

COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
Regular Meeting – March 11, 2024, 3:00 PM

73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Conference Room 101
Palm Desert, CA 92260

Tele-conference locations:

State of California, Resources Agency
715 P St.
Serpentine Room on the 20th floor (NRHQ 20-103)
Sacramento, CA 95814

3602 Inland Empire Blvd. Suite C-220
Small Conference Room
Ontario, CA 91764

AGENDA

1.0 Call to Order & Introductions

2.0 Approval of January 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes (See Attachment 1.)

3.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

At this time, any member of the public may address the Governing Board on any item not on the agenda. The Board cannot act on an item not on the agenda, but it can place it on the agenda for a future meeting. For items on the agenda, there will be an opportunity to speak when that item is heard. The Chair may limit the time for each speaker. Any written material may be submitted to the person taking minutes.

4.0 Action Items - Public Hearing (if there is any member of the public who wishes to address the Governing Board before action is taken, testimony from the public will be taken prior to a vote.)

- 4.1 Adoption of Resolution 2024-01 Approving a Climate Resilience & Community Access Program Local Assistance Grant to the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission in an amount not to exceed \$372,712.00 for its Cooperative Ranger Initiative for Conservation Lands.
(See Attachment 2.)

4.2 Amendment of Climate Resilience and Community Access Grants to Provide Additional Funding to Four Grantees. (See Attachment 3.)

4.3. Presentation by Joshua Tree Park Superintendent Jane Rodgers and staff

5.0 Reports

5.1 Written Reports from Staff. (See Attachment 4.)

5.2 Executive Director Report.

- Trail Project Status
- Legislative Update
- Community Events

5.3 Board Member comments and reports from Conservancy member agencies. This is an opportunity for any of the Governing Board Members to present a report on matters of interest regarding the agency he or she represents.

6.0 Closed Session

Pursuant to Government Code sections 11126 (a)(1), 11126(e)(1) and 11126.3(a) the Board may hold a closed session to discuss and take possible action on personnel matters and or receive advice of counsel on pending or potential litigation. In addition, pursuant to Government Code section 11126(c) 7(A) the Board may meet in closed session with its negotiator prior to the purchase or sale of real property by or for the state body to give instructions to its negotiator regarding the price and terms of payment for the purchase or sale. Confidential memoranda related to these issues may be considered during such closed session discussions. The matter scheduled for closed sessions is:

- Recruitment of Executive Director

7.0 Adjourn to the May 13, 2024, meeting at 3:00 pm.

This Agenda is available on our website at <http://cvmc.ca.gov>. Anyone with questions about any item on the agenda may contact the Conservancy by phone at (760) 776-5026 or by visiting our office located at 73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 120, Palm Desert, CA 92260.

ATTACHMENT 1 – March 11, 2024

Agenda Item 2.0 Approval of January 8, 2024, Meeting Minutes

COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY REGULAR MEETING

73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 101
Palm Desert, California
January 8, 2024 - 3:00 p.m.

Tele-conference location:

State of California, Resources Agency
715 P St.

Farallon Room on the 20th floor (NRHQ 20-105)
Sacramento, CA 95814

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lupe Ramos Amith, City of Indio
Enrique Arroyo, California State Parks
Stephen Benson, Department of Finance
Denise Delgado, City of Coachella
Gary Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs
Grace Garner, City of Palm Springs
Beatriz Gonzalez, State Assembly Appointee
Richard Kim, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
Rita Lamb, City of Cathedral City (*Chairwoman*)
Lynn Mallotto, City of Rancho Mirage
Deborah McGarrey, City of La Quinta
Jennifer Norris, Wildlife Conservation Board
Margaret Park, Aqua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
V. Manuel Perez, Riverside County
Andrea Scharffer, CA Natural Resources Agency
Joan Taylor, Governor's Appointee
Christopher Tracy, University of California, Riverside
Ellen Lloyd Trover, Senate Rules Committee Appointee
Evan Trubee, City of Palm Desert

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bruce Whitman, City of Indian Wells

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Karpiak, Executive Director
Diana Rosas, Associate Director
Maximiliano Ochoa, Project Coordinator
Abriana Elms, Administrative Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT: Tammy Martin, Friends of the Desert Mountains
Oscar Ortiz, Friends of the Desert Mountains

Jennifer Prado, Southern California Mountains Foundation

1.0 Call to Order & Introductions

Chair Gary Gardner declared a quorum with 13 voting members present at 3:02 p.m. Subsequently, 5 additional board members arrived after the roll call bringing the attendance to 19 voting members.

2.0 Approval of November 13, 2023, Meeting Minutes

November 13, 2023, meeting; the motion passed with 2 abstentions.

3.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

No public comments were made.

4.0 Action items – Public Hearing

4.1 Election of Officers for 2024.

A motion was made and seconded (Trover/Delgado) to elect Rita Lamb as Chair. A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/McGarrey) to elect Steve Downs as Vice Chair, and to designate Gary Gardner as the board's representative on the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority board. The motion passed unanimously.

4.2 Annual Review of Acquisition Priorities and Report on 2023 Acquisition Activity.

Jim summarized item 4.2 as presented in the staff report.

Gary Gardner asked Jim about the amounts of CVMC bond funds versus funding from the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC). Rita Lamb asked about which staff members would need to explore new avenues for accessing; Jim responded that the Executive Director and Associate Director will be working on that.

A motion was made and seconded (Perez/Taylor) approving revisions to the Acquisition Priorities for 2024 as shown in Exhibit A. The motion passed unanimously.

4.3 Presentation by Friends of the Desert Mountains on CRCA & Prop 68 Projects.

Jim Karpiak introduced Tammy Martin and Oscar Ortiz, Executive Director and Associate Director of Friends of the Desert Mountains, who made a presentation

on CVMC-funded FODM projects with special emphasis on the Desert Lake Shore (DLS) project.

V. Manuel Perez commented that this is a great project and would like to see this be a part of the Art and Culture Month of Riverside County. Gary Gardner asked if there is a construction timeline, Oscar responded that they do not have a timeline yet but that it will be developed as part of the next step in the design process. Evan Trubee asked what the total estimated cost was for this project. Oscar stated that the Biological Survey was \$8200.00 and the fee for the conceptual design was \$45k, but that construction costs have not yet been estimated. Tammy Martin thanked Jennifer Prado for her initiation of this project.

4.4 Annual Review of Implementation of Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Policy.

Jim Karpiak summarized item 4.4 as presented in the staff report.

Deborah McGarrey commented that she can provide some additional organizations to contact with regard to workforce diversity issues.

There were no further questions or comments from the board.

5.0 Reports

5.1 Written reports from staff.

There were no questions or discussion from the Board.

5.2 Executive Director Report.

Jim Karpiak reported on the following:

- Existing Trails- The CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration for the four trails West Deception Canyon, Biskra Palms, Chuckwalla and Cathedral Cove trails is being circulated for public comment and should be presented to the board in March. The two other trails in Blind Canyon and Fargo Canyon require NEPA action by BLM. The existing trails project of CVDMRCA has ended. The future trail work will be done utilizing the CVDMRCA's Land Management Capacity Building project staffed by the Desert Recreation District. The Big Morongo new trail signage project is waiting for Forest Service/BLM approval.

