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## REMOTE PARTICIPATION ONLY

# REGIONAL ADVANCED MITIGATION PLANNING ADVISORY TASK GROUP

*Friday, February 18, 2022*  
*2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.*

**To Attend and Participate on Your Computer:**

**<https://scag.zoom.us/j/92156366986>**

**To Attend and Participate by Phone:**

**Call-in Number: 1-669-900-6833**

**Meeting ID: 921 5636 6986**

***Please see next page for detailed  
instructions on how to participate in the meeting.***

### **PUBLIC ADVISORY**

Given the declared state of emergency (pursuant to State of Emergency Proclamation dated March 4, 2020) and local public health directives imposing and recommending social distancing measures due to the threat of COVID-19, and pursuant to Government Code Section 54953(e)(1)(A), the meeting will be held telephonically and electronically.

If members of the public wish to review the attachments or have any questions on any of the agenda items, please contact Maggie Aguilar at (213) 630-1420 or via email at [aguilarm@scag.ca.gov](mailto:aguilarm@scag.ca.gov). Agendas & Minutes are also available at: [www.scag.ca.gov/committees](http://www.scag.ca.gov/committees).

SCAG, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), will accommodate persons who require a modification of accommodation in order to participate in this meeting. SCAG is also committed to helping people with limited proficiency in the English language access the agency's essential public information and services. You can request such assistance by calling (213) 630-1420. We request at least 72 hours (three days) notice to provide reasonable accommodations and will make every effort to arrange for assistance as soon as possible.



## Instructions for Public Comments

*You may submit public comments in two (2) ways:*

1. **In Writing:** Submit written comments via email to: [scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov](mailto:scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov) by **5pm on Thursday, February 17, 2022**. You are **not** required to submit public comments in writing or in advance of the meeting; this option is offered as a convenience should you desire not to provide comments in real time as described below.

All written comments received after 5pm on Thursday, February 17, 2022 will be announced and included as part of the official record of the meeting.

2. **In Real Time:** If participating in real time via Zoom or phone, during the Public Comment Period (Matters Not on the Agenda) or at the time the item on the agenda for which you wish to speak is called, use the “raise hand” function on your computer or \*9 by phone and wait for SCAG staff to announce your name/phone number. SCAG staff will unmute your line when it is your turn to speak. Limit oral comments to 3 minutes, or as otherwise directed by the presiding officer. For purpose of providing public comment for items listed on the Consent Calendar, please indicate that you wish to speak when the Consent Calendar is called; items listed on the Consent Calendar will be acted on with one motion and there will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the legislative body so requests, in which event, the item will be considered separately.

If unable to connect by Zoom or phone and you wish to make a comment, you may submit written comments via email to: [scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov](mailto:scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov).

***In accordance with SCAG’s Regional Council Policy, Article VI, Section H and California Government Code Section 54957.9, if a SCAG meeting is “willfully interrupted” and the “orderly conduct of the meeting” becomes unfeasible, the presiding officer or the Chair of the legislative body may order the removal of the individuals who are disrupting the meeting.***

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### OUR MISSION

To foster innovative regional solutions that improve the lives of Southern Californians through inclusive collaboration, visionary planning, regional advocacy, information sharing, and promoting best practices.

### OUR VISION

Southern California’s Catalyst for a Brighter Future

### OUR CORE VALUES

Be Open | Lead by Example | Make an Impact | Be Courageous



## Instructions for Participating in the Meeting

SCAG is providing multiple options to view or participate in the meeting:

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1. Click the following link: <https://scag.zoom.us/j/92156366986>
2. If Zoom is not already installed on your computer, click “Download & Run Zoom” on the launch page and press “Run” when prompted by your browser. If Zoom has previously been installed on your computer, please allow a few moments for the application to launch automatically.
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4. The virtual conference room will open. If you receive a message reading, “Please wait for the host to start this meeting,” simply remain in the room until the meeting begins.
5. During the Public Comment Period (Matters Not on the Agenda) or at the time the item on the agenda for which you wish to speak is called (see note above regarding items on the Consent Calendar), use the “raise hand” function located in the participants’ window and wait for SCAG staff to announce your name. SCAG staff will unmute your line when it is your turn to speak. Each speaker is limited to oral comments totaling 3 minutes for all matters, or as otherwise directed by the presiding officer.

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2. Enter the **Meeting ID: 921 5636 6986**, followed by #.
3. Indicate that you are a participant by pressing # to continue.
4. You will hear audio of the meeting in progress. Remain on the line if the meeting has not yet started.
5. During the Public Comment Period (Matters Not on the Agenda) or at the time the item on the agenda for which you wish to speak is called (see note above regarding items on the Consent Calendar), press \*9 to add yourself to the queue and wait for SCAG staff to announce your name/phone number. SCAG staff will unmute your line when it is your turn to speak. Each speaker is limited to oral comments totaling 3 minutes for all matters, or as otherwise directed by the presiding officer.

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## REGIONAL ADVANCED MITIGATION PLANNING – ADVISORY TASK GROUP

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### Regional Advance Mitigation Planning – Advisory Task Group *Members – February 2022*

1. **Hon. Sean Ashton**  
Downey, RC District 25
2. **Sup. Curt Hagman**  
San Bernardino County
3. **Hon. Peggy Huang**  
TCA Representative
4. **Hon. Clint Lorimore**  
Eastvale, RC District 4
5. **Hon. David Pollock**  
EEC Chair, Moorpark, RC District 46



## REGIONAL ADVANCED MITIGATION PLANNING – ADVISORY TASK GROUP AGENDA

Southern California Association of Governments  
Remote Participation Only  
**Friday, February 18, 2022**  
**2:00 PM**

The Regional Advance Mitigation Planning - Advisory Task Group may consider and act upon any of the items on the agenda regardless of whether they are listed as Information or Action items.

### **CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** *(The Honorable Clint Lorimore, President)*

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD (Matters Not on the Agenda)**

This is the time for persons to comment on any matter pertinent to SCAG's jurisdiction that is *not* listed on the agenda. Although the committee may briefly respond to statements or questions, under state law, matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon at this time. Public comment for items listed on the agenda will be taken separately as further described below.

**General information for all public comments:** Members of the public are encouraged, but not required, to submit written comments by sending an email to: [scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov](mailto:scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov) by 5pm on Thursday, February 17, 2022. Such comments will be transmitted to members of the legislative body and posted on SCAG's website prior to the meeting. Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Regional Advance Mitigation Planning - Advisory Task Group regarding any item on this agenda (other than writings legally exempt from public disclosure) are available at the Office of the Clerk, located at 900 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1700, Los Angeles, CA 90017 during normal business hours and/or by contacting the office by phone, (213) 630-1420, or email to [aguilarm@scag.ca.gov](mailto:aguilarm@scag.ca.gov). Written comments received after 5pm on Thursday, February 17, 2022, will be announced and included as part of the official record of the meeting. Members of the public wishing to verbally address the Regional Advance Mitigation Planning - Advisory Task Group in real time during the meeting will be allowed up to a total of 3 minutes to speak on items on the agenda, with the presiding officer retaining discretion to adjust time limits as necessary to ensure efficient and orderly conduct of the meeting. The presiding officer has the discretion to equally reduce the time limit of all speakers based upon the number of comments received. If you desire to speak on an item listed on the agenda, please wait for the chair to call the item and then indicate your interest in offering public comment by either using the "raise hand" function on your computer or pressing \*9 on your telephone. For purpose of providing public comment for items listed on the Consent Calendar (if there is a Consent Calendar), please indicate that you wish to speak when the Consent Calendar is called; items listed on the Consent Calendar will be acted upon with one motion and there will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the legislative body so requests, in which event, the item will be considered separately.



# REGIONAL ADVANCED MITIGATION PLANNING – ADVISORY TASK GROUP AGENDA

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## REVIEW AND PRIORITIZE AGENDA ITEMS

### CONSENT CALENDAR

#### Approval

1. Minutes of the Meeting – January 28, 2022

### INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEM

2. SCAG Staff Update 15 Min.  
*(Jason Greenspan, Manager of Sustainable and Resilient Development)*
3. Overview of Caltrans Advance Mitigation Program 25 Min.  
*(Melinda Molnar, Acting Office Chief Caltrans, Office of Biological Science and Innovation)*
4. Overview of Draft Regional Advanced Mitigation Program Policy Framework 25 Min.  
*(Kimberly Clark, Program Manager II of Resource Conservation & Resilient Communities)*

### ADJOURNMENT



Southern California Association of Governments  
Remote Participation Only  
**February 18, 2022**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
REGIONAL ADVANCED MITIGATION PLANNING –  
ADVISORY TASK GROUP (RAMP-ATG)  
FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2022**

THE FOLLOWING MINUTES IS A SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE REGIONAL ADVANCED MITIGATION PLANNING - ADVISORY TASK GROUP (RAMP-ATG). A VIDEO AND AUDIO RECORDING OF THE ACTUAL MEETING IS AVAILABLE AT: <http://scag.iqm2.com/Citizens/>.

The Regional Advanced Mitigation Planning - Advisory Task Group (RAMP-ATG) of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) held its meeting virtually (telephonically and electronically), given the declared state of emergency (pursuant to State of Emergency Proclamation dated March 4, 2020) and local public health directives imposing and recommending social distancing measures due to the threat of COVID-19, and pursuant to Government Code Section 54953(e)(1)(A). A quorum was present.

**Members Present**

<b>Hon. Clint Lorimore, President, Chair</b>	<i>Eastvale</i>	<b>District 4</b>
Hon. Sean Ashton, Chair, TC	<i>Downey</i>	District 25
Hon. Curt Hagman		San Bernardino County
Hon. Peggy Huang, Vice Chair, LCMC		TCA
Hon. David Pollock, Chair, EEC	<i>Moorpark</i>	District 46

**Members Present**

Hon. Sean Ashton, Chair, TC	<i>Downey</i>	District 25
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**Staff Present**

Kome Ajise, Executive Director  
Darin Chidsey, Chief Operating Officer  
Sarah Jepson, Director of Planning  
Javiera Cartagena, Director of Government and Public Affairs  
Michael Houston, Chief Counsel, Director of Legal Services  
Maggie Aguilar, Clerk of the Board

**CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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The Honorable Clint Lorimore called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. President Lorimore asked Supervisor Curt Hagman, San Bernadino County, to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

Given the declared state of emergency (pursuant to State of Emergency Proclamation dated March 4, 2020) and local public health directives imposing and recommending social distancing measures due to the threat of COVID-19, and pursuant to Government Code Section 54953(e)(1)(A), President Lorimore announced the meeting was being held virtually (telephonically and electronically).

### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

President Lorimore opened the Public Comment Period and outlined instructions for public comments. He noted this was the time for persons to comment on any matter pertinent to SCAG's jurisdiction that were not listed on the agenda. President Lorimore reminded the public to submit comments via email to [scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov](mailto:scaggreenregion@scag.ca.gov).

The Clerk acknowledged there were no written public comments received by email before the 5 p.m. deadline.

Seeing no public comment speakers, President Lorimore closed the Public Comment Period.

### **REVIEW AND PRIORITIZE AGENDA ITEMS**

There was no prioritization of agenda items.

### **CONSENT CALENDAR**

1. Minutes of the Meeting – January 28, 2022

President Lorimore opened the Public Comment Period.

Seeing no public comment speakers, President Lorimore closed the Public Comment Period.

Regional Councilmember Peggy Huang, TCA, sought clarification on pages 11 and 12 of the minutes, given the use of pronouns and asked who was writing the white paper. Jason Greenspan, Manager of Sustainable and Resilient Development, noted that he would be addressing this in the introduction of Item Number 2 and indicated that Item Number 3 would also clarify the Regional Council's direction for staff to develop the white paper with the advice and guidance of this advisory committee. He further stated that the white paper was also part of the mitigation measure in the adopted PEIR which was part of Connect SoCal 2020.

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Regional Councilmember Huang suggested less use of pronouns in the minutes given the different agencies SCAG is involved with. The Clerk acknowledged the request.

A MOTION was made (Huang) to approve the Consent Calendar, Item 1. Motion was SECONDED (Hagman) and passed by the following votes:

**AYES:** Hagman, Huang, Lorimore, and Pollock (4)

**NOES:** None (0)

**ABSTAIN:** None (0)

### **INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEM**

#### 2. Information/Discussion Items No. 2 through No. 6

President Lorimore opened the Public Comment Period.

The following four speakers provided comments on Agenda Item Number 4.

Gloria Sefton, Co-Founder of Saddleback Canyons Conservancy (SCC) in Orange County, stated that 16 years ago SCC became one of more than 30 conservation and community groups that supported the Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) renewed measure M half-cent sales tax. She noted that contained within the measure was a commitment by OCTA to spend freeway mitigation dollars more wisely, strategically, and comprehensively for an environmental benefit. She stated that to-date, 350 acres had been funded for restoration and seven preserves, totaling 1,300 acres, which had been protected in perpetuity because of the advanced mitigation program in OCTA's measure. She urged SCAG to complete the creation of the Regional Advanced Mitigation Program (RAMP) as outlined in Connect SoCal and to realize some of the benefits SCC has seen in Orange County.

Helen Higgins, Regional Community Group Friends of Coyote Hills, stated her organization supported SCAG's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) documents because of the thoughtful inclusion of conservation as both a goal and priority. She urged SCAG to keep its promise to create a mitigation program and use its regional planning expertise to ensure Southern California has a regional conservation mechanism available to everyone.

Dan Silver, Endangered Habitats League, provided a comment on the RAMP's in general. He stated that he had been participating in these programs for over 20 years in Riverside County, San Diego

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County, and Orange County. He stated it was remarkable to him how well they [the RAMP's] have gone, how much they [the RAMP's] have achieved for agencies, projects, infrastructure, and for the environment. He noted that with this kind of track record, he urged SCAG to move forward on these programs.

Ed Amador, Canyon Land Conservation Fund in Silverado and the Cleveland National Forest, noted he was one of the supporters of the OCTA renewed measure M and wanted to relay some of the benefits of the partnership developed because of the mitigation program. He stated there was a partnership between OCTA and conservation groups and noted that there was a countywide Greenprint that had already been created. He indicated that OCTA worked with the conservation community in Orange County to ensure that protected lands were shown on its map to give better context to what to protect through the mitigation program. He further stated that with the research already done on the acquisition, OCTA saved valuable time and money, and was able to move quickly purchasing properties. He stated this was the beauty of partnerships.

Seeing no further public comment speakers, President Lorimore closed the Public Comment Period.

Jason Greenspan, Manager of Sustainable and Resilient Development, provided an overview of the items on the agenda. He included a brief recap of requests from the December meeting and how staff has followed up. He indicated that Item Number 2 would include a presentation on RAMP research, which SCAG staff initiated in 2020 with Connect SoCal and its required mitigation measures. He noted that the Committee members would see the RAMP white paper outline how to plan effectively for a program, such as who the essential partners and collaborators are to achieve success. He also indicated that the Committee would hear from two regional partners - practitioners of advance mitigation planning at the regional level – to better understand how their [the regional partners] programs support both growth and conservation in Orange and Riverside Counties. He also noted that Kimberly Clark from SCAG would summarize the feedback they [SCAG] had received thus far from interviewing our transportation partners and other stakeholders on the feasibility of a RAMP in the SCAG region.

