

COACHELLA VALLEY MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY
(CVMC)
REGULAR MEETING

73-510 Fred Waring Drive
Administrative Conference Room
Palm Desert, California 92260

APPROVED MINUTES

November 17, 2025 - 3:00 p.m.

Teleconference locations:

State of California, Resources Agency
715 P St.
2nd floor (Conference Room 02-310)
Sacramento, CA 95814

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
39400 Clinton Keith Rd.
Murrieta, CA 92562

MEMBERS PRESENT: Enrique Arroyo, California State Parks
Stephen Benson, Department of Finance (Remote)
Denise Delgado, City of Coachella
Steve Downs, City of Rancho Mirage
Madeline Drake, CA Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) (Remote)
Gary Gardner, City of Desert Hot Springs
Grace Garner, City of Palm Springs
Beatriz Gonzalez, State Assembly Appointee
Benjamin Guitron, City of Indio
Richard Kim, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Remote)
Deborah McGarrey, City of La Quinta (*Chair*)
Jennifer Norris, Wildlife Conservation Board (Remote)
Brian Penna, City of Indian Wells
Savanna Saubel, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Patricia Cooper, Riverside County
Rita Lamb, City of Cathedral City (*Vice Chair*)

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Leonard Allen, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens
Danelle Baronia, UC Riverside
Shane Bogner, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens
Dr. James Danoff Burg, The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens
Tammy Martin, Friends of the Desert Mountains
Elizabeth Paige, Native American Lands Conservancy
Ray Schneider, Oswit Land Trust
Lynn Sweet, UC Riverside

1.0 Call to Order & Introductions

Chair Deborah McGarrey declared a quorum with 15 voting members present and called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Subsequently, three additional Board Member (Taylor; Delgado; Guitron) arrived after the roll call bringing the attendance to 18 voting members.

2.0 Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda

No public comments.

3.0 Closed Session

No closed session was scheduled for this meeting.

4.0 Action/Informational Items- Public Hearing

Action Item 4.1 Approval of May 12, 2025, Meeting Minutes.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/Penna) to approve the May 12, 2025, minutes; the motion passed with four abstentions (Drake; Garner; Kim; Norris).

Action Item 4.2 Approval of 2026 Governing Board Meeting Schedule and Location.

Chair McGarrey gave a brief overview of the proposed schedule and meeting location. The proposed schedule dates proposed were February 9, 2026; May 11, 2026; August 10, 2026, and November 16, 2026. The proposed location was Palm Desert Council Chamber, 73-510 Fred Waring Drive, Palm Desert, CA 92260.

There were no questions or discussions from the board.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Gardner/Penna) to approve the proposed 2026 meeting schedule and location. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 4.3 Elections of Conservancy Board Officers for Calendar Year 2026 and Appointing a Representative to the Coachella Valley Desert and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Governing Board.

There were no questions or discussions from the board.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Downs/Taylor) to elect Deborah McGarrey as CMVC Chair, to elect Rita Lamb as CVMC Vice Chair, and to elect Deborah McGarrey as the new representative on the CVDMRCA governing board. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 4.4 Adoption of Resolution 2025-04 Consenting to and Approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance Grant to Oswit Land Trust for its Happy Valley Restoration and Preservation Project.

Chair McGarrey introduced Diana Rosas, CVMC Associate Director, who summarized Item 4.4 as presented in the staff report. Ray Schneider with Oswit Land Trust (OLT) was also in attendance and available for questions.

Board Member Chris Tracy with UC Riverside (UCR) asked if Dillon Road is the only access point to the property. Schneider from OLT noted that Dillon Road is one of the main access points but there are additional access points throughout the property. Board Members Evan Trubee and Brian Penna asked what will protect the easement from any encroachment. Schneider commented that before the property was acquired there were preexisting boulder barriers, however on the Dillon roadside there are still multiple points of entry that people are accessing by getting around the gate. Placing the boulders on the Dillon side would reinforce the area to prevent the encroachment. Board Member Penna asked if there was a gate on Dillon Road. Schneider responded that there are preexisting gates and fences that remain locked, and that OLT is also working with Metropolitan Water District (MWD) to coordinate any issues that may arise.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Taylor/Penna) adopting Resolution 2025-04 approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance Grant to Oswit Land Trust in an amount not to exceed \$71,801 for its Happy Valley Restoration and Prevention Project, and Delegation of Authority to CVMC Executive Director to finalize and file the CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the CEQA State Clearinghouse and County of Riverside. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 4.5 Adoption of Resolution 2025-05 consenting to and approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance Grant to the Living Desert Zoo and

Gardens for its Central Coachella Valley Pollinator Pathway Project.

Associate Director Rosas summarized Item 4.5 as presented in the staff report. Dr. James Danoff Burg with the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens (TLD), was also in attendance and available for questions.