- Grant Workshop- tomorrow Tuesday the 9th at the Indio Community Center CVMC will be holding a workshop for the available grant RFPs.
- State Budget Update- the wildfire resilience money allocated to CVMC in the FY 23-24 budget is being considered for deletion as part of the FY 24-25 budget approval. If that happens, those RFPs will be suspended.

There were no board comments or questions.

5.3 Board Member comments and reports.

Gary Gardner commented that Greater Palm Springs has completed three additional hiking trail maps in collaboration with CVMC and FODM. Copies are available in the CVMC office.

There were no further questions or comments from the board.

6.0 Closed Session

Pursuant to Government Code sections 11126 (a)(1), 11126(e)(1) and 11126.3(a) the Board may hold a closed session to discuss and take possible action on personnel matters and or receive advice of counsel on pending or potential litigation. In addition, pursuant to Government Code section 11126(c) 7(A) the Board may meet in closed session with its negotiator prior to the purchase or sale of real property by or for the state body to give instructions to its negotiator regarding the price and terms of payment for the purchase or sale. Confidential memoranda related to these issues may be considered during such closed session discussions. The matter scheduled for closed session is:

- Recruitment of Executive Director

Chair Rita Lamb asked the public to leave the meeting at 3:43 pm to convene the closed session. At 4:10 p.m., the Chair reconvened the open session and announced that the board had created an ad hoc search committee to oversee the recruitment process.

7.0 Adjourn to the March 11, 2024, meeting at 3:00 pm.

Chair Rita Lamb adjourned the meeting without objection at 4:10 p.m.

ATTACHMENT 2 – March 11, 2024

Agenda Item 4.1 Adoption of Resolution 2024-01 Approving a Climate Resilience & Community Access Program Local Assistance Grant to the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission in an amount not to exceed \$372,712.00 for its Cooperative Ranger Initiative for Conservation Lands.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Conservancy launched the second round of its Climate Resilience & Community Access grant program (CRCA - 02). Created in 2021, the program seeks to support projects that enhance desert adaptation and resilience to climate change, promote equity in access to outdoor recreation throughout the Coachella Valley or improve natural resources management on existing conservation lands. An RFP was issued December 6, 2023, with responses due by March 8, 2024.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC) is requesting a grant in the amount of \$372,712.00 for its Cooperative Ranger Initiative for Conservation Lands. The proposed project would provide a Law Enforcement Coordinator for the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP) lands, to develop a collaborative ordinance and Ranger cadet program that would work directly with the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (CVDMRCA) and the Southern California Mountains Foundation Urban Conservation Corps (UCC) to train both interpretive and contact ranger cadets for patrols of conservation lands. The cooperative and coordinated management approach will result in creating efficiencies and enhancing each entity's management capabilities and effectiveness. The CVCC is responsible for implementing the CVMSHCP, including monitoring and management to maintain a record of issues on conservation lands. Additionally, CVCC administers the CVMSHCP and coordinates land management projects for the twenty Permittees, including city and county jurisdictions with reserve managers, as well as non-profit, federal, and state partners, and tribal agencies. Hence, CVCC will be lead on this project.

Funding would create the opportunity to address the lack of enforcement capacity across conservation lands over a range of jurisdictions, including non-profit, state, county, city, and federal lands that have been a significant challenge since the Permits for the Plan were approved in 2008. Currently, the CVMSHCP accounts for more than 100,000 acres of conserved lands, requiring a crucial approach to address issues of vandalism, illegal

dumping, OHV use, and trail etiquette, along with educational outreach to change harmful environmental behaviors.

The ranger program would facilitate better management of conserved lands, through CVCCs developed land management asset database, with the goal to enhance monitoring of existing fencing and signage and to geolocate and report lands that are hotspots for illegal dumping and vehicle trespass. The ranger program would also support trailhead management where jurisdictions have not been able to control illegal activities without consistent patrols and cannot provide continuous enforcement on open space lands, particularly when working across jurisdictional boundaries. Furthermore, the ranger program would serve as a complementary program supporting existing MOUs with the Desert Hot Springs Police Department and the Riverside County Sheriff's Department in assisting with patrols in remote reserve areas, where the Sheriff's Department's capacity to patrol and manage illegal activity on open space lands is limited, with little to no support to control illegal activity on conservation lands. Funding would support the assessment of an alternative solution with CVDMRCA, a Joint Powers Authority created between the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy and Desert Recreation District (DRD), working through DRD's enforcement authority under California Penal Code § 830.31(b) to create a ranger program for more consistent and effective patrols that do not tax the capacity of local law enforcement agencies to respond to more pressing community issues.

ANALYSIS

The project meets the broad objectives of the CRCA program as it aims to improve the conservation community's capacity to manage conserved lands in the face of climate change and enhance habitat values through restoration, cleanup or other routine management or maintenance projects, expand environmental education and outdoor recreational opportunities. The project will support severely disadvantaged communities through employment and training opportunities.

More specifically the project meets four CRCA/ Nature Based Solutions funding priorities:

- People and Communities: The project will support economic development by creating workforce development opportunities for young residents of disadvantaged communities.
- Wildlife and Ecosystems: The project is part of the CVMSHCP and would support the ongoing needs to protect conservation lands from OHV use, illegal dumping and pollution, illegal shooting and camping, and misuse of trails under conserved lands.

- Land Use or Management: The project will enhance the work of local government, public and private organizations in land use and management by better monitoring and management of conserved lands through the developed land management asset database for monitoring of existing fencing, signage, geolocation, and reports of hotspots for illegal dumping and vehicle trespassing. The project will also increase capacity to patrol and manage illegal activity on open space lands.
- Community Access: The project will enhance public access to lands and trailheads through ongoing monitoring and management. Funding will support the monitoring and a degree of inspection of trails and interpretive signages.

PROGRAM AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Staff proposes a grant of \$372,712.00 for the project. CVCC has agreed to comply with all programmatic requirements of the CRCA program and will be required to enter into a grant agreement to that end.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

The Project, which consists primarily of staff work, training, and program operations, does not constitute a “project” as defined by CEQA Guideline Section 15378 as it has no potential for physical impacts on the environment. In addition, the Project is part of the implementation of the CVMSHCP, and the Final Recirculated EIR and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (2007) for the CVMSHCP specifically outlines that the management program will include the use of appropriate enforcement to maintain conservation values.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approving a Climate Resilience & Community Access Program Local Assistance Grant to the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission in an amount not to exceed \$372,712.00 to support its Cooperative Ranger Initiative for Conservation Lands Program.