Mr. Greenspan also reported that staff had set up a webpage for materials associated with this advisory task group which would include agendas, presentations and all public comments submitted. He indicated that staff had heard from the RAMP-ATG members that it would be helpful to have a one stop shop for materials and background about the SoCal Greenprint project and highlighted that SCAG had a comprehensive webpage set up for the project, which was now built out further to improve user navigation to important information. He briefly showcased the website and links to all reports and presentations on the project over the past few years to the Regional Council, Energy and Environment Committee (EEC), Community, Economic and Human Development, the Emerging Technology Committee, the Technical Working Group, and the Natural and Farmland Conservation Working Group. He also highlighted that staff developed a document

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guide that was linked at the top of the webpage and noted that materials were from 2018 through 2021. He also emphasized that the October 2021 report to the Regional Council was included in the agenda packet for this meeting as it provides a lot of project background, including an overview of outreach, a summary of feedback, correspondence, data layers proposed and those already removed, and the data vetting process. He further noted that the webpage also includes links to other useful information, such as a link to the proposed data layer list, access to a project factsheet, and access to newsletters issued since the project began. Lastly, he provided a brief overview of the meeting timeline and noted that the RAMP-ATG was expected to convene two more times through March in order to develop the policy framework for advanced mitigation.

Regional Councilmember Curt Hagman, San Bernardino County, asked Mr. Greenspan to explain what he thought the relationship between the Greenprint and the RAMP should be.

Mr. Greenspan acknowledged the question and stated that the Greenprint essentially was a tool and a link to data that's open and available that will help decision makers on a variety of matters and one of those could be developing a regional advanced mitigation program. He stated that the data that would be in a Greenprint could help build out that type of program and could also help in a number of other planning initiatives that are regional level. He clarified that for the purposes of the mitigation program, they [the Greenprint and the RAMP] are looked at together but are two separate types of projects, one is a tool, and one is a program that they are assessing the viability of building out.

Regional Councilmember Hagman stated he agreed with Mr. Greenspan's assessment. He stated that one of the suggestions he had was that he thought there needed to be a procedure for the RAMP, as well as for the Greenprint separately. He expressed that his issue with the Greenprint was that the local government did not have a say in what became part of that list. He stated the current list was what staff had put out there without the electeds saying it was valid. He stated that as they go through this process, he was less concerned with the data right now and more concerned with what the process is to vet data and get it put on there. He emphasized they should have an open vetting process by the electeds. He advocated for a collaborative process and inviting partners back in.

Regional Councilmember Huang expressed concern for questions not being answered thoroughly. She stated that the process [to-date] had given a lot of people heartburn and echoed comments by Supervisor Hagman. She stated that all of them here wanted to ensure that what was presented in the policy paper, as well as the data sets, was credible and can be relied upon. She stated they [the RAMP-ATG] were all committed and wanted to work on this, but they needed staff to be much more thorough in their explanation and really listen to the questions.

### 3. Regional Advanced Mitigation (RAMP) Research and Draft White Paper

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President Lorimore opened the Public Comment Period.

Seeing no public comment speakers, President Lorimore closed the Public Comment Period.

Mr. Greenspan reported that when the Regional Council adopted the Connect SoCal PEIR in 2020, they [the Regional Council] committed to leading a multi-year effort to develop new regional tools, such as Regional Data Platform and ESRI partnership, as well as the SoCal Greenprint tool - examples that will help partners prioritize lands for conservation based on the best available scientific data. He also stated that in 2020, the PEIR mitigation measures were laid out and included the production of a white paper on the RAMP initiative, which would include potential approaches, needed science and analysis models, challenges, opportunities and recommendations. He reiterated the Regional Council's action in November 2021, which provided direction for staff to develop a white paper and work with this advisory committee on establishing a policy framework for advanced mitigation in the region. He stated that this would be to ensure the Greenprint tool once finalized, is aligned with policy objectives. He further reported that staff had been working on the white paper since the adoption of Connect SoCal over a year ago, and had been managing The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as they initiated the white paper under staff's direction as part of an exploratory process. He stated that TNC had been conducting research to assess viability of a RAMP for the SCAG region, and what the ingredients would be to right-size it and make it a success. He indicated that the focus for this meeting would be on the front end of the white paper outline, which includes an overview of what advance mitigation planning is, the planning process for designing a program, and important partners and collaborators.

Mr. Greenspan proceeded to introduce Liz O'Donoghue, whose background in transportation and natural resource policy is highly regarded. He noted that Ms. O'Donoghue was the Director of Sustainable and Resilient Communities Strategy at TNC's California Chapter and that her work focused on innovative mitigation approaches, multi benefit conservation tools, sustainable land patterns, and transportation planning and policy. He further stated that she was a founding member of the Statewide RAMP Workgroup in 2008, helping public infrastructure and natural resource agencies develop a statewide framework for RAMP and was involved in developing legislation creating the Caltrans Advanced Mitigation Program and Regional Conservation Investment Strategy Program. He also noted that she served on committees advising Caltrans on the California Transportation Plan and is a member of the California Public Infrastructure Advisory Commission. He indicated that Ms. O'Donoghue currently assists our sister agency in the Bay Area, MTC, developing a regional RAMP program and that prior to joining TNC she worked for Amtrak, first as a Public Affairs and Communications Director and then Strategic Planning Director for the West Coast. Lastly, he noted that she also led the legislative portfolio focusing on natural resources and transportation policy for U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg in New Jersey, with major roles in the TEA-21 transportation bill, airline security and public lands policies.

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Ms. O'Donoghue thanked the RAMP-ATG members for the opportunity to present at the meeting. She stated that as Mr. Greenspan had stated they had been working together with partners on developing a white paper on the RAMP. She explained that the purpose was to identify the benefits and challenges of RAMP as a regional strategy, identify ways to support existing programs, consider agencies' roles, and identify key questions and information gaps. She stated it was really to look at the feasibility and the viability of a regional ramp program. She indicated she was going to focus on the three items in the draft outline: 1) the overview; 2) the planning process; and 3) the partners and collaborators. With respect to the overview on the regional advanced mitigation, she stated it was a science-based approach to identify advanced mitigation opportunities to support regional conservation priorities and project delivery. She stated that by considering mitigation development early in the planning process, prior to design and permitting phases, proponents can identify higher quality mitigation options. She emphasized that the goal was to expedite project delivery and achieve meaningful conservation outcomes. She stated that the outcomes that they had seen RAMP achieve were saving time and money, efficient permitting, accelerating conservation investments, and that it also encourages and improves agency communication and coordination. She expressed that what RAMP offers is an opportunity to work together towards common goals. She noted that SCAG's focus for RAMP has been for planning purposes transportation, and that was because transportation offered a definable project list 10 to 20 years in advance. She stated that the planning framework could also apply to other sectors such as energy, water, and housing.

Regional Councilmember Hagman asked if this was primarily for transportation. Ms. O'Donoghue stated they had come to this working off examples for transportation, because they had seen this be successful in the past, but it also applied to energy, housing and water. She reported that one of the pieces of feedback they had received from outreach was that transportation sounded great, but they could also consider this framework for other sectors. She indicated that as they [the RAMP-ATG] saw the planning process, they would see how other sectors can participate and should participate, as she thought it would be great for the region.

Ms. O'Donoghue further stated that getting a project through the permitting process can be long and uncertain and noted there were multiple agencies and project components to engage with. She stated this was a problem for the infrastructure agencies, developers, and conservation because it takes a lot of work. She expressed that regional advance mitigation planning was essentially born from this problem. She reported that what they were seeing and what the RAMP-ATG would hear from partners at this meeting was that RAMP for the infrastructure agencies can provide expedited permits, certainty, lower risk for projects, and reduce costs. She stated that for the conservation side, investing mitigation dollars into conservation priorities that support agency and community goals, results in ecosystem and public health benefits and reduce costs, from the conservation perspective. She noted that RAMP was considered a best practice for infrastructure project delivery throughout the country and California had been a leader in developing and implementing regional

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advanced mitigation planning. She explained that the Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plans (MSHCP) and the environmental mitigation programs that were enacted as part of transportation sales tax measures, were incredibly successful in creating a smoother path for infrastructure and housing development and resulting in hundreds and thousands of acres protected for the health and recovery of endangered species and habitats. She further noted that RAMP's had been developed in other states such as North Carolina, Colorado and Florida, with the same goals and outcomes. She stated that this did not go unnoticed and in 2006, the Federal Highway Administration published a report called Eco-Logical - An Ecosystem Approach to Developing Infrastructure Projects that highlighted the goals, outcomes, and process for RAMP. Additionally, a few years later, state and federal agencies in California created the RAMP Work Group that produced a report called the Draft Statewide Framework for RAMP, which led to an advanced mitigation program at Caltrans. Ms. O'Donoghue further stated that MSHCP's in the SCAG region, led by agencies they [the RAMP-ATG] would hear from at this meeting, represented the best most effective advanced mitigation framework. She indicated that once developed and approved, an MSHCP was a turnkey operation. She stated that they would also notice that these plans were subsets of counties and so it begged the question of what a regional agency can provide to help support these projects and bring the benefits of RAMP to other areas of the region that are not covered by these habitat conservation plans.

With respect to the planning process, Ms. O'Donoghue stated that the RAMP planning process requires knowledge of the projects one is considering and conservation information. She explained that considering this information together, rather than in siloed processes, enables partners to share information, understand goals and objectives, and see how shared goals can be achieved. She noted that the planning process can be simplified into four steps and proceeded to share maps from Caltrans, which recently completed a regional advance mitigation needs assessment. The steps were as follows: 1) identify the planned projects; 2) assemble conservation information; 3) predict impacts and determine mitigation needs for selected projects; and 4) collaborate and identify suitable mitigation sites or existing options. She also explained that by looking at a suite of projects together, RAMP allows mitigation to bundle together satisfying mitigation needs for many projects and resulting in larger conservation actions that better support the health of the environment. She stated it also reduces the work needed for both the project proponent and the regulatory agencies by looking at many projects together and having the benefit of working on a suite of projects rather than working to process permit by permit. Ms. O'Donoghue also emphasized that mitigation framework is aligned with agency outcomes, particularly the regulatory agencies, and it helps with more efficient permitting. She stated that each agency has its own policies and practices, and it takes a lot of effort and collaboration to ensure that all the agencies feel comfortable with the approach and the actions. She highlighted that both OCTA and Riverside Conservation Authority (RCA) have both been successful in achieving that and blazed the path for the rest of them. She noted they could learn a lot from their [OCTA and RCA] experience.

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With respect to partners and collaborators, she stated that OCTA, RCA and others had advisors that advised with process, but noted it could be broken into a couple items: 1) those who need mitigation, such as infrastructure agencies, cities, housing developers and the energy sector; 2) those who approve mitigation, like the regulatory agencies that need to be at the table, and by doing this collectively through a RAMP process, there is less sequential conversation and more holistic conversation; 3) those who supply mitigation, which include habitat agencies, mitigation bankers, mitigation credit agreements sponsors, conservancies, land trust and open space districts, which can be thought about as the supply parallel to the demand; and 4) the planners at all scales, like cities, towns, county, and tribal. She noted that planners develop the conservation element, the housing element, and the development element of general plans. She emphasized that planners were helpful to help guide the best opportunities for mitigation and to ensure consistency with local and community goals.

Regional Councilmember Hagman noted that Ms. O'Donoghue had mentioned that this was going to streamline permits and make things simpler and asked if they had the opportunity to look back at this process and if they could build this into a white paper. Secondly, he stated that the experience with Caltrans had been more of a transportation tool and thought that the pushback they had received from local cities when he was mayor was that transportation was done more at the regional level and had a lot more resources, like taxpayer dollars. He noted that in San Bernardino County, Orange County and San Diego they had a lot of open space, but most of the members of SCAG did not, so he asked if they were trying to fit a round peg into a square hole. He expressed concern about putting a blank statement over the entire SCAG region, which may create a lot more problems and so he asked how they build that into the white paper. He further noted that Ms. O'Donoghue had mentioned their partners to make the white paper and was curious who those partners were. He asked if it had developers as well as the conservation folks because he wanted a document that they all could stand behind and did not what to make this divisive. He emphasized that their goal at SCAG was being collaborative to bringing people together and thought it was important to bring all the partners to the table on this process. He expressed that goals and concept were fantastic and they needed to do this. Lastly, he asked staff what SCAG's goal or vision was as they put the RAMP together.

Ms. O'Donoghue stated that the SCAG region was enormous, and it had several well-developed programs that they will hear about later in the meeting and others that were habitat conservation plans. She noted that these were approved plans and projects that were on a smaller scale, but very much efficient and turnkey. She clarified that not every place in the SCAG region had the resources or the need for a Habitat Conservation Plan. She stated that what the RAMP offers is a planning process, a framework, by which you can look at a definable suite of projects and definable conservation priorities in particular areas where they may not have a Habitat Conservation Plan. She stated that one of the things they had been thinking about was that in some cases or in jurisdictions, there were conservation processes that did not stop at the borders of jurisdictions, so

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they had wildlife conductivity, migration corridors, and other needs like forest management for wildfire risk that goes past jurisdictions. She stated this was an open discussion and noted how can a RAMP in the SCAG region, support and benefit those projects that need to move forward and bring the conservation goals and priorities to be of assistance and to help. She stated that scope and scale was a question that they were thinking about.

Regional Councilmember Hagman stated it would be easier to digest if they start off with the main conservation areas and then expand. He suggested a bottom-up approach and that they should agree on the goals. He also noted that size and scale should be addressed and maybe that was something they could look at in the future. He stated that the tool they were talking about should be something that they developed from the ground floor.

Kome Ajise, Executive Director, stated that Regional Councilmember Hagman raised a very fundamental point on the reason for this white paper. He clarified that the idea behind the white paper, from the regional view that they have, was if SCAG could create a policy framework that would allow for conservation and planning for infrastructure, whether it's transportation or any other infrastructure to be done in concert. He stated it was ahead of the game and therefore more efficient because ultimately it was in the interest of public resources. He expressed that having this discussion at the regional level, he thought, didn't necessarily undermine local control. He stated it was just providing a regional perspective that would have policy individuals come up with the policy framework for how a RAMP should look like in a region that is consistent across the region. He stated that policy framework would provide tremendous capacity for many of their jurisdictions and explained that most of our cities were under 100,000 population and capacities were limited, and this would provide that capacity, for them to be able to have a defined framework within which to operate and minimize that cost.

Regional Councilmember Hagman asked Executive Director Ajise if he saw the RAMP and the Greenprint as a tool for cities and counties to adopt in their general plan as a voluntary thing.

