

## Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team



Conservation Team

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

### ATTENDEES:

- Bonnie Johnson, Orange County Water District
- Brett Mills, Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
- Cameron Macbeth, Orange County Water District
- Carol Thompson, Riverside County Flood Control and Water Conservation District
- Christopher Jones, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- David Woelfel, Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board
- Dustin McLain, Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District
- Ian Achimore, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority
- Ileene Anderson, Center of Biological Diversity
- Justin Nakano, Chino Basin Watermaster
- Kelly Perez, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority
- Natalia Doshi, Orange County Water District
- Richard Zembal, Orange County Water District
- Robert Eland, Riverside City Department of Public Works
- T. Milford Harrison, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority /SBVMWD
- Tawny Hoemke, Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
- Zyanya Ramirez, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority

### INTRODUCTIONS

The Santa Ana Sucker Conservation Team (Conservation Team) meeting was called to order at 10:00 A.M. by Ian Achimore at the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) located at 11615 Sterling Avenue, Riverside, CA 92503. The record will reflect this meeting was conducted virtually.

### REVIEW OF DRAFT 2019 RIVERWALK ATLAS

The Draft 2019 Riverwalk Atlas was presented. Ian Achimore (SAWPA Senior Watershed Manager) and Kelly Perez (SAWPA Planning Intern) are reviewing past data to ensure that the methodology used is consistent and useful with what is being used now. Normally data retrieved from the Riverwalk is summarized in map-based form; SAWPA staff is working on converting data into charts. Mr. Achimore reviewed further changes to the Riverwalk Atlas.

Mr. Achimore opened the floor for discussion regarding possible further analysis of the Riverwalk data. The following points were made:

- An understanding of transect ratings and whether they need to be updated.
- A need for a better way to correlate sucker population data to Riverwalk habitat data.
- An understanding of the type of habitat and how it benefits what stage in the sucker fish's life.

### PLANNING FOR THE 2020 RIVERWALK

Due to the importance of surveying the status of the Santa Ana sucker fish's habitat on a yearly basis, the Santa Ana Sucker Fish Habitat Survey (Riverwalk) will be performed amidst COVID-19 provisions. Mr. Achimore opened the floor for discussion in obtaining volunteers and suggestions on how to enhance volunteer's protection.

The Conservation Team agreed to gather veteran volunteers from their agencies, which would eliminate having to gather at SAWPA for an instructional meeting, and possibly exclude survey points that have always resulted in sandy areas (sites below the Van Buren Blvd.).

The Conservation Team was asked to submit a list of their volunteers, Mr. Achimore will then distribute draft of the groups and which team could take what parts of the river. Upon approval, a doodle poll to schedule the survey days in October and early November will be sent out. SAWPA staff will then work on obtaining right of entry permits with the floodplain owners.

### **UPDATE ON THE TEAM'S VAN BUREN BRIDGE HABITAT PROJECT**

Brief overview of the Van Buren Bridge Habitat Project was provided. Lessons learned from this Project were as follows:

- Saw flows higher than what is was built for; up to its 2,500 cfs threshold.
- Artificially increasing the instream grade of the Project's reach could quickly move deposited sand off the habitat.
- Installing complimentary structure across the width of the low flow channel and/or on the opposite bank would control the hydraulics entering and exiting the reach as well as control the low flow channel invert elevation.

At an upcoming field visit in late August, SAWPA and its Operations department will work with Orange County Water District's biologist to assess vegetation and some existing rocks which are sitting on the dry bank. Mr. Achimore will present the findings from the field visit to the Team at their next meeting and receive input on the Project going forward.

The USACE Project upstream from the Van Buren Bridge Habitat Project is looking to reconstruct in the year 2021.

### **UPDATE ON OFF-ROAD VEHICLE USAGE IN SAR WATERSHED**

The Police Task Force has been able to identify organized off-road vehicle events and identify entry point to control access into the river. Ian Achimore suggested sharing funds with the Police Task Force to assist with patrolling.

### **PROJECT UPDATES FROM STAKEHOLDERS**

#### *Upper SAR Habitat Conservation Plan*

Chris Jones, Valley District, stated that that the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan is being prepped to be released to the public at the end of September. Valley District will be requesting comments in the next few weeks.

#### *Sunnyslope Creek*

Cameron McBeth, OCWD, provided a PowerPoint presentation on their efforts in maintaining Sunnyslope Creek to assist chub and sucker fish. They continue to do removal of dam debris, non-native aquatics, and vegetation. An overview of the fire that destroyed the Louis Rubidoux Nature Center and the damaged it sustained to the Santa Ana River habitat was shared.

*Tequesquite Creek*

Brett Mills, RCRC, provided a verbal update on Tequesquite Creek. The area is suffering from an abundance of trash, homeless encampments, and insufficient water. Unfortunately, not much has been done due to COVID-19 and the rise in homeless encampments. There's also a reduction in water since residents are encouraged to conserve water, decreasing urban runoff into the Creek.

Mr. Jones stated that the HCP is working on a project, in coordination with the City of Riverside's Public Utilities, to transfer water released by the Van Buren treatment plant and distribute to other tributaries, including Tequesquite Creek.

Chris Medak, FWS, indicated that the FWS has funds to finance "turn-key" ready projects beneficial to the Watershed. To be considered, project plans must be submitted to FWS.

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

Chris Jones stated that the Annual Santa Ana River Science Symposium will be held in November 2020. Further details to come.

**ADJOURN**

Meeting ended at 11:30 a.m.

DRAFT