

**MINUTES
BOARD MEETING
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (WCA)
JANUARY 21, 2021**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Madam Chair Chico at approximately 1:31 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom.US.

2. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT

Ms. Herlinda Chico (for Supervisor Hahn)
Ms. Sandra Maravilla (for Supervisor Barger)
Mr. Dan Arrighi (Rivers & Mountains Conservancy)
Mr. Vincent Chang (for Supervisor Solis)
Mr. Julian Juarez (for Mark Pestrella)
Mr. Roberto Uranga (Rivers & Mountains Conservancy)

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Mark Stanley, Executive Officer
Dena Williams, Board Secretary
Debbie Enos, Deputy Executive Officer
Nicole Law, Fiscal Manager
Jeremy Munns, Project Manager
Johnathan Perisho, Project Manager
Jane Tsong, Project Manager
Joseph Gonzalez, RMC Project Manager
David Edsall, Jr., Deputy Attorney General

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Maria Soto stated, today I want to start by thanking the RMC Board as Mr. Stanley has informed us that RMC has listened to our community and are willing to change the name of the park to “River Park” although this was not one of the suggested names, in checking with our neighbors, they agreed that this was a good compromise. The community’s main goal was not to have any reference to the duck farm as part of the park’s name as it would be a constant reminder of what this community had to put up with for all of those years.

This brings me to my next point. The large mural includes big bright orange letters that depict just that “Duck Farm”. Once again, I remind you that the park entrance is the main access to our community and

that would be the first and the last thing that all of us see coming and going to work, to the supermarket, to San Angelo Park and literally anywhere many times a day, is exactly what our community wanted to avoid. We had the constant reminder of the stench all of those years and that is what is triggered each time we see the name. We ask you that the next step should be removing or modifying the mural not to include the name as was asked by our community in the first petition.

This includes a marker at the actual farm location with the history of the “Duck Farm” that includes what its purpose was, and also how it impacted this community we feel would be appropriate. It does both things, acknowledges its history and does not insult the community by having to be reminded daily each time we come in and out of our neighborhood. Please keep this in mind as you move forward to the next phase of this decision. Once again, thank you for listening and we look forward to continue working with you.

John Soto stated, to be clear, there has been two sets of data submitted. One set was the petition to rid our neighborhood of the duck farm name. The second was the ballot with four name options. The name ‘San Gabriel River Walk’ was the name most voted for. After a conversation with Mark Stanley, he suggested the name ‘River Park’ as a compromise. I asked some neighbors and they countered with ‘San Gabriel River Park’ but were willing to settle with ‘River Park. In either case, as long as the duck farm was not part of the name. I could not talk to many neighbors due to the pandemic, but I guarantee we have a good pulse of our neighborhood.

Talking with Mark, again, he suggested they may want to do more community outreach to find out the extent that duck farm name should be included in the park which may include leaving the duck farm mural on San Fidel Ave. I believe, after lengthy discussions, during the petition drive and ballot drive that the neighborhood does not want the duck farm name. Now the WCA/RMC want a redo or a recount. They can’t be serious. It’s been over two years and the people have spoken.

Finally, talking with Mark, the park will be named ‘River Park’ and any reference to the duck farm name should be at the duck farm house on the other side of the freeway where the duck farm actually was with complete history including our version. Sounds like a decent compromise. As soon as a decision is made, and hopefully soon, I will pass out flyers to all our neighbors. Thank you, Mark, for hearing us out and taking our concerns seriously. I wish I had more time for other info.

Christy Catalano stated that she just wanted to say thank you to the board for listening to the community and residents of Mt. Baldy by acknowledging their letters and signatures we received thus far, and she appreciates having the opportunity to join the board meetings via Zoom. It has been very helpful.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Minutes from November 19, 2020 meeting were approved.

There were no comments or corrections, 0 Nays and 0 Abstentions. Minutes were approved.

5. CHAIR’S REPORT

No report was given.

6. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

Board Member Arrighi motioned to keep Chair Herlinda Chico as the Chair and Vice Chair Sandra

Maravilla as Vice Chair. Board Member Chang seconded the motion. By acclamation, Herlinda Chico is the Chair and Sandra Maravilla is the Vice Chair.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORTS

7. WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Mr. Stanley stated that staff is still working from home until we hear other orders from the County. At that point, we will begin to introduce our plan which will allow us to slowly heighten our utilization of the office. As we move from testing to vaccinations, we will continue to keep the board updated if staff gets put into order of receiving the vaccine.

8. LIAISON & ACTIVITIES REPORT

Mr. Stanley stated that this is the second week of a two-year term for legislation.

Mr. Stanley also stated that there are three bills waiting for a committee hearing which are AB30, this is the Access to Nature Bill introduced by Kalra, AB78, this is the RMC Expansion Bill, which was introduced by O'Donnell, and SB45, this is the Wildfire Prevention Bill which was introduced by Portantino.

Debbie Enos stated construction documents have been updated for the Crystal Lake Redevelopment and San Gabriel Canyon Master Planning project which includes renovation of camp host sites, information kiosks and iron rangers at both Crystal Lake and Coldbrook campgrounds.

Ms. Enos also stated that the CCLB and their subcontractors at the South Gate Habitat Restoration Project have re-begun their work at the site and are in the process of completing the installation of the site improvements including metal work, signage, additional overlook and visitor amenities including seating, interpretive signage and view scopes.

Ms. Enos stated that for the Walnut Creek Habitat & Open Space project the City of San Dimas has engaged the services of the San Gabriel Valley Conservation Corps to provide trail and plant maintenance for the next year. Ms. Enos also stated that WCA staff has completed designs for the interpretive signage, operational signs and dedication plaque.

Ms. Enos further stated that the City of San Dimas has asked the assistance of WCA to help finalize items not completed by the contractor and WCA staff has provided multiple vendor estimates to the city; WCA will also augment the project with additional interpretive features, operational signage and split rail fencing with the mini Prop A grant received from SD5 excess funds.

Ms. Enos concluded that the Duck Farm Construction Manager has reviewed and finalized contractual documents with the General Contractor and has come to final agreement related to the Change Order Requests and work remaining and timeline to complete the project.

Ms. Enos mentioned that LA County Department of Agriculture has been engaged with the contractor to mitigate invasive plants on site that have sprouted since the last rainy period, the contractor and subcontractors will be back on site to resume work and progress to complete the project; graphics for operational signage and botanical interpretive signs, as well as decorative boulder locations and callouts have been completed and provided to the Contractor to send to vendors for fabrication.

Mr. Stanley stated that the name for the formerly known as Duck Farm would be changed to “River Park” after speaking to the community and surveys taken by the surrounding neighborhoods, the community expressed their concern for the name of the park. Mr. Stanley also stated that we will be speaking to the community some more regarding how we will recognize the history of the location that we’re going to tell over time.

Jeremy Munns stated that for the San Gabriel River Center there is a new funding source that he will discuss further on Item 14.

Mr. Munns stated that for the Gateway Greening project the Vision Plan and its online portal are complete and WCA staff continues to solicit additional buy-in and feedback from key stakeholders prior to a public launch.

Jane Tsong stated that Psomas is refining the final prioritization map for the Biological opportunities for the San Gabriel Mountains & Foothills Open Space Acquisition plan. Cooper Ecological Monitoring has done rapid assessment site visits to evaluate the potential for sensitive species on undeveloped lands which has brought to light additional parcels to include as conservation priorities.

Ms. Tsong also stated WCA received a proposal on Hydrologic Opportunities which will summarize existing work in the fields of hydrology and geology to suggest to what extend regional water supply and quality issues and habitat can inform prioritization of undeveloped parcels for permanent protection.

Ms. Tsong mentioned WCA is evaluating a Conservation Easement and Land Management Plan submitted by the Glendora Community Conservancy for Easley Canyon Preserve.