**RESOLUTION 2024-01 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE
COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
ADOPTED IN REGULAR SESSION
MARCH 11, 2024**

**APPROVING A CLIMATE RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM
LOCAL ASSISTANCE GRANT TO THE
COACHELLA VALLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$372,712.00
FOR ITS COOPERATIVE RANGER INITIATIVE FOR CONSERVATION LANDS**

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33501 created the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy for the purpose, among other things, of acquiring and holding, in perpetual open space, mountainous lands surrounding the Coachella Valley and natural community conservation lands, and to provide for the protection of natural and cultural resources and the public's enjoyment thereof; and

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33601(e) provides that the Conservancy may "in order to further the conservancy's purposes as set forth in Section 33501, award grants to cities, counties, resource conservation districts, or nonprofit organizations...."; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy received an allocation of general funds in the FY 22-23 State Budget to support its Climate Resilience & Community Access Grant Program (CRCA); and

WHEREAS, the CRCA provides local assistance to local nonprofits or government agencies that will respond to climate change or enhance access to outdoor recreation or related educational activities in the Coachella Valley; and

WHEREAS, on December 6, 2023, the Conservancy issued a Request for Proposals for projects that are eligible for funding under the CRCA; and

WHEREAS, the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC) is a nonprofit organization qualified as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, and is therefore eligible to receive funding from the Conservancy; and

WHEREAS, CVCC has requested a grant in the amount of \$372,712.00 for its Cooperative Ranger Initiative for Conservation Lands (the Project); and

WHEREAS, the Project will provide benefits to economically severely disadvantaged communities in the Coachella Valley by creating workforce development opportunities for young residents of disadvantaged communities; and

WHEREAS, the Project will enhance CVCC ability to implement CVMSHCP land management and projects for twenty permittees, including city and county jurisdiction with reserve managers, as well as non-profits, federal, and state partners, and tribal agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Project will provide rangers with education and training in protecting and managing conservation lands; and

WHEREAS, CVCC has a qualified professional staff, strong relationships with local nonprofits, tribes and cities, and a track record of successfully completing projects it undertakes; and

WHEREAS, the Project is in furtherance of the Conservancy's purposes as established in Public Resources Code section 33501; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy wishes to authorize a local assistance grant to Coachella Valley Conservation Commission for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the Project consists of staff work, training, and program operations, does not constitute a "project" as defined by CEQA Guideline Section 15378 as it has no potential for physical impacts on the environment; in addition, the Project is part of the implementation of the CVMSHCP, and the Final Recirculated EIR and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (2007) for the CVMSHCP specifically outlines that the management program will include the use of appropriate enforcement to maintain conservation values; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved in regular session of the Governing Board of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy that the Board finds and determines that the Project meets the objectives of the CRCA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board approves a local assistance grant to CVCC (Grantee) in an amount not to exceed \$372,712.00 for the Project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a condition of the grant is that the Grantee shall enter into a CRCA Local Assistance Grant Agreement with the Conservancy, which shall contain provisions requiring the following:

1. That the Grantee will agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Conservancy and the State of California, its contractors, officers, directors, agents or employees against any and all claims, liability, demands, damages, debts, judgments, costs, or expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising out of or in any way connected to the Grantee's actions, omissions, or other conduct relating in any way to this agreement and the activities funded by the Grant, including, but not limited to, any such losses, damages, or expenses arising out of (a) loss of or damage to property, and (b) injury to or death of persons;
2. That the Grantee must complete the work contemplated by the Grant no later than June 30, 2027, unless the Conservancy agrees in writing to an extension;
3. That should the Grantee violate the Grant Agreement in any material way, and fail to cure such violation upon written notice from the Conservancy as provided in the Grant Agreement, the Grantee shall reimburse the Conservancy for the full amount of the Grant within thirty (30) days of a written demand from the Conservancy to do so;
4. That the Grantee shall maintain accounting records of how the grant sum was spent for a period of three years and shall make such records available for inspection by the Conservancy or the Department of Finance upon request by either agency; and
5. Grantee will cause work on the Project to be commenced within a reasonable time after receipt of notification from the Conservancy that funds have been approved and that the project will be completed with reasonable diligence. If Grantee cannot submit its first invoice for reimbursement to the Conservancy by one year from the date of the agreement, Grantee will submit a statement of progress that provides real assurances that the Project will be completed prior to the completion date. All final invoices for payment shall be submitted to the Conservancy within ninety (90) days of the completion date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board hereby authorizes its Executive Director, or in his absence the Board Chair, to execute any and all documents necessary to effect the grant.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy Governing Board, held on this 11th day of March 2024, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTENTIONS:

ABSENT:

Rita Lamb, Chair
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

ATTACHMENT 3- March 11, 2024

Agenda Item 4.2 Amendment of Climate Resilience and Community Access Grants to Provide Additional Funding to Four Grantees

BACKGROUND

The Conservancy received \$2.5 million in general funds in FY 2021-22 and \$2.9 million in FY 2022-23 to promote Nature-Based Solutions in conservation, climate resilience, wildfire prevention, community access and natural resources protection. Pursuant to the Climate Resilience and Community Access (CRCA) grant program guidelines adopted by the board in November 2022 (the Guidelines), the funds are to be used to support projects that enhance desert resilience to climate change, promote equity in access to outdoor recreation throughout the Valley or improve natural resources management on existing conservation lands. The FY 21-22 funds were awarded by the board in early 2022 and most of the FY 22-23 funds were awarded in mid-2023.

A balance of \$457,977.00 remains for additional awards (after the proposed award in the previous agenda item). Although it was the intent of the Legislature and CNRA for the funding to be awarded as quickly as possible, when the last grants were made in May 2023 the consensus was that the Conservancy did not have other applications that merited funding at that time. Also, in some instances, the board had awarded applicants less than requested in order to keep the funded period to two years; to the extent that additional funds were available, the board retained the option of considering additional funding for well-functioning projects. Staff has been monitoring the progress of the CRCA grants over the past nine months in light of not only the initial goal to make awards as soon as possible but also the potential for unused state funding to be directed to other activities in future state budget considerations. Rather than initiate another long RFP process for a relatively small amount of funds, staff is recommending that the remaining funds be awarded to extend the terms of four successful projects that have made great progress but are running short on funds.

DISCUSSION

The CRCA grant program has made a significant impact in the Coachella Valley as it funds projects and programs that are not capital improvements but nonetheless address pressing needs for staff and program development and community education. Many of the projects that received grants in 2022 took longer than anticipated to start up due to difficulties hiring or long-term organizational capacity deficiencies that the funding is designed to address. As a result, many FY 21-22 grantees and most of the FY 22-23 grantees still have significant unused balances in their grants. Four FY 21-22 grantees, however, have implemented very successful programs that will soon run out of funds.

Because they have proven track records and address continuing needs, small grants to extend the projects or critical components of them are proposed:

1. Southern California Mountains Foundation (SCMF), UCC Climate Corps program. Initial Grant March 2022: \$298,000.00; Recommended additional grant: \$109,277.00.

SCMF, which developed the United Conservation Corps (UCC) in San Bernardino County, received CRCA funding for a new professional senior director position to launch a Coachella Valley-based UCC Climate Corps program. SCMF retained for the position Jennifer Prado, a long-time senior staffer at the Friends of the Desert Mountains, who has ably put together a local UCC that is responding to a huge demand for conservation corps services by conservation organizations in the Coachella Valley, including the Conservancy, CVCC, and the Oswit Land Trust. SCMF has effectively engaged with economically disadvantaged Coachella Valley communities and provided training and employment to local youth. Many of their employees have gone on to obtain full-time, career-oriented positions in conservation-related fields with other organizations.

