



RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES

Board Memorandum

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

DATE: MAY 24, 2021

SUBJECT: UPPER SANTA ANA RIVER HABITAT CONSERVATION PLAN AND THE RIVERSIDE HABITAT, PARKS, AND WATER PROJECT UPDATE

ISSUE:

Receive this update on the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan and the Riverside Habitat, Parks, and Water Project.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Public Utilities receive this update on the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan and the Riverside Habitat, Parks, and Water Project.

BACKGROUND:

On September 5, 2014, the Board of Public Utilities recommended that Council approve an expenditure not to exceed \$325,000 for Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) share in participating in the planning efforts for the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan. City Council approved the expenditure on October 7, 2014.

A Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) is a planning level document that ensures that the anticipated take of a listed (threatened or endangered) species be minimized or mitigated by conserving the habitat upon which the species depend, thereby contributing to the recovery of the species as a whole. Developing a HCP is an approach to gain regulatory approval for construction and /or maintenance activities that require an Incidental Take Permit, a permit issued under the United States Endangered Species Act (ESA) to non-federal agencies undertaking projects that might result in the destruction of an endangered or threatened species or its habitat.

Many listed species such as the Santa Ana Sucker fish and the San Bernardino Kangaroo Rat occupy key locations within the Watershed that have caused new water supply projects and maintenance activities to be put on hold. The intent behind creating the Upper Santa Ana River HCP is to find a regional, sustainable, and cost-effective approach to improve the occurrence of these species while also pursuing needed infrastructure projects. San Bernardino Valley Municipal Water District took the lead in developing the HCP for the team, which is made up of 11 funding agencies.

Over the last six years, the HCP team has been working diligently at collecting scientifically defensible data and evaluating this data to identify the current state of all of the listed species in

the area, and evaluate how pursuing infrastructure activities covered in the HCP document would impact the species to understand how best to mitigate these impacts and to identify what the costs may be. The HCP document is nearing completion and a draft Environmental Impact Report is anticipated to be released to the public within the coming months.

DISCUSSION:

The Upper Santa Ana River HCP has the potential to provide the City of Riverside with numerous benefits that the rate payers and residents will be able to take advantage of. In addition to enabling the construction of local water supply projects that are cheaper than purchasing imported water supplies, the HCP proposes to improve tributaries to the Santa Ana River that are located within the City limits. These improvements will foster a synergistic opportunity to integrate select City features with environmental improvements that will aid in promoting a sustainable and resilient community.

Through the HCP planning efforts over the last six years, staff have identified an additional opportunity to partner with the HCP in creating a regional recycled water pipeline that could be used to deliver recycled water to Riverside landscape irrigation customers while also delivering recycled water to select HCP tributaries to provide a water source for restoration efforts. This project is termed the Riverside Habitat, Parks, and Water Project, and has the potential to provide the City with a reliable supply of up to 9,750 acre-feet of water per year. The Riverside Habitat, Parks, and Water project is an opportunity to support the HCP's tributary restoration projects located within the City of Riverside. This project will provide recycled water to improve 5 tributaries to the Santa Ana River, while allowing RPU to expand its recycled water system to reach more retail customers. Furthermore, the project will generate new water rights (export rights) for the City from the Bunker Hill Basin. The development of this project is progressing, and several agreements are being prepared to memorialize next steps. These agreements will be brought to both Board and Council for consideration later this year.

The HCP and the Riverside Habitat, Parks, and Water Project are integral pieces to pursuing the City's One Water goal. Another key piece to pursuing the One Water goal is the Recycled Water Master Plan, which will be brought to the Board in the coming weeks.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There are no fiscal impacts under this receive and file update. Once total project costs are understood, this item will be presented to the RPU Board.

Prepared by: Michael Plinkski, Engineering Manager-Water Planning & Resources
Approved by: Todd M. Corbin, Utilities General Manager
Approved by: Al Zelinka, FAICP, City Manager
Approved as to form: Kristi Smith, Chief Assistant City Attorney

Certifies availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer

Attachment: Presentation