Executive Director Ajise stated there was nothing to adopt and that the Greenprint was just a tool for them to use if they wanted. He explained that it could help to make a good judgment of what types of impacts a project might be leading to contend with, ahead of the game and then plan for those contingencies upfront. He noted that it was a tool that SCAG had committed to providing to help jurisdictions who might need it because they did not have the capacity to do all that comprehensive planning on their own.

Regional Councilmember Hagman asked Ms. O'Donoghue who the partners were in making the white paper. Ms. O'Donoghue stated that Ms. Clark would be providing additional information during her presentation, but noted the County Transportation Commissions (CTC), Caltrans, mitigation bankers, and conservation organizations who have been involved in the RAMP's before.

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Regional Councilmember Hagman asked if there were any cities, county entities or developers. Ms. O'Donoghue stated the county entities they talked to were the CTC's.

Regional Councilmember Hagman expressed that he was hopeful that when the plan on the RAMP and the Greenprint came out that everyone can agree to it and maybe it was just a process part about how they bring data and vet things.

President Lorimore expressed that they may get some of their questions answered with the other presentations as they went through the meeting.

Regional Councilmember Huang stated that she hoped Ms. Clark could explain during her presentation how and why they chose certain partners and excluded others. She expressed concern that in looking at Connect SoCal it did mention jurisdictions like cities, and the fact that city planners were excluded concerned her. She further expressed concern that TCA was not part of the conversation given that they have done so much work on the corridor for wildlife and not having all the partners. She asked Ms. O'Donoghue, based on the presentation, if she was encouraging with the Greenprint some kind of end result of jurisdictions setting up mitigation banks that would ensure connectivity. She also asked why they were going through this exercise if these tools, as Ms. O'Donoghue had suggested, were really suggestions to help jurisdiction and not really going to be enforceable. She stated that if they were going to want this to be adopted then they really needed to get their local jurisdictions to be part of the conversation.

Executive Director Ajise explained that the Greenprint was just a tool and not intended to be enforced or adopted. He stated it was voluntary and there to help because they thought it would make planning better in our region. He stated that under state law, they cannot enforce the RTP/SCS and specifically stated that SCAG can't override local land use with the SCS, but SCS is there to help show a different vision of planning in our region. He stated it was not unusual to have a voluntary tool at a regional agency. He stated that SCAG did not mandate anything that anybody had to use from SCAG. He explained that the reason they had to do the Greenprint was because the adopted regional plan, and the environmental impact report mandates that we do it. He stated it was a commitment SCAG made in the plan.

Ms. O'Donoghue addresses the question on creating mitigation banks and stated that in certain areas of the region, there are habitat conservation plans that are turnkey, and they would hear from a couple of them later in the meeting. She stated that if there was an entity within that area, and they want to participate, then it's probably their best choice. She further stated that there were other parts of the region that did not have habitat conservation plans. She explained that there were new plans called regional conservation investment strategies and in fact, one was being developed in the San Bernardino County area. She stated that once these were approved, a public

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agency, a private agency, developer, mitigation bank or anybody, can develop a mitigation credit agreement that creates credits and then they bank those credits. She noted they could either use those credits for their own purpose, they can sell them, or they can transfer them. She stated that this was another opportunity and was based on a plan. She further explained that there were mitigation bankers who would benefit from this information because they are somewhat speculative on areas that they think would be good in markets, to create a mitigation bank and then to sell. She stated that they [mitigation bankers] have been very interested in having this information identified so they can have a more definable and certain place to invest in and create mitigation banks to sell mitigation credits. She noted all these things were part of advanced mitigation and the planning process that she had walked through was essentially the same, but there can be many different ways to engage in advanced mitigation depending on one's own needs and opportunities. She stated it was actually quite a flexible framework and there was no mandating of somebody needs to do this or that, they were just options that were available to scale their needs.

Regional Councilmember David Pollock, Moorpark, District 46, stated he had a lot of people struggling to understand what the Greenprint and RAMP were. He stated that in order to explain it he had been using an analogy from a construction project such as as-builts, where it was important to know where existing piping was when you go into a construction project. He indicated that he saw the Greenprint as something similar and thought it was better to understand where things were and plan for them in advance then to run into things later. He stated that lot of people were seeing harm in doing this and that somehow people were going to abuse this tool to delay projects, but he saw it as the opposite. He explained that he thought this was an opportunity for them to know these things ahead of time and deal with mitigations in advance so that construction projects don't get hung up.

#### 4. Presentation from Orange County Transportation Commission (OCTA) on the Freeway Environmental Mitigation Program

Public Comment for Item Number 4 was offered earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Greenspan introduced Lesley Hill who was the Project Manager for the OCTA's M2 Environmental Mitigation Program. He noted that Ms. Hill has worked at OCTA for over 10 years as project manager and helped develop and complete both the OCTA Conservation Plan and the programmatic permit for the Orange County Go freeway projects. He also noted that she now oversaw the implementation of the program. Additionally, before working at OCTA, she worked as a biologist at Caltrans and had also worked in the private sector. Mr. Greenspan also introduced Melanie Schlotterbeck who was representing OCTA. He noted that Ms. Schlotterbeck was Vice Chair of OCTA's Environmental Oversight Committee and has been on that committee for 15 years. He further highlighted that Ms. Schlotterbeck represents more than 30 conservation and community

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groups that supported OCTA's Renewed Measure M because of its environmental program and that she helped to reinforce the bridge between the worlds of conservation and transportation.

Ms. Schlotterbeck reported that this presentation covered four different topics: 1) an introduction to OCTA's Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP); 2) the building blocks behind the EMP; 3) the role of the Environmental Oversight Committee (EOC); and 4) the launch of EMP. She reported that in 1990, 55% of voters approved a 20-year one half cent sales tax measure that funded \$3.1 billion in transportation improvements. She stated that funding was directed into three categories: 1) freeways; 2) streets and roads; and 3) transit. She noted that it took three times at the ballot box before voters actually approved it. Fast forward to 2005, she explained that because of troubles passing M1, OCTA allowed an extra six years to get the renewal M2 passed. She noted that the duration of the measure, the percentage of support from voters, and the amount of funding all increased. She stated that M2 had the exact same program allocations as M1, but this measure now required two thirds of voters to approve it. She also reported that in 2005, OCTA was first introduced to the environmental community through a conference sponsored by the Local Government Commission, the Institute for Local Government, and the regional conservation focused nonprofit, Friends of Harbor, Beaches and Parks. She stated that this conference brought together diverging interests like environmental groups and the Building Industry Association, and because of this conference, OCTA reached out to the environmental community to discuss its plans for M2 and ask for environmental support. She also reported that in the early 2000's, environmental groups began researching other transportation measures and came across San Diego's TransNet, which was a model for how to achieve both transportation and conservation projects. She stated that it had allocated \$880 million in what is now called a RAMP. She highlighted that this was the starting point for discussions between OCTA and the conservation community.

Ms. Schlotterbeck provided an overview of how mitigation had historically been done and displayed a clip from OCTA's freeway project list. She explained that mitigation was normally a set percentage, roughly 5-8% of the capital expenditures. As an example, she discussed the Santa Ana Freeway Interchange Improvements. She noted that 5-8% of this project, would be \$23 to \$38 million for environmental actions such as California Environmental Quality Act compliance, permitting with various agencies, and completing mitigation needs. She stated this was a piecemeal approach and it was how mitigation had historically been calculated and implemented on a project-by-project basis. She further stated that that mitigation was not as thoughtful or strategic as it could have been, and it was normally done along the sides of freeways. She clarified that what the environmental community envisioned was looking at the entire freeway program budget instead of the individual freeway projects for a comprehensive approach, so this meant that 243 million to about 390 million was available to fund an advanced mitigation program. She stated that no new money was being requested and was a huge selling point for OCTA. She also explained that programmatic mitigation goes above and beyond any one particular species, and it was about

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ecosystems sustainability, and all of the natural resource values in the ecosystem. She stated that what environmental groups hoped for was that the measure would pull the project impacts and pull the money to mitigate the impacts so that larger scale mitigation was not only possible but was required. As an example, she stated that instead of doing one environmental impact report per 13 projects in M2, it now bundled that environmental review into one EIR. She reported that no support could be given for the M2 project list if the 241-Toll Road Extension, through the San Onofre State Beach, or a tunnel through the Cleveland National Forest, connecting Riverside County to Orange County, or an extension of the 57 freeway over the Santa Ana River to Pacific Coast Highway, was included. She stated that OCTA had already done polling on these three projects and felt they were too controversial to include in the measure, so this sealed the deal. She reported that OCTA committed to a minimum of \$243.5 million of the freeway program revenues for advanced mitigation and the funds could be used three ways: acquisition, restoration, and management. She stated that the measure also required that freeway projects impacting existing wildlife corridors must be funded separately, and language was inserted to ensure a net environmental benefit between transportation projects in the mitigation program, and finally, it established an oversight committee. She also noted that through Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks, a coalition of more than 30 conservation and community groups, were aligned to support M2. She highlighted that it was the first time in Orange County history that environmentalists supported a transportation measure. She further stated that environmental leaders worked closely with OCTA, the measures political advisors and marketing team, and the Orange County Business Council to promote the measure. She displayed a sample flyer that went out to the environmental coalition's mailing lists showing endorsement of the measure. She stated that it was also important to note that the measure included funding for water quality improvements, meaning that the measure actually contained a total of about \$475 million for the environment. She shared that former Caltrans Director and then OCTA CEO Will Kempton said that "the collaborative effort between OCTA and the Environmental Coalition has been instrumental in the success we have enjoyed in this program and preserving our legacy for the future."

Ms. Lesley Hill proceeded to provide an overview of the main components of the OCTA's EMP and displayed a map with the 13 different freeway projects, which included the seven preserves and the 12 restoration projects funded throughout the county. She stated that all of these components were key to designing their EMP. She shared that the projects were identified early on, which enabled them to have a pretty good idea of the type of mitigation that they would need. She reported that the properties in projects were evaluated by a subcommittee of the EOC and aligned with the OCTA's project mitigation needs. She reported that the OCTA Natural Community Conservation Plan was finalized in 2016 and the OCTA worked with state and federal wildlife agencies, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, and Caltrans to develop this document. She informed the RAMP-ATG that the conservation plan was the mechanism that enabled the OCTA preserves restoration projects and other commitments of the EMP to be used as mitigation for the Otsego freeway projects. She also reported that OCTA

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also developed corresponding state and federal environmental documents for the conservation plan. She clarified that on a separate, but parallel path, OCTA was able to utilize some of the same mitigation committed to in the conservation plan for mitigation with state and federal regulatory agencies. She highlighted that a benefit of the OCTA EMP was that they had well defined and achievable projects. She stated that OCTA also included baseline information of the freeway projects, and anticipated impacts to native habitat, plant, and animal species. She noted that in coordination with the agencies, they determined the most applicable regulatory process for OCTA, which was the development of a conservation plan and a programmatic permit with the Army Corps of Engineers. She stated that through this process, OCTA developed a trusting relationship with their state and federal wildlife and regulatory agency partners. She highlighted that the development of this partnership was an absolute co benefit to developing the conservation plan. She displayed a slide of how they quantified the anticipated impacts for the freeway projects which helped them develop their mitigation goals. She also reported that a baseline key for the program was to develop a conservation assessment specific to Orange County which was their planning area. She explained that this assessment helped identify areas where biological resources could be maintained over the long term, and it assessed habitat linkage opportunities and helped OCTA build on existing conservation investments already made within the county. She shared a slide that depicted the OCTA's conservation plan covered species. She stated that these were species that were either listed as threatened or endangered by state and federal agencies or had a good chance of becoming listed. She noted that there were 13 species that were covered by the OCTA's conservation plan. She also reported that it was determined that one of the first necessary steps was to develop and execute a master agreement with the agencies directly involved with the freeway projects and stated that the Master Agreement was signed by OCTA, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Caltrans. She stated the agreement outlined all the roles, responsibilities, and objectives for the conservation plan.

Ms. Schlotterbeck reported that the implementing agreement for measure M2 required the creation of an EOC. She stated that Councilmember Brian Goodell from Mission Viejo was currently the chair, and she was elected as the vice chair at the first meeting in 2007 and has remained in that role ever since. She noted that through the Friends of Harbor, Beaches and Parks, she was part of the negotiating team, on behalf of the conservation groups, and formed a coalition to support the measure. She stated that as vice chair, she represents the 30 environmental groups with interests in this program. She reported that the EOC also has representatives from United States Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Caltrans, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the public. She reported that the EOC advances the program, determines where the funds are spent, what the priorities are, and how best to manage and protect the mitigation sites. She further noted that the EOC makes recommendations to the OCTA board, and all final decisions reside there. She stated that to date, not one decision had been overturned that was recommended by the EOC. Ms. Schlotterbeck went on to explain how they evaluate properties when they had a board of 18 influential and well-respected politicians trying to bring dollars to their jurisdiction. She noted that

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everything they did had to tie to the permits, so scientific criteria was applied to the evaluation process, and using the principles of conservation biology, an evaluation checklist was created. She explained that science indicated that bigger was better, contiguous was better, connected was better, closer was better, roadless was better, fewer edges were better, species diversity was better, species should be well distributed, bigger habitats have more species, but what had actually been done to the landscape was something entirely different. She noted that the evaluation criteria included both biological criteria and to a lesser extent, non-biological attributes. She noted that these topics included things like 1) was there a willing seller; 2) was there a threat of development; 3) was the property supported by the M2 Environmental Coalition; 4) how will the property be managed; and 5) were there any recreational opportunities. She stated that the task was to find and evaluate potential properties. She reported that in 2000, Friends of Harbor, Beaches, and Parks developed a regional Greenprint and shared a green vision map which was updated annually. She stated that this map became the baseline inventory for OCTA's acquisition search and the Greenprint provided the context to existing protected areas, identified potential mitigation lands, and this information ultimately saved OCTA time and money, since the homework of available properties had already been done and was current. She noted that Supervisor Pat Bates, now Senator, commented that "this program is a prime example of how development and the environment can coexist."

Ms. Schlotterbeck highlighted that the EMP had preserved 1,300 acres and showcased the different preserves like Silverado Canyon, called Silverado Chaparral, Pacific Horizon in Laguna Beach, Live Oak Canyon, and Trabuco Rose in Trabuco Canyon. She noted that mountain lion crossing was under specialized fencing and there was an OCTA sign talking about the mitigation program and preserve. She also mentioned Wren's View and Bobcat Bridge and stated that each of these properties were protected because of their habitat and species distribution. Lastly, she also highlighted Eagle Ridge in Brea, which was 300 acres and adjacent to Chino Hills State Park. She noted that Regional Councilmember Hagman had mentioned the wildlife corridor and because of partnerships like this with OCTA, the environmental community, and other park agencies they continued to build lands in the Puente Hills/Chino Hills wildlife corridor. She reported that they also had several restoration projects, 12 to be exact. She showed a before and after picture of Big Bend in Laguna Beach.

