

COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
(CVMC)
REGULAR MEETING
73-510 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 115
(Administrative Conference Room)
Palm Desert, CA 92260

APPROVED MINUTES

May 12, 2025 - 3:00 p.m.

Teleconference 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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Enrique Arroyo, California State Parks
Denise Delgado, City of Coachella
Steve Downs, City of Rancho Mirage
Gary Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs
Benjamin Guitron, City of Indio
Bjana Jefferson, California Department of Fish and Wildlife
(Remote)
Rita Lamb, City of Cathedral City (*Vice-Chair*)
Deborah McGarrey, City of La Quinta (*Chair*)
Margaret Park, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Brian Penna, City of Indian Wells
V. Manuel Perez, Riverside County
Andrea Scharffer, CA Natural Resources Agency (CNRA)
(Remote)
Joan Taylor, Governor's Appointee
Christopher Tracy, University of California, Riverside (UCR)
Ellen Lloyd Trover, Senate Rules Committee Appointee
Evan Trubee, City of Palm Desert
John Walsh, Wildlife Conservation Board

MEMBERS ABSENT: Stephen Benson, Department of Finance
Grace Garner, City of Palm Springs

Beatriz Gonzalez, State Assembly Appointee

CVMC STAFF PRESENT: Elizabeth King, Executive Director
Diana Rosas, Associate Director
Maximiliano Ochoa, Project Coordinator
Abriana Elms, Administrative Coordinator

OTHERS PRESENT: Briana Greenwood, City of Coachella
Tammy Martin, Friends of the Desert Mountains
Jennifer Prado, Southern California Mountains Foundation

1.0 Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Deborah McGarrey declared a quorum with 16 voting members present and called the meeting to order at 3:09 p.m. Subsequently, one additional Board Member (Delgado) arrived after the roll call bringing the attendance to 17 voting members.

2.0 Approval of February 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded (Downs/Gardner) to approve the February 10, 2025, minutes; the motion passed with one abstention (Taylor).

3.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

No public comments on items not on the agenda.

4.0 Closed Session

No closed session was scheduled for this meeting.

5.0 Action/Informational Items- Public Hearing

Action Item 5.1 Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for the Conservancy's Proposition 1 Grant Program.

Chair McGarrey introduced Maximiliano Ochoa, Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy (CVMC) Project Coordinator, who gave a brief overview of the NOFA for the Conservancy's Proposition 1 Grant Program.

Board Member Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs, asked if this action item was to approve the project. Executive Director Elizabeth King clarified that each action item would be voted on one-by-one and that the current item was only to approve to move forward with Category 1 and Category 2 projects. Board Member Delgado, City of Coachella, commented that more technical assistance on grant proposals to applicants with less resources and staff should be a priority to ensure equity amongst all applicants. Chair McGarrey also clarified

that City of Coachella would need to abstain from approval of Action Item 5.1 Category 1 and Category 2 projects.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/Tracy) to categorize projects as proposed and to postpone consideration of Category 2 projects until CEQA compliance is fully determined. The motion passed with one abstention (Delgado).

Action Item 5.2 Adoption of Resolution 2025-01 consenting to and approving Proposition 1 Local Assistance Grant to the City of Coachella for its Rancho Las Flores Stormwater Project.

Project Coordinator Ochoa summarized item 5.2 as presented in the staff report.

Board Member Trubee, City of Palm Desert, asked if the project would serve a dual-purpose as a basin and sports field. Briana Greenwood, City of Coachella, confirmed that when the basin is not capturing stormwater it will be used as a sports field, serving the dual-purpose.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/Lamb) approving a Proposition 1 Local Assistance Grant to the City of Coachella in an amount not to exceed \$400,000 for its Rancho Las Flores Park Stormwater Infrastructure Project. The motion passed with one abstention (Delgado).

Action Item 5.3 Adoption of Resolution 2025-02 consenting to and approving a Proposition 1 Local Assistance Grant to the Southern California Mountains Foundation for its Palm Canyon Watershed Restoration Project.

Project Coordinator Ochoa summarized item 5.3 as presented in the staff report.

Board Member Trubee asked about the success rate of Tamarisk removal. Jennifer Prado, Southern California Mountains Foundation (SCMF), responded that an exact number cannot be given due to various factors. However, in past personal experience it seems to be about 80 percent success rate. Board Member Tracy, University of California Riverside (UCR), also commented that one of the challenges is the seed bank, meaning, even if removal is successful, seed banks can cause re-growth.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Taylor/Downs) approving a Proposition 1 Local Assistance Grant to the Southern California Mountains Foundation in an amount not to

exceed \$213,707 for its Palm Canyon Watershed Restoration Project. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 5.4 Request for Approval of the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget.

Executive Director King summarized item 5.4 as presented in the staff report.

Board Member Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs, asked if the Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC) Ranger Program is part of the CVDMRCA budget. Executive Director King clarified that the Ranger Program is being created to patrol conservation lands and has been funded for three years with a grant from CVMC to CVCC. Currently CVDMRCA or Desert Recreation District (DRD) are considering housing the Ranger Program under their respective organizations; when the decision is made the CVMC board will be notified. Board Member Guitron, City of Indio, asked if the Ranger Program being housed means managed, trained and supervised. Executive Director King responded that the attorneys are looking to see which entity would have the authority to enforce a new ordinance on these lands. Board Member Guitron responded that this is a policy of enforcement, and asked if there will also be an enforcement policy and oversight training to the Program. Executive Director King confirmed and stated that the attorneys are exploring the legal authorities for enforcement. It was also mentioned that the Program is modeled around the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's Ranger Program. Board Member Guitron mentioned it might be worth having a study session to discuss the model and entities involved to avoid future issues. Board Member Trover, CA Senate Appointee, expressed her excitement in moving forward.