The project has more than achieved its primary objectives of expanding the local capacity of the conservation community and supporting community economic development. The additional funds would enable SCMF to retain the senior director for an additional year. With her expertise and excellent reputation, SCMF has been able to attract contracts and work opportunities from local agencies which can help sustain SCMF and the program in the future, and ultimately to expand it further.

The funding would be used to extend the senior director's position for one year.

2. Council of Mexican Federations in North America (COFEM), *Defensores de Tierras Públicas* Program. Initial Grant March 2022: \$140,000.00; Recommended additional grant: \$140,000.00.

COFEM hired its full time Coachella Valley Conservation Manager in 2021 and received a CRCA grant in 2022 to expand its *Defensores de Tierras Públicas* (Public Lands Defenders) program, which works in collaboration with conservation organizations such as CactusToCloud to protect desert landscapes and create educational opportunities for people of low-income and traditionally underserved communities. With the grant, COFEM retained additional staff for its educational *Nuestro Desierto* program, which offers bilingual public workshops to youth and adults, along with field and camping trips. The program's targeted audience is the economically disadvantaged community in the eastern Coachella Valley and the events have been well attended. The ultimate objectives of these efforts are to facilitate participation of residents in historically underserved

communities in outdoor activities for their recreational, educational and public health benefits, and to encourage young people to become better citizen stewards of the environment or even consider conservation careers. Specifically, COFEM workshops seek to impart basic conservation knowledge along with public speaking and leadership skills that will enable young people to become the next generation of land stewards and advocates for the protection of the desert. There is evidence that both aims are being met: the staff hired with this grant has been recognized by other conservation organizations and is now playing roles as community leader, and COFEM's conservation manager has been tapped as presenter by the UC Environmental Stewards program because of her work.

The funding would allow the program at its current staff levels for another full year.

3. The Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM), Eastern Coachella Valley Programs Capacity Building Project. Initial Grant March 2022: \$287,000.00. Recommended additional grant: \$118,700.00.

Over the past several years, FODM has been actively expanding youth and family-oriented environmental education programs in the eastern Coachella Valley (ECV). The 2022 CRCA grant enhanced FODM's capacity by providing approximately two years of funding for three staff positions:

1. A full-time bilingual (Spanish and English) staff member qualified as a translator to assist in connecting with Coachella Valley residents whose first or perhaps only language is Spanish;
2. A part-time Indigenous Community Liaison who facilitates ongoing collaboration with the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians and other local tribes to provide increased access to Desert Cahuilla cultural education opportunities in the Coachella Valley; and
3. 25% of the salary of FODM's full-time Director of Education, whose work involves building and maintaining relationships throughout local underserved communities, overseeing youth education programs, developing grants for education programs, and designing locally relevant community lectures.

The CRCA grant has enabled FODM to provide programs that allow people of all ages and cultures to connect in meaningful ways to the land. Extending these bilingual programs and tribal outreach activities will continue addressing a part of the community that has traditionally been left out of local conservation education opportunities. Overall, FODM's efforts in this area will create a more inclusive conservation community that will

more effectively build a sustainable future for the Coachella Valley and its natural and cultural resources.

The additional funding will support all three positions for an additional year.

4. Coachella Valley Desert & Mountains Conservation & Recreation Authority (CVDMRCA), Land Management Capacity Building project. Initial Grant: July 2022: \$125,000; Recommended additional amount: \$90,000.

The Conservancy's grant funded an 18-month project to organize a land management services program that provides public contracting and related services to nonprofits and local public agencies that hold conservation lands. Eventually the goal is to expand the program by coordinating joint or collaborative projects among varied land-owning agencies, including support for enforcement or docent activities.

The project was launched in fall 2022 and has already been very helpful for CVCC, the Conservancy and Oswit Land Trust in facilitating improvement, large clean up and trail projects. Using the grant, CVDMRCA funded a part time coordinator position within the public works department of the Desert Recreation District (DRD). Due to backed up demand for assistance, the initial projects generated income to subsize much of the cost of the coordinator's position. The initial coordinator left DRD and CVDMRCA and DRD decided to replace that person with a full-time coordinator; the position has recently been filled with an experienced public works professional.

The project is meeting a long-unfulfilled need within the conservation community. The additional funding, when added to the remaining balance of the grant, would ensure that the full-time coordinator will remain in place for at least two years. At that time, the program should be generating enough funding from work paid for by landowners to become self-sustaining.

CEQA REQUIREMENTS

All the funding above is for personnel costs, which does not itself constitute a "project" as defined by CEQA Guideline 15378 as it has no potential for physical impacts on the environment.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the four resolutions attached to award the additional funds as described above.

**RESOLUTION 2024-02 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE
COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
ADOPTED IN REGULAR SESSION
MARCH 11, 2024**

**APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE
CLIMATE RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM LOCAL ASSISTANCE
GRANT TO THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MOUNTAINS FOUNDATION
IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$109,277.00
FOR ITS URBAN CONSERVATION CORPS COACHELLA VALLEY PROJECT**

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33501 created the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy for the purpose, among other things, of acquiring and holding, in perpetual open space, mountainous lands surrounding the Coachella Valley and natural community conservation lands, and to provide for the protection of natural and cultural resources and the public's enjoyment thereof; and

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33601(e) provides that the Conservancy may "in order to further the conservancy's purposes as set forth in Section 33501, award grants to cities, counties, resource conservation districts, or nonprofit organizations...."; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy received an allocation of general funds in its FY 22-23 State Budget to support its Climate Resilience & Community Access Grant Program (CRCA); and

WHEREAS, Southern California Mountains Foundation (SCMF) is a nonprofit organization qualified as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, and is therefore eligible to receive funding from the Conservancy; and

WHEREAS, in March 2022, SCMF received a grant in the amount of \$298,000.00 for its Urban Conservation Corps Coachella Valley (the Project); and

WHEREAS, the Project is supporting a new senior director to coordinate the development a Coachella Valley based - Urban Conservation Corps Center that trains young persons in skills necessary for conservation programs and then employs them or coordinates their placement in projects of other conservation agencies; and

WHEREAS, the Project has very successfully met the objectives of the CRCA and the Conservancy's mission by improving management of conserved lands and enhance habitat values through restoration, cleanup or other capital improvement projects and help to preserve biodiversity and natural resources, and improve access to environmental

education and outdoor recreational opportunities, and is therefore an eligible use of CRCA funds; and

WHEREAS, the Project is nearing the end of its two-year budget cycle, and the Conservancy wishes to extend funding to support the senior director position for one more year and therefore the Conservancy wishes to authorize an additional local assistance grant to SCMF for the Project; and

WHEREAS, it is in furtherance of the Conservancy's purposes as established in Public Resources Code section 33501; and

WHEREAS, the Project, which primarily funds personnel costs, does not constitute a "project" as defined by CEQA Guideline 15378 as it has no potential for physical impacts on the environment; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved in regular session of the Governing Board of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy that the Board finds and determines that the Project meets the objectives of the CRCA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board approves an additional award to SCMF (Grantee) in an amount not to exceed \$109,277.00 for the Project grant; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a condition of the grant is that the Grantee shall enter into an amendment to the CRCA Local Assistance Grant Agreement with the Conservancy, which shall contain provisions requiring the following:

1. That the Grantee will agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Conservancy and the State of California, its contractors, officers, directors, agents or employees against any and all claims, liability, demands, damages, debts, judgments, costs, or expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising out of or in any way connected to the Grantee's actions, omissions, or other conduct relating in any way to this agreement and the activities funded by the Planning Grant, including, but not limited to, any such losses, damages, or expenses arising out of (a) loss of or damage to property, and (b) injury to or death of persons;
2. That the Grantee must complete the work contemplated by the Planning Grant no later than December 31, 2025, unless the Conservancy agrees in writing to an extension;
3. That should the Grantee violate the Grant Agreement in any material way, and fail to cure such violation upon written notice from the Conservancy as provided in the

Grant Agreement, the Grantee shall reimburse the Conservancy for the full amount of the Grant within thirty (30) days of a written demand from the Conservancy to do so;

4. That the Grantee shall maintain accounting records of how the grant sum was spent for a period of three years and shall make such records available for inspection by the Conservancy or the Department of Finance upon request by either agency; and
5. Grantee will cause work on the Project to be commenced within a reasonable time after receipt of notification from the Conservancy that funds have been approved and that the project will be completed with reasonable diligence. If applicant cannot submit its first invoice for reimbursement to the Conservancy by one year from the date of the agreement, applicant will submit a statement of project progress appropriate to the project that provides real assurances that the project will be completed prior to the completion date. All final invoices for payment shall be submitted to the Conservancy within ninety (90) days of the completion date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board hereby authorizes its Executive Director, or in his absence the Board Chair, to execute any and all documents necessary to effect the amendment to the grant.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy Governing Board, held on this 11th day of March 2024, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTENTIONS:

ABSENT:

Rita Lamb, Chair
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

**RESOLUTION 2024-03 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE
COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
ADOPTED IN REGULAR SESSION
MARCH 11, 2024**

**APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE
CLIMATE RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM LOCAL ASSISTANCE
GRANT TO THE COUNCIL OF MEXICAN FEDERATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA
IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$140,000.00
FOR ITS DEFENSORES DE TIERRAS PÚBLICAS PROJECT**

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33501 created the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy for the purpose, among other things, of acquiring and holding, in perpetual open space, mountainous lands surrounding the Coachella Valley and natural community conservation lands, and to provide for the protection of natural and cultural resources and the public's enjoyment thereof; and

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33601(e) provides that the Conservancy may "in order to further the conservancy's purposes as set forth in Section 33501, award grants to cities, counties, resource conservation districts, or nonprofit organizations...."; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy received allocations of general funds in the FY 22-23 State Budget to support its Climate Resilience & Community Access Grant Program (CRCA); and

WHEREAS, the Council of Mexican Federations in North America (COFEM) is a nonprofit organization qualified as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, and is therefore eligible to receive funding from the Conservancy; and

WHEREAS, in March 2022, COFEM received a CRCA grant in the amount of \$140,000 to expand the staff capacity of its *Defensores de Tierras Públicas* (Public Lands Defenders) program which works in collaboration with conservation organizations to protect desert landscapes and create opportunities for people of economically disadvantaged communities (the Project); and

WHEREAS, using the grant, COFEM retained additional staff for its educational *Nuestro Desierto* program, which offers bilingual public workshops to youth and adults, along with field and camping trips, with a focus on serving the economically disadvantaged community in the eastern Coachella Valley; and

WHEREAS, the program has been very well received and has succeeded in imparting basic conservation knowledge along with public speaking and leadership skills and therefore is meeting the objectives of the CRCA and the Conservancy's mission by expanding access to recreational and educational programs that showcase the wildlife and cultural resources of the Coachella Valley, serving economically disadvantaged and underserved communities near conservation lands, and promoting sustainability and climate change adaptability within the desert and surrounding mountain areas, and is therefore an eligible use of CRCA funds; and

WHEREAS, the Project is nearing the end of its two-year budget cycle, and the Conservancy wishes to extend funding to allow it to continue another full year and therefore the Conservancy wishes to authorize an additional local assistance grant to SCMF for the Project; and

WHEREAS, it is in furtherance of the Conservancy's purposes as established in Public Resources Code section 33501; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy wishes to authorize a local assistance grant to COFEM for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the Project consists of programming, staff work, and outreach activities and therefore does not constitute a "project" as defined by CEQA Guideline 15378 as it has no potential for physical impacts on the environment; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved in regular session of the Governing Board of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy that the Board finds and determines that the Project meets the objectives of the CRCA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board approves a local assistance grant to the Council of Mexican Federations in North America (Grantee) in an amount not to exceed \$140,000 for the Project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a condition of the grant is that the Grantee shall enter into a CRCA Local Assistance Grant Agreement with the Conservancy, which shall contain provisions requiring the following:

1. That the Grantee will agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Conservancy and the State of California, its contractors, officers, directors, agents or employees against any and all claims, liability, demands, damages, debts, judgments, costs, or expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising out of or in any way connected to the Grantee's actions, omissions, or other conduct

relating in any way to this agreement and the activities funded by the Planning Grant, including, but not limited to, any such losses, damages, or expenses arising out of (a) loss of or damage to property, and (b) injury to or death of persons;

2. That the Grantee must complete the work contemplated by the Planning Grant no later than December 31, 2025, unless the Conservancy agrees in writing to an extension.
3. That should the Grantee violate the Grant Agreement in any material way, and fail to cure such violation upon written notice from the Conservancy as provided in the Grant Agreement, the Grantee shall reimburse the Conservancy for the full amount of the Grant within thirty (30) days of a written demand from the Conservancy to do so;
4. That the Grantee shall maintain accounting records of how the grant sum was spent for a period of three years and shall make such records available for inspection by the Conservancy or the Department of Finance upon request by either agency; and
5. Grantee will cause work on the Project to be commenced within a reasonable time after receipt of notification from the Conservancy that funds have been approved and that the project will be completed with reasonable diligence. If applicant cannot submit its first invoice for reimbursement to the Conservancy by one year from the date of the agreement, applicant will submit a statement of project progress appropriate to the project that provides real assurances that the project will be completed prior to the completion date. All final invoices for payment shall be submitted to the Conservancy within ninety (90) days of the completion date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board hereby authorizes its Executive Director, or in his absence the Board Chair, to execute any and all documents necessary to effect the amendment to the grant.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy Governing Board, held on this 11th day of March 2024, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTENTIONS:

ABSENT:

Rita Lamb, Chair
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

**RESOLUTION 2024-04 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE
COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
ADOPTED IN REGULAR SESSION
MARCH 11, 2024**

**APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE
CLIMATE RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM LOCAL ASSISTANCE
GRANT TO THE FRIENDS OF THE DESERT MOUNTAINS
IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$118,700.00
FOR ITS EASTERN COACHELLA VALLEY PROGRAMS
CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT**

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33501 created the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy for the purpose, among other things, of acquiring and holding, in perpetual open space, mountainous lands surrounding the Coachella Valley and natural community conservation lands, and to provide for the protection of natural and cultural resources and the public's enjoyment thereof; and