With respect to the NCCP, Ms. Schlotterbeck mentioned that the most important thing for OCTA was that there were no surprises as it relates to future listing of endangered species. She stated this allowed for broader mitigation and required both long term management commitments and funding that had to be included in the conservation plans as a dedicated funding source. In terms of a conservation strategy, she noted that the permitting mechanisms were different for the wildlife agencies and the aquatic resources, like the Army Corps of Engineers and the Water Quality Control Board and stated both of those processes had to move forward. She noted that the benefit of an advanced mitigation program across the region was that if you were impacting riparian resources,

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you could look to other counties for those mitigation opportunities. She also reported that OCTA had also created hiking and equestrian rides, about six to eight rides a year, which was a way to engage the public. She did note that these preserves were not open to the public typically because they were being preserved for habitat and so it was a guided program.

Ms. Schlotterbeck reported that in terms of next steps, was implementing OC Go, formerly measure M2, this freeway mitigation project, managing preserves on an interim basis, mostly by OCTA. She stated that the long-term goal was to establish long term managers and the properties will transfer to those entities, monitoring restoration projects, making sure that those get signed off by the wildlife agencies, and making sure that they are not potentially being burned by some of the wildfires as they have been. She indicated that right now the focus was on creating fire management plans, which sets standards for their fire agencies to understand where the important resources are and where they are not. She highlighted that some of the key takeaways for this program was that you get to look at things holistically, you have a defined project list, it recognizes that one size does not fit all, it's important to have that baseline information, especially for things like the Orange County Greenprint, it applies an appropriate regulatory process and speeds things up, and there are assurances established for all of the permitting agencies.

Regional Councilmember Hagman expressed it was a wonderful presentation. He stated that they basically took a transportation sales tax measure and use a part of that money to fund the different habitats and conservation projects throughout Orange County. As noted, OCTA has taken the lead on all this and asked how it had been interacting with the development communities on freeway expansion projects or other projects throughout the county, whether they participated or not.

Ms. Schlotterbeck stated it was an entirely public process in which anyone that wanted to be involved could be involved. She stated that here were quite a few properties nominated for consideration of preservation and one example was the Trabuco Rose which had a development proposal on it.

Regional Councilmember Hagman clarified his question and asked what if any are they [the developers] contributing to this process and if they were completely on their own? He stated he was asking because this had been proposed as not just a transportation RAMP, but also as housing, energy, water, and all inclusive. He asked what if any participation has been by other development, for those sectors into this plan.

Ms. Schlotterbeck stated that the development community, the way the measure had been written, could not accommodate at the moment anyone else participating in this regulatory process with OCTA because there were a defined 13 freeway projects that OCTA needed to mitigate. She explained that they [the RAMP-ATG] were going to hear a presentation later that links housing and

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other development, as well as transportation and conservation. She stated that would be better ask there because they [the next presenter] had more flexibility and more scope.

Regional Councilmember Hagman Ms. Schlotterbeck if she would see herself as an organization transferring this to the SCAG, for it to add the housing, water, and other components to their plan at this point.

Ms. Schlotterbeck stated this would be a major amendment of the ordinance and did not believe that could be achieved at the moment, but it could be in the future.

Regional Councilmember Hagman asked Ms. Schlotterbeck if she would like to see this go from their local control to SCAG, like bigger picture.

Ms. Schlotterbeck stated that she believed based on the permits it could not be transferred. She stated that what would be overlaid on the SCAG side covers everything and those regional projects that sit on county boundaries, so it would be in addition to this one.

Kome Ajise, Executive Director, stated SCAG could not subsume this because it had its own regulation.

Regional Councilmember Hagman stated this went back to his point that this was a local measure, passed by the taxpayers with a goal to increase their freeways and to have mitigation on those freeways. He stated that Orange County did it right, they did it from the bottom up and got local buy in to make this project work.

Regional Councilmember Huang stated she was very proud of what Orange County had done and thought they had done quite a bit. She asked if SCAG would be looking, when they create the policy for the white paper, at incorporating all the things that the local jurisdictions were doing to create a regional RAMP or if they were looking at what the counties were doing and helping these individual jurisdictions do better work by collecting that data and examples for other jurisdictions. She asked what the takeaway was from what they had just seen with OCTA. She also asked if they were making this into something for the entire region, or were they just saying, here's a great example, we're going to collect all the data and put it together in the white paper.

President Lorimore stated that Regional Councilmember Huang was asking good questions and asked if they [staff] could make note of them to answer later because he thought some of the questions may be answered by the following presentations. Regional Councilmember Huang indicated she was okay with getting answers later in the meeting.

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5. Presentation from Riverside Conservation Authority (RCA) Western Riverside County Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan

President Lorimore opened the Public Comment Period.

Seeing no public comment speakers, President Lorimore closed the Public Comment Period.

Jason Greenspan, Manager of Sustainable and Resilient Development, introduced Aaron Hake who was speaking on behalf of the Riverside County Transportation Commission (RCTC) and the Western RCA. He noted that Mr. Hake served as the Interim Regional Conservation Deputy Executive Director for RCTC, which became the managing agency of RCA in January 2021 and that RCA managed the largest habitat conservation plan in the country.

Mr. Hake applauded the RAMP-ATG for taking on this visionary conversation. He expressed his agency and the plan he was going to talk about were here because of visionary conversations that leaders within Riverside County, on the Board of Supervisors, City Council's, the building industry, the environmental community, and the transportation industry had almost 20 years ago. He stated they recognized that the region was going to grow and recognized that they were in a biological hotspot, that mitigation was happening, and that development was happening inefficiently. He noted that in fact, there was a lot of litigation and things were moving slowly through regulatory agencies, and everybody wanted to do something about it. He recognized a couple of people at this meeting who were involved in the crafting of the Western Riverside County Plan, like Dan Silver, who was intricately involved in the negotiations, and Liz O'Donoghue, who was an advisor to Caltrans in the negotiation of the Western Riverside County MSHCP, and his Executive Director, Anne Mayer, who was the Caltrans District Director in the Inland Empire at that time.

Mr. Hake proceeded with the presentation and recognized Regional Councilmember Hagman who had pointed out that these processes needed to be generated at the local level. He emphasized that these processes needed to be locally driven and agreed upon, and they needed to bring other partners to the table. He informed the RAMP-ATG that the Riverside County Integrated Project back in the early 2000's had multiple components, the biggest of which was the MSHCP. He stated that it also involved the new county general plan which would guide this development in the future and has come to fruition. He stated that the project integrated the general plan, the transportation vision, the next sales tax measure from Riverside County, Measure A, the need to preserve open space to protect species, and to create the reserve. He noted that it was a very arduous process for this [the project] to happen. He stated it was clear to him today, that everybody then had a reason to walk away from the negotiation, but at the same time they knew that they couldn't afford to walk away because they wanted development, the economy, the transportation system to grow, and they also wanted the environment to be protected and to preserve the quality of life for people who moved to their community to enjoy. He expressed that they found a way to that. Mr. Hake

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explained that their plan was one of over a dozen natural community conservation plans in the state and noted they had one in the Coachella Valley. He reported that over 90% of the residents in their county live within one of these plans. He noted that these were existing tools that communities can use to get state and federal permits to streamline the review process for their projects. He addressed one of the points raised by the RAMP-ATG members about how this works and how do you bring housing to the table. He explained that their plan not only applied to transportation projects, but it applied to development projects, utilities and other types of infrastructure that will get built across their region. He noted that development pays impact fees, and it was a requirement of their plan that every city in the county imposes development impact fees, which pays for the habitat that they acquire to assemble the reserve. He further explained that if a jurisdiction chose not to impose that development impact fee, then they did not get sales tax money from their transportation sales tax measure, which was written into the ordinance the voters had approved. He stated that development pays its own way and also contributes acreage to the reserve in some instances. He highlighted that the benefit they get here was streamline project delivery. He explained that when you have a transportation project or a development project that occurs in the planning area, instead of negotiating one on one with the resource agencies, you just simply have to demonstrate that you're consistent with the requirements of this plan. He stated the plan was extensive in its description of what was required, but it was predictable and consistent. He noted that on some projects, especially transportation projects, they did have some metrics where they can demonstrate that they are able to clear projects through the wildlife agencies in a certain amount of time versus what they normally would have taken otherwise. Mr. Hake noted this was the big benefit and demonstrated pictures of some of the projects that had benefited from this, such as: 1) the 91 Corridor Improvement Project, between Riverside and Orange County that was completed a couple of years ago, and went through the MSHCP review process called the Joint Project Review; 2) the Santa Ana River Trail that was being completed, and the next segment of that project had gone through a Joint Project Review within a sensitive habitat area; 3) the Perris Valley Line; and 4) the new Metrolink extension, just to name few. He further noted that other projects they were working on in the 60 freeway or the 91 freeway, which had some significant wildlife corridors, did not get hung up in wildlife agency reviews because they had MSHCP's with a path forward.

Mr. Hake displayed and briefly provided an overview of their RCA MSHCP information map. He noted this plan was the largest Habitat Conservation Plan in the country, which covered 146 species. He noted that they had an ambitious goal to assemble a 500,000-acre reserve and that a lot of that reserve already existed in the form of national forests and public parklands. He stated that at the local level they had a responsibility to acquire about 97,000 acres of additional habitat and that this was defined in the Habitat Conservation Plan document. He proceeded to provide a demonstration of their GIS system which was publicly available on their website.

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## 6. Summary of Feedback Shared from Interviews with County Transportation Commissions on SCAG's upcoming Regional Advanced Mitigation Program

President Lorimore opened the Public Comment Period.

Seeing no public comment speakers, President Lorimore closed the Public Comment Period.

Ms. Clark, Program Manager II of Resource Conservation and Resilient Communities, noted that the Regional Council voted on October 7 to support the staff recommendation and continue the pause on implementation of the SoCal Greenprint, allowing further engagement with stakeholders to ensure the tool advances required PEIR mitigation measures and is aligned with regional policy objectives. She reported that during this pause on implementation, there were several ongoing steps underway as directed by the Regional Council, as follows: 1) the first of which was this Advisory Task Group, which would establish a policy framework and white paper for advance mitigation; 2) continuing to develop the Greenprint tool with focus on maximizing benefits to cities, counties and transportation agencies; 3) reviewing and revising proposed Greenprint data layers with feedback from strategic and scientific advisors, stakeholders, and the advisory task group; 4) further into 2022, conduct some user testing for the website; 5) develop a disclosure statement and user acknowledgement checkbox feature when the tool is started; and 6) return to the Regional Council in late 2022 to seek feedback and remove the implementation pause.

Ms. Clark indicated that this direction helps to build policy guidance for the next Connect SoCal plan in 2024, and also advances the policies, strategies, and mitigation measures of the existing Connect SoCal plan and its corresponding PEIR, which include: 1) identifying mitigation solutions for infrastructure projects early in the planning process; 2) supplementing regional conservation and mitigation banks; and 3) supporting long-term management and stewardship of already conserved areas. She also noted that this action supports implementation of mitigation measures in Connect SoCal's PEIR that call for the development of new regional tools, like the Regional Data Platform and the SoCal Greenprint, which can help identify priority conservation areas utilizing the most scientifically available data. Additionally, part of the PEIR mitigation measures calls for SCAG to produce a white paper on a Regional Advanced Mitigation initiative, and work with CTCs to do so. She stated that the Regional Council's action helps to implement this measure and most importantly, the white paper will identify how SCAG can potentially support advanced mitigation in the region, not create a program that SCAG then administers.

Ms. Clark provided information on the feedback shared from interviews with the CTC's on SCAG's upcoming RAMP and stated that SCAG and TNC held interviews with each of the CTC's in our region that focused on identifying how regional advanced mitigation would impact, supplement, or potentially complement existing advanced mitigation efforts in the region. She reported that SCAG also interviewed Caltrans District 7 and 8 staff, as well as Brightline West High Speed Rail Project

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staff, and Land Veritas – an organization that manages two mitigation banks in our region for the Soquel Canyon area near Chino Hills, as well as Petersen Range in Los Angeles County, which is the largest bank in the State of California. She noted that in conducting these interviews, SCAG focused on organizations that were existing practitioners of advanced mitigation to collect their direct feedback, and have continued engagements with other stakeholders, including local jurisdictions, through the Technical Working Group and the Regional Planning Working Groups. She explained that these interviews were held over the last several months and were expected to continue as they [SCAG staff] plan to interview staff from the Transportation Corridor Agencies in the coming weeks.

Ms. Clark reiterated that the October Regional Council action, directed SCAG staff to continue outreach through this entire process, and proceeded to provide a summary of the outreach to date on the RAMP. She reported that the summary of feedback from CTC's on the potential benefits of a RAMP, which could help: 1) address data gaps, and allow CTC's to provide comments on local land use, and facilitate data sharing amongst partner agencies; 2) enhance cross-jurisdictional and cross-county collaboration; 3) the RAMP could also encourage continued collaboration between SCAG and CTC's to address mitigation project-by-project and at a county scale; and 4) that the CTC's recommended that SCAG potentially arrange for incentives to spur advanced mitigation, and also provide solutions for reducing the impacts of projects. She further noted that the CTC's also expressed concerns on establishing a RAMP, including the potential duplication and/or conflicting mitigation efforts between regional, county, and local approaches, and that a RAMP also may have gaps in direct application to local conditions. Suggestions included, 1) recognition that RAMP can provide value across multiple sectors, including housing and not just transportation; 2) a menu of mitigation options and approaches could be tailored for each county; 3) a focus on water resources and engagement with water agencies should be considered, in addition to impacts on biological resources; and 4) engagements with CTC's, partner agencies, and utility agencies should be transparent.

Ms. Clark also reported that in addition to interviewing CTC's, SCAG was also engaging with other agencies, principally transportation providers, including Caltrans Districts 7 and 8, Brightline West, and Land Veritas. She stated that feedback included: 1) that establishment of a RAMP could bring private and public entities together towards a common goal; 2) it would increase public awareness of environmental resources; 3) support for a multi-county approach, especially when collaborating across Caltrans Districts for development of multi-species regional plans; 4) encouraged development of a credit system that could provide consistency across management of multiple mitigation banks; and 5) were interested in collaborating on advanced mitigation, specifically multi-agency advance mitigation projects.

Ms. Clark also provided an overview of the timeline of the RAMP-ATG and SoCal Greenprint and noted that looking forward, SCAG would be discussing RAMP initiatives and connections to data in the subsequent meeting, while staff seeks the RAMP-ATG's guidance on developing the RAMP

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Policy Framework through March. She informed the RAMP-ATG that they [SCAG staff] will also be engaging the Greenprint Science and Strategic Advisory Committee meeting after their next meeting of the ATG. She stated that an announcement of this meeting would be forthcoming, and that the meeting had recently been moved to March to allow sufficient time after this group [RAMP-ATG] provides feedback on the data considerations for the Greenprint. She reported that staff was aiming to present a policy framework to Regional Council in April and then finalize the list of data layers based on feedback from the strategic and scientific advisors, stakeholders like the Technical Working Group, and RAMP-ATG members. She further noted that from June until August, staff would aim to complete the draft tool and conduct user testing, as directed by Regional Council, and then in the Fall, staff would present the tool to Regional Council and the EEC for consideration of public release.