Board Member Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs, asked about the CVMC/CVDMRCA board position designation. Chair McGarrey suggested that it be tabled for the next meeting until a policy has been drafted on the process for approving the board position.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/Downs) approving the attached Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 5.5 Adoption of Resolution 2025-03 consenting to and approving Diana Rosas as Acting Executive Director from August – October 2025.

Executive Director King summarized item 5.5 as presented in the staff report.

Associate Director Diana Rosas expressed her acceptance and willingness to serve as temporary Acting Director during King's Maternity Leave. Associate Director Rosas also

added that it will be a team effort. Chair McGarrey expressed her support. Board Member Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs, also echoed Chair McGarrey's comment expressing his strong support.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/Delgado) approving Diana Rosas as the Acting Executive Director of CVMC from approximately August- October 2025 or as long as the Maternity Leave persists, not to exceed four months.

Informational Item 5.6 Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy 2024 Annual Report Presentation.

Project Coordinator Ochoa summarized Information Item 5.6 as presented in the staff report.

Board Member Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs, expressed his excitement with the Annual Report. It was also noted that the recent community outreach has given the Conservancy much needed visibility.

Informational Item 5.7 Recognition of Tammy Martin for Receiving the Trails Champion Award from California State Parks.

Executive Director King recognized Tammy Martin for receiving the Trails Champion Award from California State Parks.

Tammy Martin, Friends of the Desert Mountains (FODM), expressed her gratitude and appreciation to CVMC and DRD. Martin, FODM, also noted to City officials the upcoming Public Lands Day and FODM efforts to assist the Cities with cleanup of their public lands. City officials are encouraged to reach out to FODM directly for scheduling any cleanups. Executive Director King asked if there is a date for Public Lands Day. Martin, FODM, commented that Public Lands Day falls in September but due to the heat FODM is planning to complete cleanups later in the Fall. Chair McGarrey also congratulated Tammy Martin and FODM for all the work that they do.

6.0 Reports

6.1 Written reports from staff.

Associate Director Rosas gave a brief update on acquisitions and land management updates.

Vice Chair Lamb, City of Cathedral City, asked for clarification regarding the Tax Default properties on hold due to potential legal risks. Associate Director Rosas commented that

the U.S Supreme Court decision in Tyler v. Hennepin County, Minnesota, et al has created potential legal risks. Due to the legal risks, it has been decided by Riverside County Treasurer-Tax Collector to postpone the planned Agreement of Sales. For now, all sales are on hold until further notice which is not expected until the 2026, according to the Riverside County Tax Sale Operations Unit.

6.2 Executive Director Report.

Executive Director King reported on the following:

King shared her support of Kevin Kalman, Desert Recreation District, and his retirement announcement, and thanked him for his 27 years of service. Regarding grant management, staff continue to manage 27 active grants, an investment of over \$16 million in the Valley. Proposition 4's guidelines will be out for public comment and Tribal Consultation soon. Regarding acquisitions, King discussed the 106,000 acres of land conserved and co-managed. CVMC is supportive of establishing a ranger program and ordinance to help with the lands management. She shared wildlife camera photos of a bobcat and burrowing owl on CVMC land. Regarding local outreach, CVMC has publicly supported responsible recreation practices to protect Bighorn Sheep. CVMC conducted youth outreach by meeting with the UCC on upcoming projects for the corps at FODM's Wildflower Festival. On March 7th, CVMC presented to 40 students at the Palm Desert High School Ecology Club. CVMC also engaged with the Desert Hot Springs Rotary Club and Desert Hot Springs High School, and conducted a site visit with Desert Compost at Indio High School. CVMC staff will be moving offices on July 1, 2025.

Board Member Guitron, City of Indio, suggested to add some of the wildlife photos to the CVMC website. Board Member Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs, asked if there was a budget update. Executive Director King responded that per the Department of Finance, a public update on state budget-related issues will be available after the Governor releases the May revision later in the week, and the public update will be shared with the Board via email.

6.3 Board Member Comments and Reports.

Board Member V. Manuel Perez, County of Riverside, District 4, spoke on the abandoned golf course in Desert Hot Springs that the Oswit Land Trust is trying to acquire. He expressed the County's support of the acquisition project and wanted to bring the attention to the Board. Board Member Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs, also spoke on the project and acknowledged the City of Desert Hot Springs' support moving forward. Board Member Perez also mentioned the proposal of renaming the Bump and Grind Trail to the Brian Nestande Bump and Grind Trail. Board Member Delgado thanked the Board for their

consideration and approval of the City of Coachella's grants for the Rancho Las Flores and Bagdouma Parks. She assured the Board that the grant funds will be put to good use. Martin, FODM, also mentioned that the dedication bench in memory of former CVMC/FODM Board Member and former City of Palm Desert Council Member Buford Crites is ready to be installed at a specified trailhead.

It was also noted that all future CVMC board meetings would be held at the City of Palm Desert in the Administrative Conference Room.

7.0 Adjourn to the August 11, 2025, meeting.

Chair Lamb adjourned the meeting without objection at 4:45 p.m.