (including the Chino Cone area) and Santa Rosa Mountains alluvial fans (in La Quinta, Oasis, Thermal and Vista Santa Rosa, as well as Palm Hills) – contain cultural resources, scenic resources within and adjacent to the National Monument and significant habitat values for Peninsular bighorn sheep, along with future recreational options.
- ◆ Stubbe Canyon corridor – includes significant wildlife corridor between the San Jacinto and San Bernardino Mountains, sand transport essential areas and high quality riparian habitat, as well as trail alignment opportunities. (Approximately 80% of the potential conservation acquisitions here have been completed.)
- ◆ Lake Cahuilla shoreline – protects this unique historical shoreline and important cultural resource area from potential development and connects it to other conservation areas. (Approximately 90% complete.)
- ◆ Sand transport areas in Willow Hole, Thousand Palms and Edom Hill areas – where many parcels are in the CVFTL Preserve/Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), providing excellent habitat for CVFTL, Coachella Valley milkvetch, Coachella valley round-tailed ground squirrel, and Palm Springs pocket mouse. Many sites contain cultural resources and could provide trail alignment opportunities; there is a significant threat of development for many properties. (Approximately 50 % complete.)
- ◆ Thermal Canyon/Mecca Hills/Orocopia Mountains Wilderness areas – in the Joshua Tree National Park Wildlife Movement Corridors, which include significant desert dry wash woodland and the I-10 scenic gateway area; and the Paradise Valley site should it become available. (Approximately 50% complete.)
- ◆ Joshua Hills inholding (Section 30) – contains habitat, public access to future State Park facilities and maintaining the “wilderness” quality of this area. (Approximately 90% complete – prior acquisitions were the former Cathton property and several earlier Joshua Hills projects.)
- ◆ Dos Palmas area – contains existing valuable habitat as well as future potential linkages for wildlife movement and connects to other publicly owned land in the Dos Palmas ACEC. Due to location near the Salton Sea, it also may facilitate future cooperative projects that allow funds to be leveraged.
- ◆ East Valley Canyon Protection Project (EVCPP) – portions of the Desert Tortoise/Linkage, Mecca Hills/Orocopia Mountains, West Deception Canyon and the Indio Hills/Joshua Tree National Park Linkage Conservation Areas, which contain

significant habitat as well as potential linkages for wildlife corridors at the mouths of significant canyons. They also contain significant historical resources due to their proximity to the Colorado River Aqueduct and represent future trail opportunities.

- ◆ Any project area – transfers of previously acquired land to federal agencies to relieve management obligations and/or receive repayment of CVMC grants, which then can be used to purchase additional properties.

Approved by CVMC Board, 11/4/13