

COACHELLA VALLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

2023-24
State
Legislative
Platform

November 2023





Coachella Valley Conservation Commission

The Coachella Valley Conservation Commission (CVCC) is a joint powers authority responsible for the implementation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP). The CVMSHCP includes an area of approximately 1.1 million acres in the Coachella Valley and protects 27 species, 27 natural communities, and three essential ecological processes over 75 years while simultaneously identifying lands outside of Conservation Areas where development and infrastructure can move forward with minimal constraint. CVCC's membership includes nine cities, the County of Riverside, and three public utilities. As an organization committed to balancing growth and economic development with conservation for decades to come, CVCC strives to implement regional programs and policies that advance the protection of critical species and habitats and improve the quality of life for residents, including opportunities for recreation, tourism, and job creation.

The legislative platform will guide the tracking and analysis of priority legislative, budget, regulatory, and administrative issues at the state level. It will assist in providing staff and lobbyists guidance on policy-related matters that may impact the operation and implementation of the CVMSHCP and related programs and services offered by CVCC. This document will also facilitate the development of a state strategy and focused action plan to address the needs and priorities of CVCC and its member jurisdictions.

- City of Cathedral City
- City of Coachella
- City of Desert Hot Springs
- City of Indian Wells
- City of Indio
- City of La Quinta
- City of Palm Desert
- City of Palm Springs
- City of Rancho Mirage
- County of Riverside
- Coachella Valley Water District
- Imperial Irrigation District
- Mission Springs Water District

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Key Categories



LAND CONSERVATION

Acquisition and conservation of land to achieve sustainable long-term viability of populations of native plants and animals that make the Coachella Valley desert landscape unique and provide open space for recreation.



HABITAT PROTECTION

Support and secure funding for the implementation and management of programs that ensure listed species and their natural communities have healthy populations and habitats.



STEWARDSHIP

Conservation is not only about purchasing land but also being stewards of the land through best management practices that protect the initial acquisition investment.




CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is a major threat to Coachella Valley's desert species. As temperatures increase, and precipitation becomes less reliable, native species become vulnerable to increased loss of habitat.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Balancing growth and development with conservation is a key goal of the CVCC. Quality of life is key to the economic vitality of the Coachella Valley.



RECREATION

Providing open space for recreation, education, and tourism opportunities, and increasing access for communities to open space when it aligns with sustainable use of conservation lands.

STATE

Land Conservation

- Support policies and programs that supplement land conservation activities including, but not limited to, funding for preservation, restoration, and enhancement activities.
- Support policies and programs specific to the southern California Desert that fund or support plans that address land management and wildfire prevention and recovery, including on Tribal lands.
- Support legislation that seeks to increase funding for Natural Community Conservation Plans (NCCPs) and Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs).
- Support efforts to increase the ability of Native American Tribes to participate in and contribute to the protection, restoration, and stewardship of open space and habitats.
- Support the meaningful collaboration between CVCC and state agencies' rulemakings, administrative processes, guidelines, and policy development activities regarding conservation planning and implementation activities.
- Advocate for dedicated funding for NCCPs and HCPs from the state's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund.
- Oppose legislation or regulatory efforts that weaken protections for wildlife and habitat in NCCPs and HCPs.
- Monitor policy changes and funding for Regional Conservation Investment Strategies.
- Monitor activities by the California Department and Fish and Wildlife that may impact the CVCC's Permittee status.
- Monitor policies and regulations related to mitigation agreements and support streamlined implementation by CDFW to improve efficiency between pertinent agencies.

Habitat Protection

- Support increased funding for the Wildlife Conservation Board, the Department of Fish and Game, the Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy, and educational and research institutions, to assist in conservation and biological monitoring related activities of the CVCC.
- Support increased funding for the Local Assistance Grant program administered by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and advocate for funding tailored to the Southern California desert region.

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- Support expansion of the Local Assistance Grant program to include funds for monitoring and land management activities.
 - Support Salton Sea Authority efforts related to the Salton Sea and legislation that provides funding for the restoration and revitalization of the Salton Sea to limit regional impacts to air quality, wildlife habitat, and health of communities, including the Phase One: 10 Year Plan.
 - Monitor federal legislative, regulatory, and administrative activities that may impact the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan.
 - Monitor and support funding opportunities for wildlife crossing structures to increase habitat connectivity and decrease wildlife-vehicle collisions in areas where populations are fragmented by highways and interstates.