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33601(e) provides that the Conservancy may "in order to further the conservancy's purposes as set forth in Section 33501, award grants to cities, counties, resource conservation districts, or nonprofit organizations...."; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy received an allocation of general funds in the FY 22-23 State Budget to support its Climate Resilience & Community Access Grant Program (CRCA); and

WHEREAS, Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM) is a nonprofit organization qualified as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, and is therefore eligible to receive funding from the Conservancy; and

WHEREAS, in March 2022, FODM received a CRCA grant in the amount of \$287,000.00 for its Eastern Coachella Valley Programs Capacity Building Project (the Project); and

WHEREAS, the grant enabled FODM to retain three additional staff members to expand youth and family-oriented environmental education programs in the eastern Coachella Valley (ECV); and

WHEREAS, the Project is meeting the objectives of the CRCA and the Conservancy's mission by expanding access to recreational and educational programs that showcase the wildlife, scenic and cultural resources of the Coachella Valley to underserved and

economically disadvantaged communities in the ECV and is therefore an eligible use of CRCA funds; and

WHEREAS, the Project is nearing the end of its two-year budget cycle, and the Conservancy wishes to extend funding to support the three positions for another year and therefore the Conservancy wishes to authorize an additional local assistance grant to FODM for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the Project is in furtherance of the Conservancy's purposes as established in Public Resources Code section 33501; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy wishes to authorize a local assistance grant to FODM for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the Project consists of consists of staffing, training and outreach, and therefore does not constitute a "project" as defined by CEQA Guideline 15378 as it has no potential for physical impacts on the environment; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved in regular session of the Governing Board of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy that the Board finds and determines that the Project meets the objectives of the CRCA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board approves a local assistance grant to FODM (Grantee) in an amount not to exceed \$118,700.00 for the Project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a condition of the grant is that the Grantee shall enter into a CRCA Local Assistance Grant Agreement with the Conservancy, which shall contain provisions requiring the following:

1. That the Grantee will agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Conservancy and the State of California, its contractors, officers, directors, agents or employees against any and all claims, liability, demands, damages, debts, judgments, costs, or expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising out of or in any way connected to the Grantee's actions, omissions, or other conduct relating in any way to this agreement and the activities funded by the Planning Grant, including, but not limited to, any such losses, damages, or expenses arising out of (a) loss of or damage to property, and (b) injury to or death of persons;
2. That the Grantee must complete the work contemplated by the Planning Grant no later than December 31, 2025, unless the Conservancy agrees in writing to an extension;

3. That should the Grantee violate the Grant Agreement in any material way, and fail to cure such violation upon written notice from the Conservancy as provided in the Grant Agreement, the Grantee shall reimburse the Conservancy for the full amount of the Grant within thirty (30) days of a written demand from the Conservancy to do so;
4. That the Grantee shall maintain accounting records of how the grant sum was spent for a period of three years and shall make such records available for inspection by the Conservancy or the Department of Finance upon request by either agency; and
5. Grantee will cause work on the Project to be commenced within a reasonable time after receipt of notification from the Conservancy that funds have been approved and that the project will be completed with reasonable diligence. If applicant cannot submit its first invoice for reimbursement to the Conservancy by one year from the date of the agreement, applicant will submit a statement of project progress appropriate to the project that provides real assurances that the project will be completed prior to the completion date. All final invoices for payment shall be submitted to the Conservancy within ninety (90) days of the completion date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board hereby authorizes its Executive Director, or in his absence the Board Chair, to execute any and all documents necessary to effect the amendment to the grant.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy Governing Board, held on this 11th day of March 2024, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTENTIONS:

ABSENT:

Rita Lamb, Chair
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

**RESOLUTION 2024-05 OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE
COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
ADOPTED IN REGULAR SESSION
MARCH 11, 2024**

**APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE
CLIMATE RESILIENCE & COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM LOCAL ASSISTANCE
GRANT TO THE COACHELLA VALLEY DESERT AND MOUNTAINS RECREATION
AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$90,000.00
FOR ITS LAND MANAGEMENT CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT**

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33501 created the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy for the purpose, among other things, of acquiring and holding, in perpetual open space, mountainous lands surrounding the Coachella Valley and natural community conservation lands, and to provide for the protection of natural and cultural resources and the public's enjoyment thereof; and

WHEREAS, Public Resources Code Section 33601(e) provides that the Conservancy may award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations in order to further the Conservancy's purposes as set forth in Section 33501, and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy received an allocation of general funds in the FY 22-23 State Budget to support its Climate Resilience and Community Access Grant Program (CRCA); and

WHEREAS, the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (the Authority) is a joint powers agency existing pursuant to Government Code section 6500 et seq., and is therefore eligible to receive funding from the Conservancy; and

WHEREAS, IN July 2022, the Authority received a local assistance grant from the Climate Resilience and Community Access Grant Program in the amount of \$125,000 to fund its Land Management Capacity Building Project (the Project); and

WHEREAS, the Project is significantly improving local capacity to manage natural resources and existing conservation lands, along with strengthening ties between among the public agencies and nonprofits that make up the conservation and recreation communities in the Coachella Valley, which in turn is facilitating greater access to the outdoors for all parts of the Valley, and is therefore an eligible use of CRCA funds; and

WHEREAS, the Project has recently retained a full-time coordinator in place of a part-time coordinator, which will allow it to become more effective and established so that it eventually can be self-sustaining, and the Conservancy wished to provide additional funding which, in combination with the remaining balance of the original grant, will ensure that the Project can continue for two years; and

WHEREAS, the Project is in furtherance of the Conservancy's purposes as established in Public Resources Code section 33501; and

WHEREAS, the Conservancy wishes to authorize a local assistance grant to the Authority for the Project; and

WHEREAS, the Project consists of personnel costs and therefore, does not constitute a "project" as defined by CEQA Guideline 15378 as it has no potential for physical impacts on the environment; and

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved in regular session of the Governing Board of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy that the Board finds and determines that the Project meets the objectives of the CRCA; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board approves an amendment to the local assistance grant to the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (Grantee) in an amount not to exceed \$ 90,000 for the Project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a condition of the grant is that the Grantee shall enter into a CRCA Local Assistance Grant Agreement with the Conservancy, which shall contain provisions requiring the following:

1. That the Grantee will agree to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the Conservancy and the State of California, its contractors, officers, directors, agents or employees against any and all claims, liability, demands, damages, debts, judgments, costs, or expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees, arising out of or in any way connected to the Grantee's actions, omissions, or other conduct relating in any way to this agreement and the activities funded by the Planning Grant, including, but not limited to, any such losses, damages, or expenses arising out of (a) loss of or damage to property, and (b) injury to or death of persons;
2. That the Grantee must complete the work contemplated by the Planning Grant no later than June 30, 2026, unless the Conservancy agrees in writing to an extension;