Ms. Tsong stated that Cooper Ecological Monitoring has completed rapid assessments for the Vasquez Acquisitions and Interim Land Management Plan. Ms. Tsong mentioned that discussions are underway to transfer the adjacent 200-acre Azusa-RMC JPA Open Space into WCA ownership and once the transfer is concluded, WCA anticipates including consideration of this property and its substantial watershed in the Azusa foothills lands interim management guidelines.

Ms. Tsong mentioned that WCA has advised SCCWRP to keep WCA up to date on the Los Angeles River Environmental Flows Study Supplemental Analysis on the planned and proposed in-stream uses in the Lower Los Angeles River and to develop assumptions for analysis of Compton Creek and Rio Hondo restoration scenarios in March.

Ms. Tsong concluded with Inland Empire Resources Conservation District mapped 6.7 acres of Spanish Broom at the Mt. Baldy Wilderness Preserve and submitted a plan for methods and strategies to control this species.

Johnathan Perisho stated that for the GREEN project a concept plan has been completed for the Duck Farm Equestrian Center which this site plan has informed a grant application for construction of planned elements for consideration under the Consent Calendar Item 12.

Mr. Perisho also stated that plans are in development to prepare for a construction phase for the entry improvements to the River Wilderness Park beginning this year. Mr. Perisho also stated that the City and project team are currently moving forward with concurrent review of construction drawings and entitlements to be ready for the City Council approval by this Spring 2021.**9. EXPENDITURE REPORT**

Nicole Law explained that Exhibit A reflects updated balances of the FY 20/21 as of December 31, 2020 and the Statement of Receipts and Disbursements from the Los Angeles County Auditor-Controller's office have not been finalized but will be included in the next board meeting.

Ms. Law explained that the Authority received the annual JPA contributions from LA County Flood Control District and Rivers & Mountains Conservancy. Ms. Law stated that the Authority doesn't anticipate any revenue from filming and permits due to the COVID-19 restrictions but that Operational lease revenues are currently on target, including the lease revenue from the commercial tenant.

Ms. Law further stated that the Authority is awaiting reimbursement from several grants and will be reflected when submitted costs expended under the grant has been approved for reimbursement and the reimbursement is received.

Ms. Law mentioned COVID-19 expenses line item is within YTD budget projections, insurance line item is lower than YTD budget projections and the electricity line item is slightly ahead of the YTD budget projections due to the Southern California Edison modified the billing rates since October 2020 and the new rate schedule has no monthly fixed charges; therefore, the Authority anticipates expenses incurred through the end of the fiscal year to be within budgeted projections.

CONSENT CALENDAR

- 10. FUND BALANCE REPORT**
- 11. CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE BILLABLE RATES UPDATE.**
- 12. CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO RATIFY AN APPLICATION TO THE RIVERS AND MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY PROPOSITION 68 GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER EQUESTRIAN CENTER WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT.**

Board Member Uranga motioned to approve items 10 thru 12. Vice Chair Maravilla seconded the motion. Board Voted. 5 Ayes, 0 Nays & 0 Abstentions.

REGULAR CALENDAR

- 13. CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER OR DESIGNEE TO NEGOTIATE AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS IN SUPPORT OF THE SAN GABRIEL VALLEY GREENWAY IMPLEMENTATION.**

Johnathan Perisho stated that on May 16, 2017 the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors approved a motion directing the Department of Public Works and the Department of Parks and Recreation to work with regional planning agencies to develop a strategic implementation plan for the San Gabriel Valley Greenway Network.

Mr. Perisho further stated that WCA, under the County work order, is prepared to facilitate, organize and lead up to 16 community engagement events, partnering with community organizations that will follow the approach outlined in the San Gabriel Valley Greenway Implementation Community Engagement Plan and facilitate virtual and physical distancing

strategies that respond to COVID-19 safe practices and limitations during Shelter-in Place directives.