Dr. James Danoff Burg from TLD thanked the board for considering their proposal. Danoff Burg added that TLD's goal is to create a single pollinator pathway that would span the entire valley. The project not only benefits the native species and pollinators but also migratory species such as birds, butterflies, and dragonflies that move through the Coachella Valley. He noted the deep partnerships that TLD has fostered through collaborations so far in the East Valley cities and in Desert Hot Springs. TLD will continue the same process in the central valley areas.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Penna/Gardner) adopting Resolution 2025-05 approving a Proposition 68 Local Assistance Grant to the Living Desert Zoo and Gardens in an amount not to exceed \$526,997 for its Central Coachella Valley Pollinator Pathway Project, and Delegation of Authority to CVMC Executive Director to finalize and file the CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the CEQA State Clearinghouse and County of Riverside. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Item 4.6 Adoption of Resolution 2025-06 consenting to and approving the transfer of one parcel of land by the Friends of the Desert Mountains to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and establishing conditions for the termination and release of recorded restrictions, including the Notice of Unrecorded Grant Agreement (NOUGA)- The Board will vote regarding consent to and approval of transferring a 656-acre parcel of land, known as Riverside County Assessor Parcel Number 686-320-013, in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation Area, to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians for conservation in perpetuity, and on establishing conditions for the termination and release of recorded restrictions, including the Notice of Unrecorded Grant Agreement (NOUGA).

Board Member Savanna Saubel, representative of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, recused herself and left the room for the agenda item per Bagley Keene rules. Chair McGarrey opened the item. Executive Director Elizabeth King summarized item 4.6 as presented in the staff report.

Board Member Joan Taylor asked about the baseline assessment reference to the former property owner before it was conserved. Associate Director Rosas commented that according to title when the property was acquired Schlesinger was the owner at the time. Chair McGarrey and Board Members Taylor and Penna disclosed that they serve as unpaid Board Members on the Friends of the Desert Mountains Board and that per the Attorney General no conflict exists therefore recusal is not required.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Garner/Taylor) adopting Resolution 2025-06 consenting to and approving the land transfer of one parcel, APN 686-320-013, consisting of 656.86 acres in the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains Conservation Area, by the Friends of the Desert Mountains to the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, and establishing conditions for the termination and release of recorded restrictions, including the Notice of Unrecorded Grant Agreement (NOUGA). The motion passed with one abstention (Saubel).

Action Item 4.7 Adoption of Resolution 2025-07 Consenting to and Approving Proposition 4 Grant Program Guidelines.

Associate Director Rosas presented item 4.7 as presented in the staff report.

There were no questions or discussions from the board.

Vote: A motion was made and seconded (Trubee/Gardner) adopting Resolution 2025-07 consenting to and approving the Proposition 4 Grant Program Guidelines. The motion passed unanimously.

Informational Item 5.1 Presentation by Native American Land Conservancy

Chair McGarrey introduced Elizabeth Paige, Education and Stewardship Program Manager for the Native American Land Conservancy (NALC). Program Manager Paige gave a brief informational presentation on NALC and general updates.

Board Member Gary Gardner commented that Willow Hole is a very special place. He noted the efforts to keep the important habitat protected and clean, as it is often subject to illegal dumping. He also inquired if it was possible for schools to take field trips to the area. Paige responded that NALC has done small field trips to the area but would need to confirm with the various Willow Hole landowners and local tribes for a deeper discussion on the sensitive habitats before encouraging large field trips to the area.

Informational Item 5.2 CVMC Photo Contest- Protecting Public Lands

Project Coordinator Ochoa gave a brief overview of the Photo Contest and its guidelines.

Board Member Grace Garner asked if the photo contest submissions will also be accepted on Facebook. Project Coordinator Ochoa responded that submissions will also be accepted on Facebook. Board Member Penna asked how many followers there are on Instagram. Executive Director King responded that there are roughly 300 followers on Instagram. Board Member Benjamin Guitron also commented that if CVMC pushes out the photo contest flyers to all the Cities and local agencies they would be happy to publish them on their social media platforms. Chair McGarrey thanked Board Members Evan Trubee and Chris Tracey for their tour prize donations. Board Member Tracey added that UCR is offering a private tour of Deep Canyon which is not typically open to the public.

6.0 Reports

6.1 Written reports from staff.

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

There were no questions or discussions from the board.

6.2 Executive Director Report.

Executive Director King reported on the following:

- CVMC Budget Update- Executive Director King shared the Operational Budget Overview.
- CVMC Staff Community Outreach- Executive Director King shared some images of the Summer and Fall Outreach events that staff attended.

There were no questions or discussions from the board.

6.3 Board Member Comments and Reports.

Tammy Martin, Executive Director of Friends of the Desert Mountains, commented that due to weather conditions, the Buford Crites dedication was postponed and that she would notify Conservancy staff when a new date is set.

7.0 Adjourn to the February 9, 2026, meeting.

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