3. That should the Grantee violate the Grant Agreement in any material way, and fail to cure such violation upon written notice from the Conservancy as provided in the Grant Agreement, the Grantee shall reimburse the Conservancy for the full amount of the Grant within thirty (30) days of a written demand from the Conservancy to do so;
4. That the Grantee shall maintain accounting records of how the grant sum was spent for a period of three years and shall make such records available for inspection by the Conservancy or the Department of Finance upon request by either agency; and
5. Grantee will cause work on the Project to be commenced within a reasonable time after receipt of notification from the Conservancy that funds have been approved and that the project will be completed with reasonable diligence. If applicant cannot submit its first invoice for reimbursement to the Conservancy by one year from the date of the agreement, applicant will submit a statement of project progress appropriate to the project that provides real assurances that the project will be completed prior to the completion date. All final invoices for payment shall be submitted to the Conservancy within ninety (90) days of the completion date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board hereby authorizes its Executive Director, or in his absence the Board Chair, to execute any and all documents necessary to effect the amendment to the grant.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy Governing Board, held on this 11th day of March 2024, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTENTIONS:

ABSENT:

Rita Lamb, Chair
Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy

ATTACHMENT 4 – March 11, 2024

Agenda Item 5.1 Written Reports from Staff

ACQUISITION AND LAND MANAGEMENT UPDATES

CVCC/CVMC/FODM Management – The Conservancy continues to perform monitoring inspections on properties owned by the Conservancy, staff send reminders to grantees where local assistance grants have been provided in support of the CVMSHCP.

COACHELLA VALLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION (CVCC) ACQUISITION MANAGER PROGRAM - The Conservancy continues to contract with CVCC as Acquisition Manager. Current acquisition efforts include:

Long Canyon Conservation Area: In November, the CVCC board accepted a donation of a property consisting of 0.63+/- acres, escrow closed January 31.

Willow Hole Conservation Area: In November, the CVCC board accepted a donation of a property consisting of 5.0+/-acres, escrow closed January 18. In November, the CVCC board approved the acquisition of seven parcels consisting of 83.65+/-acres, escrow closed January 30.

Tax Default Properties: In October 2022, CVCC applied to purchase 48 tax defaulted parcels. In February 2023, CVCC received notice from the Riverside County regarding the tax sale, CVCC is awaiting purchase price quotes for parcels that it applied for and have not been redeemed. The acquisition process through the tax default program has proven to take anywhere from 3 to 5 years from the application submittal to recording of properties under the vesting of the applicant.

In October 2023, CVCC received a list of parcels eligible for acquisition under the Tax Default program. In December, CVCC applied to purchase 12 tax defaulted parcels. In February, CVCC received notice that one of the parcels has been redeemed and is no longer available for purchase. CVCC is awaiting purchase price quotes for the remaining 11 parcels that have not been redeemed.

In January, CVCC received another list of parcels eligible for acquisition under the Tax Default Program. In February, CVCC applied to purchase 12 tax defaulted parcels. CVCC is awaiting a response to the application from the Tax Sale Operations Unit.

Appraisals Completed and/or in Process:

1. Long Canyon Conservation Area – In March 2023, an appraisal was completed on 26 parcels, consisting of 354.82+/- acres, representing separate ownerships. Contingent offer letters were sent to property owners. One owner of two parcels (totaling 10.6+/- acres) accepted the offer and the CVCC board approved the acquisition in June. Appraisal expires April 2024.
2. Upper Mission Creek/Big Morongo Canyon Conservation Area – In August 2023, an appraisal was completed on 3 parcels, consisting of 24.12+/- acres, representing separate ownerships. 24.12+/- acres were acquired in December 2023. Since then, four separate owners in the area reached out with interest to sell for conservation, an addendum to the appraisal is being completed and is expected by end of March.
3. Willow Hole Conservation Area - In June 2023, an appraisal was completed on 49 parcels, consisting of 312.41+/- acres, representing separate ownerships. Contingent offer letters were sent to property owners, to date a total of 78.65+/- acres have been acquired. Appraisal expires July 2024.

PROPOSITION 1 GRANT PROGRAM - PROJECT STATUS

City of Indio - Infrastructure Grant – Jackson St. and Ave. 50 Flood Prevention Project: The City is preparing engineering plans, right of way acquisitions, and procurement of qualified contractors for the flood prevention project; this work is expected to be completed by end of April. Bid requests will be issued subsequently with contract award and construction to begin after September.

Southern California Mountains Foundation - Restoration Grant – Palm Canyon Watershed Restoration Project: The UCC is in their third year of restoration work in the Palm Canyon Watershed, to date the crew has completed a total of 12.81-acres of initial treatment and 23.26-acres of re-treatment. The goal is to complete 60 acres of initial treatment and 15 acres of re-treatment. Although the retreatment goal has been exceeded, the Grantee has requested a no-cost extension for two more years of restoration work to further their efforts on the initial treatment goal. The UCC will begin their next season with field work or “spike” days in September 2024.

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens - Infrastructure Grant – San Felipe Creek Desert Pupfish Pond Project: The site and plans for the new pond have been approved, construction activities of the pond initiated in October, excavation was completed mid-

February. Grading refugia banks are commencing by hand in March to ensure accuracy before construction continues. TLD is requesting a no-cost extension as there were delays to the plan approvals which then delayed construction. Staff is working with TLD on an Amendment to extend the grant for another six months.

The Wildlands Conservancy - Planning Grant - *Whitewater Preserve Flood Control Improvement Project*: TWC's consultants have revised project permits for the flood control improvement project in response to the Wildlife Agencies comments during the Joint Project Review process. Revised project permits were submitted in November with a 16-week review period. TWC is keeping the Conservancy informed as updates are received from the agencies on the permits which seem to be moving through the process, however, TWC is requesting a no-cost extension to allow for the permits to continue the process with the hope that permits will be approved by end of June 2024.

PROPOSITION 1 GRANT PROGRAM – COMPLETED PROJECTS

Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians - Infrastructure Grant – Section 33
Groundwater Monitoring Wells Project

Center for Natural Lands Management - Restoration Grant - Desert Pupfish Refuge
Habitat Restoration Project

Center for Natural Lands Management – Restoration Grant – Dos Palmas Controlled
Core Marsh Burn and Restoration Project

City of Coachella - Planning Grant - Citywide Stormwater Resource Plan Project

City of Palm Springs – Restoration Grant - Tahquitz Creek-Triangle Parcel Restoration

City of Palm Springs – Restoration Grant - San Jacinto Mountains Watershed
Restoration

Coachella Valley Public Cemetery District – Infrastructure Grant – Water
Management System Project

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission – Acquisition Grant - Snowcreek and
Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Watershed Acquisition

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission - Restoration Grant - Willow Hole
Canyon & Wash Restoration Project

Coachella Valley Conservation Commission - Restoration Grant - Wetlands Restoration, Tamarisk Control and Rail Habitat Enhancement at North Shore Ranch Project

Coachella Valley Resource Conservation District – Infrastructure Grant - Root Water Project

Coachella Valley Water District – Infrastructure Grant – Groundwater Monitoring Wells Project

Coachella Valley Water District – Infrastructure Grant – DHS and Mission Creek Subbasins Groundwater Monitoring Wells Project

Department of Fish & Wildlife – Infrastructure Grant - Dos Palmas Reserve Well Improvement

Desert Recreation District – Infrastructure Grant – Flood Control Project at North Shore Park