Stewardship

- Support programs that fund implementation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan and that support habitat restoration in the Coachella Valley.
- Support efforts to increase funding for invasive species management and eradication, specifically for weed management areas in the Coachella Valley.
- Support funding and programs that reduce wildfire risks in the Coachella Valley region due to overgrown brush and lack of weed management and advocate for policy changes to designate open space fire threats in the desert as high-risk to increase eligibility for funding.
- Advocate for programs and funding to address unauthorized activities and enforcement, such as illegal dumping and homelessness on conservation lands and support policies that increase resources and capacity of Conservation Corps to help address unauthorized activities and enforcement.
- Support policies and programs that increase funding for tamarisk tree removal as a means by which to remove invasive species and increase water conservation.
- Monitor efforts to establish the Chuckwalla National Monument and advocate for any position the CVCC takes on the proposal.

Climate Change

- Support legislation and programs that invest in projects that achieve climate resiliency and environmental benefits, including improved air and water quality, water and energy conservation, heat resiliency and urban greening initiatives in the region.
- Support legislation that facilitates environmentally sensitive renewable energy development at the Salton Sea Known Geothermal Resource Area, including lithium extraction.

- Support efforts that advance the implementation of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan as well as resources for desert communities to prepare and adapt to changing climate and natural disasters, such as the Climate Resiliency programs.
- Support funding for local planning and response measures to extreme heat events, including nature-based solutions, to protect critical infrastructure, habitat, and public health and safety.
- Support funding for drought resiliency and water conservation efforts and activities related to the Colorado River, ground water and State Water Project water that benefits the Coachella Valley.
- Monitor implementation of Executive Order N-82-20, regarding elevating the role of natural and working lands in the fight against climate change and advancing biodiversity conservation as an administration priority, to reach the goal of conserving 30 percent of our lands and coastal waters by 2030.
- Advocate for funding for the southern California desert region to play an increased role in carbon sequestration projects and associated funding opportunities, to reach carbon neutrality by 2045.
- Identify opportunities to advocate for the state's climate policies to reflect the carbon sequestration potential of the desert's natural lands.

Infrastructure

- Support legislation and programs that invest in infrastructure projects that achieve environmental benefits, including improved air and water quality, water and energy conservation, and urban greening initiatives in the region.
- Support policies and nature-based solutions that enable positive benefits that the CVMSHCP brings to species, habitats, ecosystems, air quality, infrastructure and infill housing, economic development, and overall health and wellness of the region.
- Support legislative efforts, regulation and guidance that allows for virtual public meetings to continue for regional agencies, such as AB 361, to facilitate access to meetings and allow for increased efficiencies and effectiveness in conducting public meetings while also reducing vehicle miles traveled.
- Oppose policies that aim to weaken CVCC's permittee authority and oversight responsibility of the CVMSHCP.
- Oppose efforts that infringe on CVCC's discretion in collecting and administering its revenue related to the Local Development Mitigation Fees (LDMF), tipping fees, Conservation Trust Fund, Regional Road Projects Mitigation, Regional Infrastructure Mitigation, and potential successors such as the Eagle Mountain Landfill Environmental Mitigation Trust Fund and other conservation-related transfers and investments.

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- Monitor legislation and regulations related to urban environments interfacing with wildlife protection and conservation.
 - Monitor efforts to “cut the green tape” by the California Natural Resources Agency and Support policies and funding that benefit environmental and conservation related projects in the Coachella Valley.

Recreation

- Support funding that increases access to trails and open spaces for underrepresented communities.
- Identify opportunities for funding of environmental education initiatives that assist with teaching students and communities about the value of open space.
- Encourage and support collaboration with federal, state, and local land-use authorities regarding regional and local land use planning, acquisitions, and management of trails for recreation.
- Support implementation and extension of AB 661 (Statutes of 2017) to ensure proper use and monitoring of the Bump and Grind Trail within the Magnesia Springs Ecosystem, to protect the sensitive Peninsular bighorn sheep habitat.

Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