Mr. Perisho concluded that the community engagement contracts are anticipated to be stipends less than \$5,000 but may be up to contracts of \$40,000 based on the partner community engagement history and availability. Mr. Perisho mentioned that this action will be funded under a \$147,212 task order number 3 authorized through the existing professional services master agreement with LACFCD which was implemented on October 25, 2018 and not to exceed \$1,750,000 over the 5-year life of the program and LACFCD has the discretion to amend the master agreement for additional services for up to \$300,000 for a total contract value not to exceed \$2,050,000 for work within the Watersheds.

Vice Chair Maravilla motioned to approve Item 13. Board Member Chang seconded the motion. Board Voted. 5 Ayes, 0 Nays, & 0 Abstentions.

14. CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE ENTERING INTO AN ESCROW AGREEMENT WITH THE SANITATION DISTRICTS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND US BANK FOR THE DUCK FARM SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT(SEP).

Jeremy Munns explained that an escrow agreement with the Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County and US Bank for the Duck Farm Supplemental Environmental Project and acceptance of funds in the amount of \$2,000,132 was necessary in order to fund 6+ acres of additional habitat enhancement and demonstration gardens showcasing water-wise residential landscaping and interpretive exhibits to the 30+ acre River Park.

Mr. Munns stated that the Duck Farm SEP will augment and complement the site and area development design and improvements funded by the Duck Farm House Landscape and Water Conservation Center Project and the Duck Farm River Center Development Project which will also expand a permeable parking area, access improvements and habitat enhancements for the greater Duck Farm River Park currently under construction.

Mr. Munns concluded that funding for the implementation of this project will be held with US Bank and will be released to WCA on a reimbursement basis up to the amount of \$2,000,132 over the 36-month agreement timeline.

Board Member Uranga motioned to approve this Item. Vice Chair Maravilla seconded the motion. Board Voted. 5 Ayes, 0 Nays & 0 Abstentions.

15. CONSIDERATION OF A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE NEGOTIATION FOR THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY IN THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER FLOODPLAIN IN AZUSA, ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBERS (AIN) 8684-027-004 AND 8684-027-010, FROM THE GATTI FAMILY TRUST. WCA NEGOTIATOR: MARK STANLEY.

Jane Tsong explained that this acquisition would protect approximately 18 acres along one of the region's most significant water sources among the last remaining opportunities in Los Angeles County for floodplain habitat restoration and compatible public access on a significant scale.

Ms. Tsong further explained that negotiation for the terms of the acquisition is time-sensitive because the site is under strong threat of development.

Ms. Tsong stated that the parcel is called out as a conservation priority in the City of Azusa General Plan and is one of the last privately-owned lands in the San Gabriel Canyon Significant Ecological Area and is currently home to a family-owned and operated equestrian training facility and is zoned for resort use and its flat buildable topography is under very strong development pressure.

Ms. Tsong further stated that this multi-benefit project exemplifies WCA's mission to enact conservation, restoration and environmental enhancement that are consistent with the goals of flood protection, water supply, groundwater recharge and water conservation.

Ms. Tsong concluded that initial pre-acquisition activities for Rainbow Ranch are funded by the existing grant RMC17019 for the San Gabriel Mountains and Foothills Open Space Acquisition Master Plan and WCA has submitted an application to fund the potential acquisition through RMC Prop 68.

Board Member Uranga motioned to approve this item. Board member Chang seconded the motion. Board Voted. 5 Ayes, 0 Nays & 0 Abstentions.

- 16. CLOSED SESSION: PURSUANT TO GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54956.9, THE WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY MAY HOLD A CLOSED SESSION ON THE FOLLOWING ITEM: SAVE OUR ACCESS – SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS V. WCA, ET AL., LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT CASE NO. 18STCP02904.**

There was no Closed Session. **17. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

A. STATEMENTS, RESPONSES, QUESTIONS OR DIRECTIONS TO STAFF PURSUANT TO SECTION 54954.2(A) OF THE GOVERNMENT CODE

B. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- 18. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 1:30 pm via Zoom.US meeting.

- 19. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned by Madam Chair Chico at approximately 2:23 pm.

X

Herlinda Chico
Chair

X

Dena Williams
Board Secretary