Lastly, Ms. Clark noted some issues for consideration by the RAMP-ATG in gearing up for the next meeting and stated that some of the questions they sought to address through ongoing discussion with this group to help develop the RAMP Policy Framework were: 1) what could a program for advance mitigation be in the SCAG region; 2) what regional policies should be emphasized; 3) how can we effectively satisfy SCAG's requirements in Connect SoCal and the PEIR related to RAMP; 4) what is the state of advanced mitigation in the SCAG region; 5) how can SCAG enhance this; and 6) what priorities, parameters and governance could be considered in development of the Greenprint tool to align with RAMP opportunities? Before closing, she addressed the question regarding the difference between the white paper and the RAMP policy framework. She noted that the white paper helps to explore existing RAMP in the region, and address the RAMP planning process, map out partners and collaborators, science and methods, scope and scale, potential roles, authorities and responsibilities, and funding and financing available. Whereas the policy framework, will have policies that will guide the future work on the regional advance mitigation program, and also carry through to key considerations for inclusion in our planning processes.

Regional Councilmember Huang stated that the foundation of this work was the stakeholders and their own RTP directed them [SCAG] to talk to cities and their partners [the builders], besides just the CTC's. She indicated that the builders had participated in the RTP, and that housing was part of this whole transportation network and asked why they were left out. She asked if SCAG was trying to subsume all the local planning because they were looking at it regional and if this was the purpose. She stated that one of the concerns was that it felt like a moving target for developers and transportation for any development projects.

Sarah Jepson, Planning Director, acknowledge the questions and stated that what they were trying to do at this meeting was to provide a background on what RAMP is and current examples of advanced mitigation in the region. She explained that the plan [RTP/SCS] indicated that SCAG was going to support advanced mitigation in the region and therefore SCAG needed to figure out how best to do that. She reported that staff had been working with the CTC's and others to gain that

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feedback. She stated that SCAG was not an implementing agency and generally supported others in taking actions, so they [staff] wanted to show what had happened in Orange County and Riverside. She noted SCAG wanted to support similar efforts in other counties, as well as look at opportunities where they can support the mitigation that might happen across county lines. She explained that SCAG was in a phase of understanding and the goal was to support RAMP in the region, which was what they [staff] had been asked to look into. She noted that this process was not to develop one RAMP that SCAG administers and indicated that at the next meeting they would talk about the goals for SCAG's RAMP initiative because that becomes part of the policy framework. She emphasized that SCAG was trying to provide a resource for the region to continue to support these types of programs and were not looking to take on the whole thing or to take over what the CTC's were doing as it was not within the scope of what they were looking at. She indicated that the tools that staff were developing, like the Greenprint, were aimed at supporting people who want to do more regional advanced mitigation. She also noted that the tools will be part of the policy framework so they can determine the types of tools they can create and the governance for those tools. Lastly, she stated that staff aimed to have the policy discussion to frame the work staff would be doing moving forward.

Regional Councilmember Huang asked how they were planning to implement a policy that would potentially affect the housing developers as well as the utilities if staff was not soliciting their input. She asked if they planned on reaching out to them.

Ms. Jepson stated that Mr. Greenspan had mentioned at the beginning the various outreach that had occurred and the working groups that had provided feedback. She stated all that information was available if they wanted to provide feedback on it.

Regional Councilmember Huang noted she was looking at the PowerPoints slides, and it was all transportation. She expressed concern for the cities, counties, utilities, housing, and citizens not being a part of the process.

Ms. Jepson stated that in developing the RTP and looking at ways that they can mitigate it, they definitely had a focus on transportation and how SCAG can support the transportation partners in mitigating their projects. She expressed that they hope the tools that they provide can provide additional benefit, but certainly the core and the research that they were doing to the white paper was to really reach out to our core partners who help them develop the transportation projects in our plan and figure out how SCAG can support them in mitigating those projects.

Regional Councilmember Huang indicated she would have to think about this a bit more but expressed that she liked Ms. Schlotterbeck's idea about connected is better, not segmented. She stated that if they really want to make things work, then everybody had to be at the table so that they don't create the chopped up visual that Ms. Schlotterbeck had provided in her presentation.

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She further emphasized that if they were serious about bringing balance, conservation, and mitigation for the projects that they were advancing, then they need to have everybody at the table to establish this and it just couldn't be transportation. She indicated that she was not sure if this was a policy they wanted to include in the white paper or if it was something they needed to discuss.

Executive Director Ajise acknowledged that Regional Councilmember Huang had provided a directive that would go into the policy that the RAMP-ATG was developing. He reconfirmed that she was saying that if SCAG was going to support a Greenprint, it should be beyond just transportation and it needed to be part of that policy framework for SCAG's Greenprint that was required per the RTP. He stated staff would take this as a beginning conversation and would come back to it next time.

Regional Councilmember Hagman stated they were here to provide direction to the staff, and this was their opportunity to say what they [the RAMP-ATG] would like to see in this going forward. He noted that the examples provided at the meeting were great, but both were focused on transportation mitigation, and they were trying to take this a couple steps forward. He stated he agreed with Regional Councilmember Huang that they needed to bring in other partners to the table, especially since they had so much pressure around development and needed to bring their building partners into the process. He indicated that to him it was clear that the RAMP and the Greenprint tool were two separate things. He stated he would like to see white papers that maybe parallel or are contingent on both. He further stated that he hoped that they could work together as a group to come up with a process to vet data sets before they go public and discuss the policy for what those data sets can possibly be on the Greenprint side white paper and continue discussions with the RAMP. He expressed that he thought they were both valuable tools for regional planning but that local control, local process, and local planning for the cities had to be a part of this. He stated they needed to make sure they had the ability for regions within the county to work collectively together to provide input into the RAMP process, and then hopefully all the stakeholders can be part of a committee to vet the data sets on the Greenprint. He indicated that they wanted the data to be beneficial to all the partners within their communities, both in government and the private sector. He suggested maybe having two white papers on the RAMP and the Greenprint and hopefully they connect and support each other for the regional goals. He mentioned that local input and at least some say by the Planning Commissions would be great. He reemphasized that it was important to have their local partners. He further noted that data sets on the Greenprint should not be published until they have a good operational process. He thanked everyone for their presentations.

Regional Councilmember David Pollock, Moorpark, District 46, stated that he thought this helped clarify some things for him and that it was a good learning process for them to really get their arms

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around this. He expressed that hopefully this would clear up any misunderstandings that were out there and how this [the Greenprint] was going to be used.

Regional Councilmember Hagman expressed that there was still a lot to cover and asked if there was any way of having additional meetings.

President Lorimore stated he would be open to more meetings as needed. Executive Director Ajise acknowledged the idea of having more meetings and stated he would address this with President Lorimore so they could then run it by the RAMP-ATG members.

President Lorimore asked for clarification on next steps and what staff was asking the RAMP-ATG members to think about.

Executive Director Ajise stated that staff hoped they could frame some of the thought process as to what direction the RAMP-ATG was looking to give and consider what kind of responsibilities SCAG has in dealing with Greenprint in our region, with the understanding that it was positive given the presentations they had received. He indicated that the questions by staff would help provide direction on what to include in the policy framework that they developed at SCAG for a RAMP.

President Lorimore stated he agreed with Regional Councilmember Hagman and would really appreciate at their next meeting spending time on figuring out if the Greenprint and the RAMP are the same or if they are different.

Regional Councilmember Huang stated she was glad they were going to have more meetings because there was a lot. She asked that this Committee have a chance to review the final product before they take it to the Regional Council or the Policy Committee. She stated that if this was going to be published, they all had to be on the same page. She noted that she would like to have that opportunity to provide feedback.

Ms. Jepson stated that staff can be prepared to put something down on paper for them to respond to. She expressed that they had good discussions and had a better understanding of what staff needs to clarify, such as what the policy framework is, what the Greenprint is, and how these things come together. She indicated that staff would work on an outline that has more detail in it so that the RAMP-ATG members can provide responses to the questions as outlined in the presentation.

President Lorimore stated they were elected officials and had their thoughts on these things, but they were not experts on all these subjects. He asked that for the next meeting they consider what the different options are and what were the positives and negatives. He asked that they go through them one by one and start weighing in.

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Regional Councilmember Hagman stated they were on the right path and needed to get some more specifics about what the process was going to be. He stated this would be helpful for them.

Regional Councilmember Pollock stated that what he wanted to get out of this process was to make sure that they were addressing the objections that were raised about this [the Greenprint], particularly the BIA, in which they saw this as some sort of a threat. He stated they needed to find a way to address their concerns or at least help them understand that it's not what they think it is.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, President Lorimore adjourned the Regular Meeting of the Regional Advanced Mitigation Planning - Advisory Task Group at 5:33 p.m.

[MINUTES ARE UNOFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE RAMP-ATG]

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## AGENDA ITEM 2 REPORT

Southern California Association of Governments  
Remote Participation Only  
February 18<sup>th</sup> 2022

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**To:** Regional Advance Mitigation Planning – Advisory Task Group  
(RAMP-ATG)

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S  
APPROVAL**

**From:** Jason Greenspan, Manager of Sustainability  
(213) 236-1859, [greenspan@scag.ca.gov](mailto:greenspan@scag.ca.gov)

**Subject:** SCAG Staff Update

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### **RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR RAMP-ATG:**

Information Only – No Action Required

### **STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This item supports the following Strategic Plan Goal 3: Be the foremost data information hub for the region.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

*This report contains a summary of attached documents for the February 18<sup>th</sup> RAMP-ATG Meeting.*

### **BACKGROUND:**

The attachments for the February 18th RAMP-ATG meeting include reference documents for Agenda Items 2 through 5.

Agenda Item Number 2 is the presentation for a SCAG staff update on activities since the last RAMP-ATG meeting.

Agenda Item Number 3 is a presentation from Melinda Molnar, Acting Office Chief of Caltrans Office of Biological Science and Innovation on their existing RAMP program.

Agenda Item Number 4 is the Draft Regional Advanced Mitigation Program Policy Framework which covers an introduction to Regional Advance Mitigation Programs (RAMP), alignment with Connect SoCal goals, opportunity and challenge areas, goals, data needs and resources, and other established RAMPs in the SCAG region.

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Additionally, as shared in the January 28<sup>th</sup> RAMP-ATG meeting, a comprehensive repository of past Greenprint staff reports, presentations, public hearings, and meeting minutes dating back to 2018 on the SoCal Greenprint website, can be found at this link: <https://scag.ca.gov/gis-social-greenprint/staff-reports-presentations-and-documents>.

For further information, RAMP-ATG members are invited to refer to the Greenprint Newsletters, which are archived on the website at this link: <https://scag.ca.gov/pod/social-greenprint-newsletter>.

The following chart provides a table of contents and a description of the attached documents in the Board Agenda packet:

Document	Description
Agenda Item Number 2 – SCAG Staff Update	Presentation
Agenda Item Number 3 - Overview of Caltrans Advance Mitigation Program	Presentation
Agenda Item Number 4 – Overview of Draft Regional Advanced Mitigation Program Policy Framework	Draft Regional Advanced Mitigation Program Policy Framework

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

This project is funded in SCAG’s Fiscal Year 2021-2022 Overall Work Program under 290-4862.01 and 290-4862.02.

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# Caltrans - Advance Mitigation Program

February 18, 2022

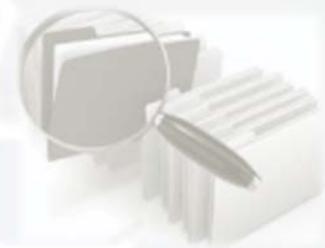


1-1



## Overview:

- Background
- Advance Mitigation Program Overview
- Advance Mitigation Planning Process
- Program Progress To Date



1-2



## Background: Definition

- ❑ What is Advance Mitigation?
  - Aggregated compensatory mitigation for multiple planned future transportation projects
- ❑ What are the goals of Advance Mitigation?
  - Improve project delivery outcomes
  - Implement mitigation projects for impacts at the landscape scale
  - Achieve improved mitigation project outcomes
- ❑ How is Advance Mitigation different?
  - Identifies compensatory mitigation needs during early statewide transportation planning
  - Process for scoping advance mitigation projects, not for approval of future transportation projects
  - Landscape scale mitigation for aggregated transportation project impacts



1-3



## Advance Mitigation Program Overview:



The Legislation (SB 1 and SB 103) established SHC §800 *et seq.* which:



Created the Advance Mitigation Program in Caltrans



Established the Advance Mitigation Account as a revolving fund in the State Highway Fund



Authorized the deposit of a minimum of \$30 million annually for four years (commencing 2017/2018) after which it is intended to become self-sustaining



Restricts the use of advance mitigation to transportation projects in:  
 ✓ State Highway Operations and Protection Program (SHOPP)  
 ✓ State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)



Authorizes Caltrans to allow other transportation agencies to use the program's mitigation for their STIP projects  
 ✓ Transportation projects must reimburse the Program for the mitigation used



1-4



## Program Goals:

Accelerate transportation project delivery



Improve environmental outcomes



Enhance communication with stakeholders and California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW)



Ensure the Program account is self-sustaining



1-5



## Program Funding:



- 1 Advance Mitigation Budget**  
Allocation of \$30 million per year – over four years – into revolving Advance Mitigation Account in State Transportation Fund

- 2 Advance Mitigation Project**  
Funds allocated to advance mitigation projects, which acquire/create mitigation credits and values



- 3 Transportation Project**  
Transportation projects use Program mitigation and reimburse the account for mitigation it provides



- 4 Advance Mitigation Account**  
Account is replenished, additional Advance Mitigation projects can be implemented



1-6



## Program Overview:

- ❑ Authorized expenditures from the account include:
  - Purchasing credits from existing conservation banks, mitigation banks, and in-lieu fee programs
  - Establishing new conservation banks, mitigation banks, and in-lieu fee programs
  - Paying mitigation fees or other mitigation costs to existing Natural Community Conservation Plans and/or Habitat Conservation Plans (NCCPs/HCPs)
  - Preparing or funding the preparation of Regional Conservation Assessments or Regional Conservation Investment Strategies with Mitigation Credit Agreements
  - Where the above are not feasible, other mitigation activities can be performed, with restrictions
- ❑ Reporting Requirements include
  - Biennial Report to the State Legislature,
  - Disclosure to the California Transportation Commission on Advance Mitigation Account activities, and
  - Biennial reporting by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to the State Legislature



1-7



## Program Overview, Continued:

- ❑ Restrictions on the Advance Mitigation Program Funding include:
  - The Caltrans Director must determine if the expenditure justification will likely accelerate the delivery of specific transportation projects
  - If Program activities occur within the areas of NCCPs/HCPs
    - Actions must be consistent with NCCPs/HCPs
    - Requires the Department to go through the NCCP/HCP if eligible to be a special participating entity
  - For “other” activities:
    - No more than 25% of account funds over a 4-year period may be allocated
    - There must be a Programmatic Mitigation Plan (per 23 USC 169)
  - Caltrans continues to meet requirements of CEQA and other environmental processes and permitting laws for all transportation projects
    - Avoid and minimize before compensating mitigation



