

## **Orange County Transportation Authority Measure M2 Environmental Mitigation Program Status Report**

### **Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan and Associated Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Study Update**

In November 2016, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Measure M2 (M2) Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP) and associated environmental impact report/environmental impact study (EIR/EIS) were finalized. Changes to the final NCCP/HCP and EIR/EIS were based on 48 comment letters received on the draft documents released for public review and on the acquisition of the Aliso Canyon and MacPherson Preserves. On November 28, 2016, the Board of Directors (Board) approved the NCCP/HCP, certified the final EIR/EIS, and authorized the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to negotiate and execute the implementing agreement between OCTA and the resources agencies. Staff is currently assisting the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Wildlife Agencies) with the biological state and federal Findings and Biological Opinion. These documents are part of the state and federal agency permitting processes. Once those documents are provided to OCTA, all signatories will sign the implementing agreement.

Concurrently, OCTA is working with the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Water Resources Control Board to streamline the regulatory permitting process. These two agencies are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Clean Water Act. The previously mentioned four agencies (resource agencies) are the key regulatory organizations tasked with the review of environmental documents for major projects, such as OCTA's M2 Freeway Plan.

### **Interim Preserve Services Update**

OCTA currently holds the title and interim land management responsibility of the conservations properties (Preserves). In April 2016, two separate request for proposals (RFP) were released to obtain consultant services to perform interim biological preserve monitoring and maintenance activities for the Preserves. These services will ensure that the biological integrity of the Preserves is maintained. It is anticipated that the Preserves will be transitioned to another entity whose core function will be to manage conservation lands within the next three to five years. Until that time, OCTA is responsible for the Preserves and must ensure that the biological integrity is upheld.

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The following two contracts were approved by the Board on August 1, 2016, and have since been executed by staff. These services will provide the necessary property management and monitoring services for the OCTA Preserves.

- Glenn Lukos Associates, Inc., was approved to provide interim biological monitoring services in the amount of \$375,000 for a five-year term.
- RECON Environmental, Inc., was approved to provide interim land management services in the amount of \$500,000 for a five-year term.

### Endowment Manager Selection Update

In October 2014, the Board approved a non-wasting endowment target of approximately \$34.5 million to fund the long-term management of the Preserves. This commitment demonstrates to the Wildlife Agencies that OCTA has the financial capacity to fund the management of the Preserves that are integrated into the NCCP/HCP. In May 2016, the Board approved the release of a RFP to retain investment management firms to assist OCTA with the establishment of the endowment, and to provide the long term management services for the M2 Preserves.

On September 26, 2016, the Board approved the selection of the California Community Foundation as an endowment fund manager for the EMP, and authorized the CEO to negotiate and execute an agreement for a 12-year term. The first endowment deposit is anticipated to be made in early 2017.

### Restoration Projects Update

#### Chino Hills State Park (CHSP) Restoration Project

On May 14, 2012, the Board approved two habitat restoration projects sponsored by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, one of which was the CHSP Restoration Project. This project proposal included restoration to riparian and cactus scrub within CHSP. On October 26, 2016, the Environmental Oversight Committee (EOC) endorsed a change in scope to the originally approved CHSP Restoration Project due to the costs of the riparian restoration component. The revision would eliminate the riparian component and increase the area of the cactus scrub restoration within the original Board-approved amount (\$193,000).

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### West Loma Restoration Project

On May 14, 2012, the Board approved two habitat restoration projects sponsored by the Irvine Ranch Conservancy, one of which was the West Loma Restoration Project (\$1,322,800). This restoration project proposal consisted of habitat restoration and wildlife movement improvements around the West Loma undercrossing at State Route 241. On November 21, 2016, the EOC endorsed a change in scope to the originally approved West Loma Restoration Project. Due to multiple factors, the original location for the undercrossing improvement was deemed infeasible. The scope change would replace the original wildlife connectivity component with a wildlife connectivity improvement at the State Route 91 Coal Canyon undercrossing. The budget for the project will remain the same.