

SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA



FROM: Supervisor Roy Wilson

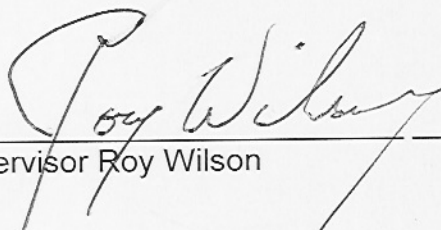
SUBMITTAL DATE: February 25, 2003

SUBJECT: Request for funding assistance from the Wildlife Conservation Board for purchase of MSHCP land in the Coachella Valley

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors authorize the Chairman to sign the attached letter requesting participation of the Wildlife Conservation Board in acquiring property which is a natural biological "bridge" between the Coachella Valley Preserve and the Joshua Tree National Park.

BACKGROUND: A Coachella Valley developer has optioned the "Cathton property," which comprises approximately 8,800 acres in the north central part of the Coachella Valley, for the purpose of developing the "Joshua Hills" project. This intense development envisions a university, three hotels, 12 golf courses and approximately 7,000 homes in a relatively pristine area between the Coachella Valley Preserve and the Joshua Tree National Park. Without this piece of property, which makes up the bulk of a key Conservation Area, the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan is severely compromised. The Chatton property, in fact, comprises 80 percent of the "Indio Hills/Joshua Tree National Park Linkage Conservation Area," which is a fluvial sand transport zone, vital for protection of the endangered fringe-toed lizard, the threatened desert tortoise and several other important species.

The Nature Conservancy is attempting to acquire the property, but the asking price is still far from what the Conservancy considers appropriate and/or "affordable." The Conservancy states that they will need to find funding help from a variety of sources. The Wildlife Conservation Board is one such source.



Supervisor Roy Wilson

Department Recommendation: Consent Policy
Per Executive Office: Consent Policy

SEARCHED 17 APR 11 33

CLERK COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE
RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIVISION

Al Wright, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Board
1807 13th Street, Suite 103
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Wright

As you know, the area between the existing Thousand Palms Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park is critical for the natural habitat of the region. Without this natural land bridge between the Preserve and the Park, the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan is severely compromised.

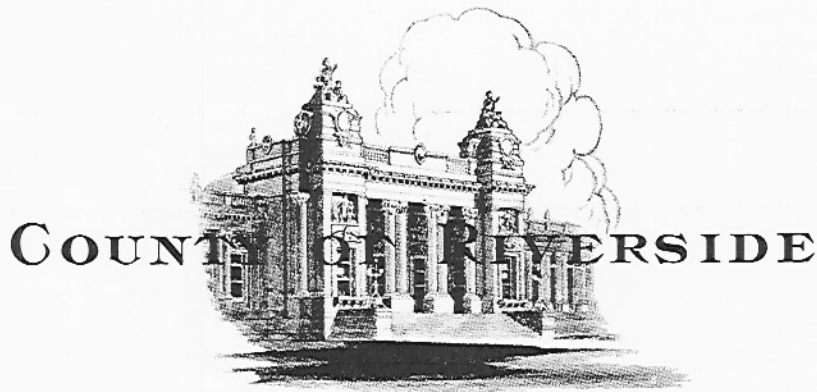
The "Cathton property," which comprises approximately 8,800 acres, has been optioned by a local developer who would like to build a major new community on the property, with 7,000 homes, 12 golf courses, three hotels and a university. This property makes up about 80 percent of the proposed "Indio Hills/Joshua Tree National Park Linkage Conservation Area." This Conservation Area is a vital part of the fluvial sand transport system for the sand dune habitat on the existing Thousand Palms Preserve. The long-term viability of the Preserve is critical, since it provides core habitat for many species, and fluvial sand transport is in turn critical to that viability. Moreover, the property serves as a wildlife movement corridor between the Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park, and contains valuable habitat for the threatened desert tortoise.

The Nature Conservancy is currently pursuing acquisition of approximately 8,860 acres in this area, including the Cathton property, but negotiations thus far have been very difficult. The Conservancy is indicating that funds will be needed from a variety of sources in order to close the gap on the negotiated purchase price.

The County of Riverside supports the purchase of the property for wildlife protection, and requests the Wildlife Conservation Board's participation in the acquisition effort.

Sincerely,

John Tavaglione, Chairman
Second District Supervisor



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February 12, 2003

Al Wright, Executive Director
Wildlife Conservation Board
1807 13th Street, Suite 103
Sacramento, CA 95814

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