1-8



## Description of each Advance Mitigation Program Step:

<p><b>Step 1</b> Statewide Advance Mitigation Needs Assessment</p>		<p>SAMNA is completed every two years</p>
<p><b>Step 2</b> Geographic Area of Interest Selection</p>		<p>Request local STIP information from LOCAL transportation agencies and internal coordination</p>
<p><b>Step 3</b> Regional Advance Mitigation Needs Assessment</p>		<p>Planning document available for resource agency, local transportation agency, stakeholder, and public review</p>
<p><b>Step 4</b> Project Scoping and Initiation</p>		<p>Districts prepare PIP for HQ AMP to approve opening K-Phase Districts prepare PID to submit to HQ AMP, SC, and PDAC</p>
<p><b>Step 5</b> Caltrans Director's Approval</p>		<p>Caltrans Director makes his recommendation and justification that the proposed project will likely accelerate the delivery of specific transportation projects</p>



## Advance Mitigation Program Funding:

- ❑ Planning Activity/Project Pipeline
- ❑ Activity in the Advance Mitigation Account
  - \$122.8M in the account
  - Progress to Date:
    - Two projects approved for funding
      - \$12.546M encumbered
    - Two project proposals under evaluation for funding
      - \$12.558M proposed
- ❑ Use of funds for Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (RCIS)
  - Caltrans supports the development of RCIS's
  - CDFW's Mitigation Credit Agreement (MCA) guidelines and fee schedule have not been published
  - Caltrans currently participates in the technical advisory committees for four RCISs:
    - Santa Clara County RCIS;
    - East Bay RCIS;
    - Yolo RCIS;
    - Mid-Sacramento Valley RCIS





## Advance Mitigation Program Funding (Continued):

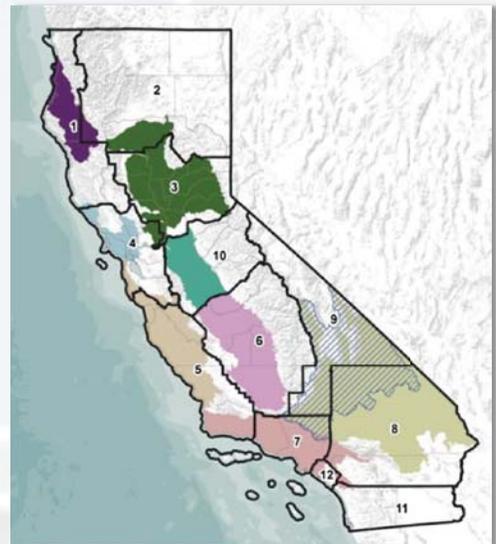
- ❑ Use of funds for Regional Conservation Investment Strategies (continued)
  - Caltrans participates in the steering committees for two RCISs:
    - Monterey County;
    - Santa Cruz County;
  - Caltrans serves on the Steering Committee for the annual RCIS Symposium
  - AMP RAMNA documents consider mitigation activities allowed under SHC 800.6(a)
    - Includes RCIS and MCAs per SHC 800.6(a)(3)
  
- ❑ Recommendations:
  - When developing mitigation projects, seek to implement the project to maximize the number of state and federal requirements that can be satisfied
  - Accelerate project delivery by meeting several permit requirements simultaneously



## Advance Mitigation Program Planning Activity:

Geographic Area  
of  
Interest Selection

The Geographic Area of Interest (GAI) is selected by Caltrans Districts and Headquarters based on the forecasted compensatory mitigation need from the SAMNA, results of District coordination with other transportation Agencies, professional judgment and experience with respect to compensatory mitigation opportunities (or lack thereof), and acceleration priorities for Caltrans planned transportation projects.





## Advance Mitigation Program Planning Activity to date:

- Step 1**  
Statewide Advance Mitigation Needs Assessment
- All Districts:** First Run, Second Quarter 2017/2018  
**All Districts:** Second Run, Second Quarter 2019/2020  
**All Districts:** Begin Third Run of SAMNA, based on the 2021-2022 first quarter and quarterly thereafter
- Step 2**  
Geographic Area of Interest Selection
- District 2 (Redding):** GAI selection pending input from Regional Partners and internal coordination  
**District 11 (San Diego):** GAI selection pending input from Regional Partners and internal coordination
- Step 3**  
Regional Advance Mitigation Needs Assessment
- District 3 (Marysville):** Public/Agency meeting has completed; RAMNA final  
**District 4 (Oakland):** District Public Draft completed, Public Meeting scheduled February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022  
**District 9 (Bishop):** Public/Agency meeting completed; Public comments received, under review  
**District 10 (Stockton):** GAI selection completed, initial draft RAMNA under review



## Advance Mitigation Program Planning Activity to date:

- Step 4**  
Project Scoping and Initiation
- District 7 (Los Angeles):** Drafting watershed-based PIPs
- Step 5**  
Caltrans Directors Approval
- District 1 (Eureka):** Proposed Implementation Project (PIP) under program review  
**District 5 (San Luis Obispo):** PIP was approved and currently drafting Project Initiation Document (PID)
- Advance Mitigation Project Delivery
- District 8 (San Bernardino):** Mojave Desert Project drafting Requests for Proposals  
**District 6 (Fresno):** Aquatic Resources and Desert Species project funding allocated





## District 8 (San Bernardino) - Advance Mitigation Mojave Desert Project:

- ❑ Project Status:
  - The District is currently working with the Division of Procurement and Contracts to prepare requests for proposals
- ❑ Cost, Scope, and Schedule:
  - Total Project Cost: \$8,105,000.00
    - Capital Cost: \$7,720,000.00
    - Capital Support: \$385,000.00
  - Scope:
    - Credit Types:
      - 105 desert tortoise credits
      - 4 ephemeral wash credits
      - 0.2 wetland credits
    - 4 anticipated Benefiting Transportation Projects
      - Transportation Project RTL Dates 2026 - 2027
  - Schedule:
    - Award, Winter 2023
    - First Credit Release: Winter 2023



## District 6 (Fresno) - Advance Mitigation Aquatic Resources and Desert Species Credits:

- ❑ Project Status:
  - The Caltrans Director has approved the Project for funding and funding allocation. The District is beginning project delivery.
- ❑ Cost, Scope, and Schedule:
  - Total Project Cost: \$4,441,000.00
    - Capital Cost: \$4,116,000.00
    - Capital Support: \$325,000.00
  - Scope:
    - Credit Types:
      - 14 Acres Aquatic Resource credits
      - 20 Acres San Joaquin Kit Fox credits
      - 22 Acres Tipton Kangaroo Rat credits
    - 17 anticipated Benefiting Transportation Projects
      - Transportation project RTL dates: 2023 - 2029
  - Schedule:
    - Award, Winter 2023
    - First Credit Release: Summer 2023





## District 5 (San Luis Obispo) - Advance Mitigation Aquatic Resources Central Coast Region:

- ❑ Project Status:
  - Project Proposal, approved. District is drafting Project Implementation Document
- ❑ Cost, Scope, and Schedule:
  - Total Project Cost: \$3,558,000.00
    - Capital Cost: \$3,235,000.00
    - Capital Support: \$323,000.00
  - Scope:
    - Credit Type
      - 1 acre credit purchased for wetlands and non-wetland waters
      - 11 acres credit purchased for California red legged frog habitat
      - 75 acres credit purchased for California tiger salamander habitat
    - 16 anticipated Benefiting Transportation Projects
      - Transportation project RTL dates: 2023 - 2031
  - Schedule:
    - Award, Winter 2023
    - First Credit Release: Summer 2023



## Interagency Alignment Needs:

- ❑ Bank Enabling Instruments (BEI):
  - Army Corps posted an amended Bank Enabling Instrument template that allows for the pre-permit bulk credit purchases
  - Caltrans is working with USACE to amend the new template for other concerns
  - Existing banks will need to amend their BEIs.
- ❑ Coastal Commission Banking Alignment:
  - The Coastal Commission does not recognize that the published BEI template and bank establishment processes explicitly incorporates CCC needs and concerns.
  - The CCC is preparing a mitigation guidance memo for Caltrans.
- ❑ State Water Resources Control Board/Regional Water Quality Control Board:
  - The published BEI template and bank establishment processes incorporates SWRCB and RWQCB needs and concerns.
  - The SWRCB is developing an internal steering committee and charter for integrating bank establishment into the SWRCB and RWQCBs process
- ❑ AB 1282 Recommendation 6.1 - Improve tools and options to align agency requirements in implementing Advance Mitigation:
  - The Advance Mitigation Program is the lead on the Recommendation 6.1 Working Group
  - Critical agency alignment Issues are being elevated through this effort



**Draft Regional Advanced Mitigation Program Policy Framework**

*Regional Advanced Mitigation Program Advisory Technical Group (RAMP-ATG)*

*February 18, 2022*

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## Background

As the SCAG region’s population and economy continue to grow, new housing units, employment facilities, water, energy, and transportation infrastructure are needed to accommodate the nearly two million residents that are forecasted to call Southern California home by 2050.<sup>1</sup> With an over 10 million additional jobs forecast in the region by 2050<sup>2</sup>, strategies that expedite transportation infrastructure delivery are critical to keep people and goods moving.

Framing this regional growth are the diverse natural and agricultural landscapes of Southern California. These invaluable assets ensure a robust economy, clean drinking water, improved air quality, and essential recreation activities for all of the region’s residents. In addition to desert, mountain and coastal habitats, some of the highest concentrations of native plant and animal species on the planet are found within our region. Recognized as part of the California Floristic Province, Southern California is one of the planet’s top twenty-five biodiversity hot spots.<sup>3</sup>

Given the sensitive natural habitats of the Southern California region, many essential development projects will have environmental impacts that require compensatory mitigation due to federal mandates under the Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, as well as state requirements under the California Environmental Quality Act, California Endangered Species Act, California Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Act.

Addressing environmental impacts can be accomplished in a number of ways, as defined in Title 14, Section 15370 of the California Code of Regulations (commonly known as the “CEQA Guidelines”):

- (a) Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action;
- (b) Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation;
- (c) Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating, or restoring the impacted environment;
- (d) Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action; and
- (e) Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environment.

Mitigating environmental impacts can often be expensive and increase total project costs significantly. Alongside mitigation, uncertainty in timing can also contribute to significant project costs. For transportation investments broadly, “the permitting process under federal and state legislation constitutes a major component of the project development and delivery process for transportation

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<sup>1</sup> *Connect SoCal 2024 Preliminary Regional and County Growth Projections* retrieved from <https://scag.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/rc020322fullpacket.pdf?1643342099>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>3</sup> Myers, N., R.A. Mittermeier, C.G. Mittermeier, G.A.B. da Fonseca, J. Kent. (2000). Biodiversity Hotspots for Conservation Priorities

projects. Over \$3.3 billion is spent annually on compensatory mitigation under the Clean Water Act (CWA) and Endangered Species Act programs.”<sup>4</sup>

Traditionally, environmental mitigation has been handled by lead agencies during the CEQA process on a project-by-project basis, “usually near the end of a project’s environmental review...where permitting delays can occur when appropriate mitigation measures cannot be easily identified and agreed upon, and the cost of mitigation often increases between the time the project is planned and funded and the time mitigation land is acquired. As a result, infrastructure agencies end up paying top dollar to satisfy mitigation requirements.”<sup>5</sup> The practice of identifying mitigation measures at the end of a project’s environmental review often results in delays in project delivery and uncertainty in the development process. This is often due to the costs incurred to conduct biological studies after project plans have been created, especially in instances where impacts are discerned that were not foreseen and mitigation costs increase unexpectedly. A national study identified that nearly two thirds of departments of transportation (DOTs) surveyed had experienced delays from environmental issues, often of 12 months or more.<sup>6</sup>

In California, researchers estimate that mitigation costs for transportation projects initiated between 2014 and 2019 ranged from two percent to twelve percent of total project costs – to a sum of roughly four billion dollars.<sup>7</sup> While the exact length and causes of delay from environmental review are varied, some reports suggest the current process may add 10 to 15 years to project delivery.<sup>8</sup> Continued cost escalations over the past two decades have prompted Caltrans to consider strategic planning for consolidated advance mitigation opportunities.

## Policy Framework for Advance Mitigation

### Regional Advance Mitigation Program & Advisory Task Group

California state law allows agencies to establish voluntary advanced mitigation programs in selected areas, providing an opportunity for infrastructure project leads to identify potential impacts early in the planning stages and work with regulatory agencies to reduce permitting costs, improve certainty, and expedite project delivery.<sup>9</sup> Regional advance mitigation programs (RAMP) allow state and federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts and mitigation needs of multiple planned infrastructure projects and urban development all at once, and satisfy those mitigation requirements early in the project planning and environmental review process. In cases where compensatory mitigation is needed, advanced mitigation can help agencies purchase larger parcels for mitigation at a lower unit cost to

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<sup>4</sup> Overman, J. H., Storey, B., Kraus, E., Miller, K., Walewski, J., Elgart, Z., & Atkinson, S. (2014). Maximizing mitigation benefits-making a difference with strategic inter-resource agency planning: year one technical report (No. FHWA/TX-13/0-6762-1). Texas. Dept. of Transportation. Research and Technology Implementation Office.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Sciarra, G. C., Bjorkman, J., Stryjewski, E., & Thorne, J. H. (2017). Mitigating environmental impacts in advance: Evidence of cost and time savings for transportation projects. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 50, 316-326.

<sup>8</sup> Sciarra, G. C., Bjorkman, J., Lederman, J., Thorne, J. H., Schlotterbeck, M., & Wachs, M. (2015). Task 2 Report: Setting the Stage for Statewide Advance Mitigation in California.

<sup>9</sup> Cal. F&G Code sec. 1850 et seq

offset impacts<sup>10</sup>. Further, RAMP can result in better collaboration between regulatory and infrastructure agencies, better project delivery, and better mitigation outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

Regional advance mitigation also presents opportunities to improve quality of life in the region, as it relies on a science-based approach to anticipate and identify mitigation needs for multiple development projects early in the planning process, facilitating the prioritization of sites for conservation and/or restoration with the highest ecological benefits and providing mitigation efficiencies to transportation, land use and other development projects. This approach contrasts with project-by-project mitigation, which “often overlooks regional conservation needs and ecosystem-scale impacts to sensitive species and habitat, thereby missing critical opportunities for efficient, reliable, and biologically relevant mitigation. Additionally, the opportunity for greater benefits to water and air quality and public health are lost.”<sup>12</sup>

There are many established advanced mitigation programs in various locales within the SCAG region, and project applicants in these areas can take advantage of advanced mitigation benefits if they choose. Appendix A of this outline includes a summary of some RAMP programs in the SCAG region. Areas without established programs do not have these efficiencies in the environmental review process. A large percentage of the SCAG region’s land area is not covered by an existing program. As a result, environmental impacts for discretionary projects in these areas would need to be mitigated on a project-by-project basis.