Desert Recreation District - Infrastructure Grant - Flood Control Project at Oasis Park

Friends of the Desert Mountains - Restoration Grant - Palm Canyon Restoration Project

Friends of the Desert Mountains – Restoration Grant – Santa Rosa Wilderness Restoration Project

Mission Springs Water District – Infrastructure Grant - Willow Hole Groundwater Monitoring Wells

Palm Springs Cemetery District – Restoration Grant - Invasive Species Removal Project

Santa Rosa Band of Cahuilla Indians – Restoration Grant – Santa Rosa Horse Creek Dam and Wetlands Restoration Project

Southern California Mountains Foundation - Restoration Grant - Dos Palmas Restoration Project

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens - Restoration Grant - Desert Pupfish Refugia and Native Habitat Restoration Project

The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens - Restoration Grant - Dos Palmas-Middle Salt Creek Restoration Project

Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians – Planning and Restoration Grant - Phase 1-Salton Sea Wetlands Restoration

Torres Martínez Desert Cahuilla Indians – Planning and Restoration Grant - Phase 2-Salton Sea Wetlands Restoration

The Wildlands Conservancy – Planning Grant - Planning & Feasibility for Whitewater Preserve Flood Control

University of California/Riverside – Planning Grant - Salton Sea Crust and Water Quality Remediation Project

PROPOSITION 68 GRANT PROGRAM – PROJECT STATUS

City of Coachella – Planning Grant – *Environmental Analysis for its Grapefruit Boulevard Urban Greening Project*: Project to prepare engineering, design and environmental documentation for future Urban Greening and Active Transportation along Grapefruit Boulevard between Avenue 48 and 54. The project currently is coordinating with utility purveyors and collecting record drawings. The grantee has developed and submitted the first draft 50% Design Plans and has begun working on the limited hydrology study and BMP recommendation. Environmental Tech Studies are also ongoing.

City of Indio – Infrastructure Grant – *Parking Lot Improvements at the Indio Hills Badlands Trail*: The project to increase and enhance the visitor experience at the Indio Hills Badlands trailhead by improving trail infrastructure, parking facility, and wayfinding systems. MSA Consulting Inc. has successfully completed the design. The revised conceptual designs have been submitted, and the grantee is currently in the process of obtaining a proposal for the construction of the project.

Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority – Planning Grant – *Trails Environmental Assessment*: Project to coordinate the environmental and other consultant services related to completing environmental review necessary for six new or extended trails in the Coachella Valley. Aspen Environmental has completed separate CEQA and NEPA documents – one for a project containing two trails that cross federal land, the another for a project consisting of four trails that do not lie on federal lands. The CEQA document is a draft Mitigated Negative Declaration that will be released later this month for public review and be brought to the Conservancy board for consideration in May. The NEPA document is awaiting BLM review.

Living Desert Zoo and Gardens – Infrastructure Grant – *Greening the Desert Project:*

The project will construct improvements at The Living Desert facility and interpretative signage at libraries, community centers, city halls and comparable public places in economically disadvantaged areas of the East Valley. The grantee completed the design and has received all the final signs and mounting posts. The grantee has secured landowner permissions for each of the sites and has retained a contractor for installation, which will start in the next week or two, depending on their schedule.

Living Desert Zoo and Gardens - Infrastructure Grant - *Signs of Nature Project -*

Connecting DHS to Nearby Nature: The project will design, fabricate, and install double-sided bilingual interpretative signage at 18 libraries, community centers and other public locations in and around Desert Hot Springs. The grantee completed the design and has received all the final signs and mounting posts. The grantee has secured landowner permissions for each of the sites and has retained a contractor for installation, which will happen after the East Valley Signs of Nature project is completed, likely in the next month.

Living Desert Zoo and Gardens – Infrastructure Grant - *East Valley Pollinator*

Pathway Demonstration Project: The project will create between 10 and 20 pollinator gardens using native plants on a total of less than five acres on school campuses in Coachella, Thermal, and Mecca. The grantee co-developed the school curriculums with local teachers from a series of schools who are passionate about hosting some of these gardens. The grantee has cultivated or obtained plants for the gardens, created the first garden at Cesar Chavez Elementary School in Coachella in early February and will continue with the other schools in the next two months.

Living Desert Zoo and Gardens – Infrastructure Grant – *Conservation Greenhouse*

Project: The project to construct a conservation-dedicated greenhouse to germinate and propagate native plants for use in projects will improve climate resilience and community access to nature across the Coachella Valley. Permit applications for the emergency water line for the fire hydrant and the construction have been approved by the City of Indian Wells. Excavation of the line for the hydrant will begin in early March. The greenhouse is a duplicate of another that the grantee previously installed. The grantee expects total construction time of less than six months.

Riverside County Parks and Open Space District – Planning Grant – *Coachella*

Valley Regional Park Feasibility Study: The project consists of a consultant preparing a feasibility study to analyze the market for a regional park at four potential sites in the Coachella Valley that would serve economically disadvantaged communities. Webb consulting is working on a report of prior efforts, market research guide, the stakeholder database, micro website and finalizing their outreach plan.

PROPOSITION 68 GRANT PROGRAM – COMPLETED PROJECTS

Center for Natural Lands Management – Infrastructure Grant – C.V. Preserve Fencing Grant.

Center for Lands Management – Infrastructure Grant – C.V. Preserve. *Restroom Replacement Project.*

Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority – Infrastructure Grant - Existing *Trails and Interpretative Signage Project.*

Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority – Planning, Design, and Infrastructure Grants – Shumway Restroom and Pavilion Improvements.

Friends of the Desert Mountains – Planning Grant – National Monument Visitor Center Interpretive Improvements.

Friends of the Desert Mountains – Design Grant – Signage/Interpretive Improvements Project - National Monument Visitor Center.

Friends of the Desert Mountains – Planning Grant – C.V. Trails Facilities and Signage Inventory and Assessment Grant.

Kounkuey Design Initiative – Planning Grant – SDAC - Restoration of the Salton Sea-State Recreation Area.

Oswit Land Trust – Planning Grant – *Biological Resources Assessment and Environmental Review for the Prescott Preserve.*

Shumway Ranch.Org – Planning Grants – Master Plan and Shumway Ranch Historic Structure Preservation Plan.

Southern California Mountains Foundation – Planning Grant – Concept Design and Strategic Plan for C.V. Conservation Corps Center Project.

CVMC FUND STATUS

After the awards on the agenda above, the Conservancy's available funding balances will be as follows:

Proposition 1	\$3,029,358.45
Proposition 68	\$4,014,004.42
Proposition 84	\$5,840,790.86
CRCA FY22/23	\$ 0
Total Remaining Funds	\$ 12,884,153.73

Coachella Valley Federal Endangered Species Act – Section 6 Grant Balances:

In 2022 the Coachella Valley received a commitment of \$456,420 to partially fund a proposed acquisition adjacent to the Indio Hills Palms Conservation Area which is being spearheaded by the Oswit Land Trust. The project does not yet have an approved appraisal, so it is uncertain whether it will proceed. No applications for Coachella Valley projects are pending or in process due to a lack of sellers willing to participate in the program, which can take a year or more to complete.