Recognizing the opportunities that a RAMP can present to reduce project costs and improve certainty for project delivery, Connect SoCal and its corresponding Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) direct SCAG to collaborate with stakeholders to establish a RAMP initiative to preserve habitat and offset impacts of transportation and other development projects. To help define potential advanced mitigation efforts, the Connect SoCal plan and PEIR also anticipate development of the SoCal Greenprint mapping tool to help municipalities, conservation groups, developers and researchers prioritize lands for conservation based on the best available scientific data.

To increase clarity and further guide this work, SCAG’s Regional Council voted on October 7, 2021 for staff to develop a white paper and work with a Regional Advance Mitigation Planning Advisory Task Group (RAMP-ATG) on establishing a policy framework for advanced mitigation in the SCAG region to ensure the SoCal Greenprint tool is aligned with policy objectives.

## Regional Policy Foundation: Connect SoCal Goals and PEIR Requirements

### Connect SoCal Goals

As discussed, Connect SoCal expects a RAMP planning initiative to support the establishment or supplement the region’s established advanced mitigation programs, mitigation banks, and other

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<sup>10</sup> Sciara, G. C., Bjorkman, J., Stryjewski, E., & Thorne, J. H. (2017). Mitigating environmental impacts in advance: Evidence of cost and time savings for transportation projects. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 50, 316-326.

<sup>11</sup> Overman, J. H., Storey, B., Kraus, E., Miller, K., Walewski, J., Elgart, Z., & Atkinson, S. (2014). Maximizing mitigation benefits-making a difference with strategic inter-resource agency planning: year one technical report (No. FHWA/TX-13/0-6762-1). Texas. Dept. of Transportation. Research and Technology Implementation Office.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

approaches to more effectively address impacts for projects that support reduction of per-capita vehicle miles traveled. The initiative would also support long term management and stewardship of mitigated properties. SCAG can support partner implementing agencies to establish advanced mitigation programs that reflect local priorities, expand regional growth opportunities, and advance regional conservation goals.

Importantly, use of RAMP is voluntary. Cities, counties, and transportation agencies retain authority for decisions on future development, and there is no obligation for a jurisdiction to change its land use policies or infrastructure priorities to be consistent with a future RAMP. Similarly, project leads do not have to participate in a RAMP and can opt for a project-by-project environmental review process as appropriate.

The RAMP planning initiative is part of SCAG’s comprehensive effort to implement the vision outlined in Connect SoCal to advance the region’s economic vitality, improve mobility options, and grow in a sustainable way that builds healthy and vibrant communities. It is intended to advance several of Connect SoCal’s specified goals, namely to:

- Enhance the preservation, security, and resilience of the regional transportation system;
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality;
- Support healthy and equitable communities;
- Adapt to a changing climate and support an integrated regional development pattern and transportation network; and
- Promote conservation of natural and agricultural lands and restoration of habitats.<sup>13</sup>

Connect SoCal also includes specific strategies to support implementing the region’s adopted Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). Several strategies are directly tied to supporting related greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions while others support the broader Plan goals. RAMP can help implement several “Green Region” SCS strategies, including:

- Preserve, enhance and restore regional wildlife connectivity;
- Reduce consumption of resource areas, including agricultural land; and
- Support local policies for renewable energy production, reduction of urban heat islands and carbon sequestration;
- Promote more resource efficient development focused on conservation, recycling and reclamation;
- Identify ways to improve access to public park space.<sup>14</sup>

#### Natural and Farm Lands Conservation and Climate Resolution 21-628-1

Connect SoCal includes a Natural and Farm Lands Conservation Technical Report that outlines an integrated land use and conservation planning approach that seeks to protect the environment and reduce GHG emissions while meeting the needs of current and future populations. Policies in the Technical Report direct SCAG to:

- Promote best practices in advanced mitigation;

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<sup>13</sup> Connect SoCal p. 9

<sup>14</sup> Connect SoCal p. 50

- Facilitate partnerships and collaboration;
- Provide incentives for jurisdictions to work across county lines;
- Expand data sharing amongst partner agencies;
- Align support for local actors with funding opportunities;
- Support innovative land use policies;
- Improve natural corridor connectivity;
- Encourage urban greening and green infrastructure; and
- Connect the benefits of natural lands to public health – including air quality, recreation, and carbon sequestration.<sup>15</sup>

Within the Plan, specific next steps are included to further a regional conservation strategy, including development of the SoCal Greenprint regional mapping tool that can help stakeholders identify the areas with the highest potential conservation value and encourage advance mitigation programs.<sup>16</sup>

Connect SoCal’s policy goals and next steps related to RAMP were reaffirmed by the Regional Council in Resolution 21-628-1, which was adopted unanimously on January 7, 2021 and recognized a climate emergency in the SCAG region. The Resolution committed SCAG to “develop a regional advanced mitigation program (RAMP) as envisioned in Connect SoCal for regionally significant transportation projects to mitigate environmental impacts.”<sup>17</sup>

#### PEIR Mitigation Measures

Establishing a RAMP planning initiative fulfills required mitigation measures of Connect SoCal’s Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), which state that SCAG will support advanced mitigation efforts in the region (SMM AG-2) through the establishment of data tools (i.e. the SoCal Greenprint) that can provide an easily accessible resource to help municipalities, conservation groups, developers and researchers prioritize lands for conservation based on the best available scientific data (SMM BIO-2). As a result, the RAMP initiative is both a project feature (as described above) and part of SCAG’s mitigation measure obligations.

Importantly, these mitigation measure apply only to SCAG. Nothing in the PEIR supersedes or applies to existing regulations pertaining to land use and policies of individual local jurisdictions, who fully retain their local authority to approve, deny or condition projects. Indeed, SCAG has no authority to impose these mitigation measures on jurisdictions; as a result, mitigation measures implemented by local jurisdictions in their own processing of projects are fully subject to a lead agency’s independent discretion. Lead agencies are under no obligation, legal or otherwise, to use measures identified in the PEIR. The determination of significance and identification of appropriate mitigation under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) is solely the responsibility of the lead agency.

The specific PEIR mitigation measures referencing the need to establish a RAMP initiative are:

- *SMM AG-2: SCAG shall develop a Regional Greenprint, which is a strategic web-based conservation tool that provides the best available scientific data and scenario visualizations to help cities, counties and transportation agencies make better land use and transportation*

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<sup>15</sup> Connect SoCal Natural and Farm Lands Conservation Technical Report pp. 21-22

<sup>16</sup> Connect SoCal Natural and Farm Lands Conservation Technical Report p. 22

<sup>17</sup> [Resolution 21-628-1](#)

*infrastructure decisions and conserve natural and farm lands. SCAG shall use the Greenprint to identify priority conservation areas and work with [County Transportation Commissions] CTCs to develop advanced mitigation programs or include them in future transportation measures by (1) funding pilot programs that encourage advanced mitigation including data and replicable processes, (2) participating in state-level efforts that would support regional advanced mitigation planning in the SCAG region, and (3) supporting the inclusion of advanced mitigation programs at county level transportation measures.*

*SMM BIO-2: SCAG shall continue to develop a regional conservation strategy in coordination with local jurisdictions and other stakeholders, including the county transportation commissions. The conservation strategy will build upon existing efforts including those at the sub-regional and local levels to identify potential priority conservation areas. SCAG will also collaborate with stakeholders to establish a new Regional Advanced Mitigation Program (RAMP) initiative to preserve habitat. The RAMP would establish and/or supplement regional conservation and mitigation banks and/or other approaches to offset impacts of transportation and other development projects. To assist in defining the RAMP, SCAG shall lead a multi-year effort to SCAG shall develop new regional tools, like the Regional Data Platform and Regional Greenprint that will provide an easily accessible resource to help municipalities, conservation groups, developers and researchers prioritize lands for conservation based on best available scientific data. The Regional Greenprint effort shall also produce a whitepaper on the RAMP initiative, which includes approaches for the RAMP in the SCAG region, needed science and analysis, models, challenges and opportunities and recommendations.*

SCAG continues to pursue the development of a regional conservation strategy through regular convenings of its Natural & Working Lands Regional Planning Working Group, and through interviews and other engagements with stakeholders. The RAMP planning initiative is an important element of this strategy and, as guided by the RAMP policy framework, supports the region in achieving Connect SoCal's goals.

### RAMP Opportunity & Challenge Areas

To identify opportunities and challenges associated with developing and launching a RAMP planning initiative for the expansive SCAG region, interviews were conducted with local transportation agencies with project mitigation needs, as well as with other stakeholders involved in related programs. These interviews were conducted from April through December 2021 to gather initial feedback on potential program needs and benefits, and are currently ongoing.

Interviewees conveyed that a RAMP planning initiative could help address data gaps and facilitate data sharing between land use authorities and transportation entities. A RAMP planning initiative could also enhance cross-jurisdictional and cross-county collaboration to address mitigation project-by-project and at a county scale. Further, SCAG could foster local action by identifying incentives to spur advanced mitigation, and also provide solutions for reducing project impacts. SCAG could also incorporate an analysis of future mitigation needs and provide a menu of mitigation options and approaches for each county, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, as specific project needs differ across the region and within each county. Importantly, a RAMP could foster engagement with the California Coastal Commission, US Army Corps of Engineers, and Water Board to incorporate a focus on water resources in addition to biological resources. Overall, transparent engagement with CTCs, partner agencies, utilities, and communities throughout RAMP development would be important for the program's success.

Concerns included that a RAMP could have potential duplication and/or conflicting mitigation efforts between regional, county, and local approaches, and that a RAMP also may have gaps in direct application to local conditions.

In addition to interviewing CTCs across the SCAG region, SCAG staff engaged with other partners experienced in mitigation. These included Caltrans Districts #7 and #8, Brightline West, as well as Land Veritas – the largest mitigation bank in California. Feedback from these entities included that establishment of a RAMP planning initiative could bring private and public entities together towards a common goal and increase public awareness of environmental resources. These organizations also expressed support for a multi-county approach, especially when collaborating across Caltrans Districts for development of multi-species regional plans. They also encouraged development of a credit system that could provide consistency across management of multiple mitigation banks. Finally, they were interested in collaborating on advanced mitigation, specifically multi-agency advance mitigation projects.

### Goals for Regional Advanced Mitigation

Considering the potential advantages and concerns for expanding regional advanced mitigation planning in Southern California, a policy framework for advance mitigation positions SCAG to foster collaboration between programs across the region and support local implementing agencies to:

1. Expedite project delivery;
2. Improve predictability for project funding;
3. Examine potential environmental impacts at the early stages of project development, utilizing the SoCal Greenprint tool, to help expedite the CEQA process;
4. Reduce costs, risks, and permitting time for responsible development;
5. Improve and reinforce regulatory agency partnerships;
6. Balance future growth and economic development with conservation and resilience; and
7. Achieve meaningful, regional-scale conservation outcomes.

To implement these goals, SCAG will seek to:

1. Be a resource for local partners to consider actions in a regional context;
2. Focus on the transportation sector, and consider opportunities to expedite and streamline mitigation needs for other sectors including housing, energy and utilities;
3. Identify ways to establish or supplement regional conservation and mitigation banks and other approaches to more effectively address impacts for projects that support reduction of per-capita vehicle miles traveled;
4. Support long term management and stewardship of conserved properties;
5. Pursue a study to assess RAMP governance structures that will complement existing advanced mitigation efforts in the region, fill gaps where programs do not exist, and ascertain best ways to collaborate with partner agencies and permitting entities;
6. Pursue partnerships and collaborative resource development with state agencies and other MPOs to leverage funding and align efforts beyond SCAG's jurisdictional boundaries;
7. Be a data resource with widely accessible data tools to assist in defining a RAMP that can provide the best available scientific data to help municipalities and transportation agencies

- make better land use and transportation infrastructure decisions and conserve natural and farm lands, consistent with Connect SoCal’s PEIR Mitigation Measure AMM AG-2 and SMM BIO-2; and
8. Identify potential partnerships to foster the long-term maintenance of the SoCal Greenprint tool.

These goals and actions are intended to advance policies established in Connect SoCal and support proactive implementation of required mitigation measures in Connect SoCal’s Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR).

## Data Needs & Resources to Support RAMP

### Science Based Approach

Utilizing a science-based approach to understand the comprehensive biological and resource needs of a given area to discern potential impacts from development projects at the early planning stages is an essential element of regional advanced mitigation. As shared through interviews with CTCs and other practitioners, data access and sharing is a key benefit of a RAMP planning initiative. As noted by an Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funded study looking at advanced mitigation nation-wide, “improved environmental information is needed on the front end of the project delivery process. Under the current process, state DOTs retrieve environmental data from a variety of sources and then assess environmental impacts and constraints. A central data clearinghouse—similar to those that MPOs developed in the [US Environmental Protection Agency’s] Eco-Logical grants—could improve assessment processes and mitigation outcomes.”<sup>18</sup>

Consistent with Connect SoCal’s PEIR Mitigation Measure AMM AG-2 and SMM BIO-2, SCAG shall develop a web-based SoCal Greenprint tool to assist in defining a RAMP that provides the best available scientific data to help municipalities and transportation agencies make better land use and transportation infrastructure decisions and conserve natural and farm lands. The SoCal Greenprint will provide an easily accessible web mapping resource to help other regional stakeholders as well, including conservation groups, developers, and researchers prioritize lands for conservation. However, the SoCal Greenprint tool, and the data layers within, is not a strategic conservation plan; rather, it is an information resource for partner agencies as well as SCAG to support their conservation planning efforts.

To ensure that data provided through the tool aligns with advanced mitigation opportunities and fulfillment of the Connect SoCal PEIR mitigation measures, establishment of the SoCal Greenprint tool will adhere to the following data policies, governance standards, user guidelines, data selection criteria, and data parameters preceding, during, and subsequent to launch:

### Data Policies

1. SCAG will continue to promote data-driven decision making, government transparency, and data as a public engagement tool to accelerate progress toward achieving regional planning goals consistent with policies included in the Agency’s final Future Communities Framework;

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<sup>18</sup> Overman, J. H., Storey, B., Kraus, E., Miller, K., Walewski, J., Elgart, Z., & Atkinson, S. (2014). Maximizing mitigation benefits-making a difference with strategic inter-resource agency planning: year one technical report (No. FHWA/TX-13/0-6762-1). Texas. Dept. of Transportation. Research and Technology Implementation Office.

2. Data included in the SoCal Greenprint tool must be publicly available, meaning that existing datasets are available online or can be accessed if requested and/or licensed;
3. Data available through the SoCal Greenprint tool will not be identified, qualified, or defined as constraints on future development or growth, or in any way endorsed by the regional council as official policy of the agency;
4. Publicly available data to be made accessible through the SoCal Greenprint are not adopted by SCAG and are not an expression of regional policy;
5. The SoCal Greenprint will utilize the best available scientific data and will be vetted for inclusion by a selection of scientists across the region with regional knowledge and expertise;
6. Scientists providing vetting will be drawn principally from regional colleges and universities, public agencies, and non-governmental organizations for their expertise in natural science, climate science, energy resources, and water resources;
7. A timeline and process for periodically updating datasets will be established to ensure continuous use of the best available scientific data;
8. SCAG will seek feedback broadly on all proposed data layers for inclusion in the tool to identify, investigate, and address valid data security concerns;
9. Data elements will be regionally comprehensive to the extent feasible, and data depicted will not be altered from their original source;
10. Consistent with policies included in SCAG's final Future Communities Framework, SCAG will continue to promote data-driven decision making, government transparency, and data as a public engagement tool to accelerate progress toward achieving regional planning goals;
11. SCAG will endeavor to increase the availability of civic data and information to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of public services; and
12. SCAG will support development and use of data tools to increase opportunities for public engagement and advocacy to inform local and regional policy.

### Governance Standards

1. To convey limitations and foster its proper use as well as emphasize to users that the SoCal Greenprint tool is a non-regulatory tool with no legal effect on land-use decisions made by local agencies or property owners, the final, publicly available version of the tool will include a "pop-up screen" displaying disclosure language and will require user acknowledgment of the data's limitations; and
2. Prior to using the tool, users will be required to acknowledge and agree to the terms of use, containing the aforementioned disclosures and data limitations, through a "clickwrap" statement that is reasonably and prominently visible to all users. This will require the active, affirmative acknowledgement of each user; and will be written to be easily understood by the average user.

### User Guidelines

1. The SoCal Greenprint will be web-based and easily accessible; and
2. The SoCal Greenprint will help identify potential priority conservation areas based on user needs using the best available scientific data to support decision making for municipalities, transportation agencies, conservation groups, developers, and researchers.

## Data Selection Criteria:

1. SCAG staff will prioritize selection of data accessible through the tool by rigorously applying the foregoing data policies, governance standards, and user guidelines;
2. SCAG staff shall explicitly instruct scientists providing vetting to identify data that supports regional advance mitigation planning for cities, counties and transportation agencies as the highest priority for inclusion in the tool;
3. SCAG staff shall actively engage with local partners through an open and transparent process and in consultation with established Regional Planning Working Groups, the Technical Working Group, as well as other strategic advisors representing key users to help inform data selection ensuring that the SoCal Greenprint tool can support decision making for municipalities, transportation agencies, conservation groups, developers, and researchers as required by Connect SoCal's PEIR mitigation measure;
4. Data will be organized in seven thematic areas, which are aligned with feedback from stakeholders and based on local planning needs in support of RAMP:
  - a. Agriculture and Working Lands;
  - b. Built Environment;
  - c. Environmental Justice, Equity and Inclusion;
  - d. Habitat and Biodiversity;
  - e. Vulnerabilities and Resilience;
  - f. Water Resources;
  - g. Context;
5. Through outreach conducted with municipalities, transportation agencies, conservation groups, developers, and researchers, the following data topics have been identified as valuable for land use and transportation infrastructure decisions as well as conserving natural and farm lands, and are listed under each thematic area:
  - a. Agriculture and Working Lands:
    - i. Prime agricultural land, Williamson Act contracts, soil ratings, irrigation , groundwater recharge areas for agricultural land;
  - b. Built Environment:
    - i. Impervious surfaces, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), light pollution, noise, public transit facilities, sewer network, airports, entitlements, clusters of parcels meeting CEQA streamlining definitions;
  - c. Environmental Justice, Equity and Inclusion:
    - i. Gentrification and displacement, historic redlining areas, tribal nations, affordable housing opportunity areas, park access equity, sea level rise impact areas, tsunami inundation zones;
  - d. Habitat and Biodiversity:
    - i. Habitat connectivity (including resilience considerations), fish passage barriers, soil/above ground/wildland carbon production, species biodiversity, species requiring mitigation, areas with least conflict for solar energy development, existing conservation plans;
  - e. Vulnerabilities and Resilience:
    - i. Urban heat islands, earthquake hazard zones, earthquake shaking potential, fire hazard severity zones and risks to communities, historic wildlife perimeters,

- landslide zones, liquefaction zones, projected high heat days, sea level rise impact areas and vulnerabilities;
- f. Water Resources:
  - i. Water districts, altered streams, water quality monitoring sites, groundwater recharge areas, points of diversion, runoff, wells and change in groundwater levels, water stress, watersheds, water quality index;
- g. Context:
  - i. Land cover, land use, zoning, protected open space areas.
- 6. A timeline and process for periodically updating data sets will be established to ensure continuous use of the best available scientific data.

### Data Parameter Requirements

Consistent with SCAG's past and current practice, all data layers included in the SoCal Greenprint will feature individual background information on methods, limitations, sourcing, as well as guidance on their proper use, including:

1. The SoCal Greenprint shall feature a glossary and methods section that will provide full transparency to users on data elements featured, and will include:
  - a. Narrative definitions that cite the data sources, explain the data in accurate and user-friendly terms, and offer guidance on how the information can be used;
  - b. A description of the methodology, reporting framework, and processing methods used to develop the data;
  - c. Dataset names and URLs of original data sources;
  - d. Data creation date and anticipated update schedules;
  - e. Geographic constraints identifying the geographic unit of accuracy for the dataset. In some instances, data is accurate at larger areas but is not accurate when zoomed in to a smaller geography. For these instances, the minimum reporting size, or minimum level of geographic accuracy, will be displayed alongside the glossary entry (note that this reporting threshold will be used in the tool to hide reporting for measures that are not precise enough for a given area of interest report);
2. Layers will be consolidated in a single database for download and the database will include metadata consistent with the Geospatial Metadata Standards and Guidelines established by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC):
  - a. Identification information (originator, publication date, title, abstract, purpose, time period for content, currentness, progress, maintenance, etc.);
  - b. Data quality information (attribute accuracy, completeness, positional accuracy, etc.);
  - c. Spatial data organization information (indirect spatial reference for locating data without using coordinates);
  - d. Spatial reference information (geographic coordinate system, latitude and longitude, etc.);
  - e. Entity and attribute information (detailed description of dataset, overview description, attribute domain values, etc.);
  - f. Distribution information (contact information for the individual or organization that distributes the data, a statement of liability assumed by the distributing individual or organization); and

- g. Metadata reference information (date metadata was written, contact information for the metadata author, metadata standard, metadata access constraints, metadata use constraints).

## Appendix A - Established RAMPs in SCAG Region

### **Mitigation Banks**

A conservation or mitigation bank is privately or publicly owned land managed for its natural resource values. In exchange for permanently protecting, managing, and monitoring the land, the bank sponsor is allowed to sell or transfer habitat credits to permittees who need to satisfy legal requirements and compensate for the environmental impacts of developmental projects ([CDFW](#)). There are several mitigation banks in the SCAG region:

#### I. Soquel Canyon Mitigation Bank, City of Chino Hills

The Soquel Canyon Mitigation Bank, an over 300-acre property located predominantly within the City of Chino Hills, San Bernardino County and includes a few acres located in Orange County. The bank is owned by Land Veritas, a California-based mitigation bank owner. The southern boundary of the bank, the Chino Hills State Park, is an open space area that straddles the junction of San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside and Los Angeles Counties and is a critical link in the Puente-Chino Hills biological corridor.<sup>19</sup>

#### II. Peterson Ranch Mitigation Bank, Los Angeles County

The Petersen Ranch Mitigation Bank, covering over 4,000 acres within the boundaries of the proposed San Andreas Rift Zone Significant Ecological Area in Los Angeles County, is the largest bank in California and one of the largest banks in the United States. The bank is owned by Land Veritas and offers compensatory mitigation across a large part of Southern California.<sup>20</sup>

#### III. Santa Paula Creek Mitigation Bank, Ventura County

The Santa Paula Creek Mitigation Bank includes over 200 acres across Northern Ventura and Los Angeles counties and was the first mitigation bank of its kind in the area, established in 2011. The bank's service area covers the combined watersheds of the Santa Clara and Ventura Rivers. Property was previously owned by Santa Paula Water Works LTD and then purchased by SPC Environmental Holdings, Inc.<sup>21</sup>

#### IV. Chiquita Canyon Conservation Bank, Orange County

The Chiquita Canyon Conservation Bank covers 1,182 acres in Orange County, just east of the City of Mission Viejo. The bank was established in 1996 with Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency as its sponsor.<sup>22</sup>

#### V. Barry Jones Wetland Mitigation Bank, Riverside County

The Barry Jones Wetlands Mitigation Bank is located in western Riverside County and incorporates the 33-acre Skunk Hollow Vernal Pool Preserve, the second largest vernal pool in the state, along with 107

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<sup>19</sup> Land Veritas, <https://landveritasmitigationbanks.com/soquel.html>

<sup>20</sup> Land Veritas, <https://landveritasmitigationbanks.com/petersen.html>

<sup>21</sup> California Department of Fish and Wildlife, <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=180663>; <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=109831>

<sup>22</sup> Federal Regulatory in-lieu Fee and Bank Information Tracking System, [https://ribits.ops.usace.army.mil/ords/f?p=107:10::NO::P10\\_BANK\\_ID:668](https://ribits.ops.usace.army.mil/ords/f?p=107:10::NO::P10_BANK_ID:668)

acres of the pool's upland watershed. The bank was established in 1997 and is managed by the Center for Natural Lands Management.<sup>23</sup>

VI. Black Mountain Conservation Bank, San Bernardino

The Black Mountain Conservation Bank, located in the western Mojave Desert of San Bernardino County, spans over 1,940 acres. The bank was established in 2018 and is managed by Wildlands, a conservation and mitigation bank.<sup>24</sup>

VII. Cajon Creek Habitat Conservation Management Area, San Bernardino

The Cajon Creek Conservation Bank was first established in 1996 and was expanded to cover over 1,300 acres in 2017. The bank, managed by Vulcan Materials Company, is located in Cajon Wash and Lytle Creek in San Bernardino County.<sup>25</sup>

VIII. Mojave Desert Tortoise Conservation Bank, San Bernardino County

The Mojave Desert Tortoise Conservation Bank covers 4,658 acres of preserved habitat and includes 8 sites across San Bernardino County. The bank was authorized in May 2020 and is one of the largest tortoise conservation banks in the state.<sup>26</sup>

IX. Riverpark Mitigation Bank, Riverside County

Riverpark Mitigation Bank serves western Riverside and portions of San Bernardino Counties and is located at the southern terminus of the California State Water Project that moves water to Southern California from the San Francisco Bay Delta. The bank is sited in one of the priority areas designated by the Western Riverside County Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP).<sup>27</sup>

### ***Regional Conservation Plans***

Local agencies throughout the region have worked together to form Regional Conservation Plans (RCPs) that can span multiple jurisdictions, recognizing that important habitats do not routinely line up with jurisdictional borders. Additionally, RCPs efficiently address mitigation mandates pursuant to CEQA by anticipating transportation projects and “banking” potentially threatened endangered-species habitats. Multiple Species Habitat Plans (MSHCPs) allow the county, its cities and special districts to more effectively make local land use decisions regarding development, while adhering to state and federal endangered species acts regulations and environmental mandates. Under an MSHCP, wildlife agencies grant authorization for public and private development that is potentially detrimental to individual species, in return for assembling and managing a coordinated Conservation Area. Similar to the MSHCP,

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<sup>23</sup> California Department of Fish and Game, <https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=151451>; McCollum & Sweetwater, Mitigation and Conservation Banks, <https://mccollum.com/mitigation/>

<sup>24</sup> Wildlands, <https://www.wildlandsinc.com/banks/black-mountain-conservation-bank-2/>

<sup>25</sup> Vulcan Materials Company, <https://westerncsr.vulcanmaterials.com/2019/01/08/protecting-our-endangered-species/>

<sup>26</sup> The Mojave Desert Tortoise Conservation Bank, <https://deserttortoisebank.com/>

<sup>27</sup> McCollum & Sweetwater, <https://mccollum.com/mitigation/>; Ecosystem Investment Partners, <https://ecosystempartners.com/project/riverpark/>

Natural Communities Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plans (NCCP/HCP) acquire and manage large conservation areas that can be made up of several distinct jurisdictions. An NCCP/HCP takes a broad-based ecosystem approach, focusing on the long-term protection of wildlife and plant species while also allowing for development. There are five established RCPs in the SCAG region:

I. Coachella Valley MSHCP

This plan aims to preserve 240,000 acres of natural habitat and 27 plant and animal species in the Coachella Valley region of Riverside County. Since receiving its state and federal permits in 2008, about 40% of the land (89,000 acres) has been acquired. A major amendment is that includes the entire City of Desert Hot Springs was approved in August 2016.

II. Lower Colorado River MSCP

Established in 2005, this program is a multi-state plan to balance use of the Colorado River's water resources and conservation of native species and their habitats along the lower Colorado River in compliance with the Endangered Species Act. The program area covers over 400 miles of the lower Colorado River across Arizona, Nevada, and California and aims to preserve over 8,100 acres of habitat, produce over 1.2 million native fish, and benefit at least 27 species, most of which are state or federally listed as endangered, threatened, or sensitive.

III. Orange County Central-Coastal NCCP/HCP

Approved in 1996, this plan was one of the first regional HCPs in the country. The planning area covers 208,000 acres, protecting habitats for 39 species, six of which are federally listed endangered species. Participating organizations include seven cities, the County of Orange, Irvine Company, Metropolitan Water District, the Transportation Corridor Agencies and UC Irvine.

IV. OCTA Measure 2 NCCP/HCP

Approved in 2017, this plan protects threatened plant and wildlife species and covers routine maintenance for preserve areas. It is funded by OCTA's Measure M2 Environmental Freeway Mitigation Program. An extension of Measure M (1990), Measure M2 is a voter-approved half-cent sales tax increase to fund transportation improvements. Over thirty years, the Environmental Mitigation Program will allocate about \$300 million to acquire natural lands and fund habitat restoration projects, while enabling a more streamlined approval process for freeway improvement projects. Since the initial funding round in 2010, 1,300 acres of natural lands have been acquired and twelve restoration projects have been funded. The total land in the planning area is 510,000 acres.

V. Western Riverside MSHCP

Half a million acres of land are designated for conservation under this plan, the largest habitat conservation plan in the United States. When the MSHCP was enacted in 2008, nearly 70 percent of the land already had public or quasi-public status. Since then, the Regional Conservation Authority (RCA), the plan's facilitating agency, has been active in acquiring the remaining 153,000 acres. To date, 42 percent of the total land has been acquired.

### ***Regional Conservation Investment Strategies***

Established by Assembly Bill 2087, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife created the Regional Conservation Investment Strategy (RCIS) program in 2017 to encourage regional approaches for advance mitigation and conservation. The program is a voluntary, non-regulatory conservation assessment and strategy to benefit species and habitats of concern and to provide a more efficient and effective approaches to mitigation and conservation. An RCIS can be used as the basis for advance mitigation and have the benefit of streamlining. There is one approved RCIS in the SCAG region:

#### VI. Antelope Valley Regional Conservation Investment Strategy

Approved in 2021 by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Antelope Valley RCIS (AVRCIS) covers over 707,000 acres in northern Los Angeles County. The AVRCIS uses the best available science to identify conservation goals and objectives, conservation actions, habitat enhancement actions, and conservation priorities. It is a voluntary non-regulatory conservation strategy intended to guide conservation investments and advance mitigation, as well as help species and their habitats adapt to climate change and other pressures, in the AVRCIS area.