

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of February 6, 2026**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Khoury
Rich Risner
Candice Bowman
Kelly Clemshaw
Frederique Duranton
Glen Morgan
Victoria Touchstone
Jeremy Blakespear
Beatrice Darimont
Jennifer Disser
Julie Klein
Peter Shapiro
Pam Heatherington
Jim Smith
Eric Jones
Jeff Barnouw
Bob Dudley
Bill Adelson
Neil Meyer

REPRESENTING

CAC, Chair
American Society of Architects
Carmel Valley Planning Board
Del Dios Town Council
Del Mar Lagoon Committee
Ramona Trails Assoc.
Rancho Bernardo Planning Board
San Diego Bicycle Coalition
San Diego Bird Alliance
San Diego Mountain Biking Assoc.
San Diego Trails Alliance
San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy
Sierra Club
Torrey Pines Community Planning Group
Volcan Mountain Foundation
Coastal Property Owner
San Pasqual Property Owner
Eastern Property Owner
Eastern Property Owner

VISITORS/STAFF PRESENT

Shawna Anderson
Dewanda Vandermost
Nathan Lacy
John Degenfelder
Patricia Heyden
Cheryl Wagner
Paul Bernstein

San Dieguito River Park JPA
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Ramona Trails Assoc
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Ramona Trails Assoc
San Pasqual Property Owner, Alt

Roll Call and Introductions

Chair Khoury called the meeting to order at 10:32 AM. A roll call was taken with 19 committee members present to begin the meeting. Chair Khoury introduced the following representatives: Frederique Duranton, attending as the alternate for the Del Mar Lagoon Committee, introduced herself as the Vice Chair of the committee, noting she has served in that role for about a year.

Don Wendt, outgoing primary representative for the Ramona Trails Association (RTA), reflected on his long tenure and announced that this would be his final meeting due to relocation. Glenn Morgan was introduced as the RTA's outgoing president and new primary CAC representative, with Patty Hayden as alternate. Cheryl Wagner as the new RTA President highlighted her outreach role, her background as a retired Senior Park Ranger, and RTA's involvement with the Santa Maria Creek Greenway.

Chair Khoury offered a special acknowledgment to John Degenfelder, recognizing his long-standing service to RTA and the SDRP.

Chair Khoury thanked all representatives and expressed appreciation for their participation and the upcoming presentation.

Approval of Minutes – 12-5-25

No amendments or changes were requested for the draft minutes. Peter Shapiro made the motion to approve the minutes and Jennifer Disser seconded the motion.

All members were in favor.

Abstain: None

Chair's Report –

Chair Khoury reported that the JPA Board met on December 12, 2025, and January 16, 2026. At the January meeting, both he and Vice Chair Jeremy were unanimously reappointed to their CAC leadership roles. The JPA Board also reappointed Jill MacDonald as JPA Chair and Chair Khoury as JPA Vice Chair.

The JPA has begun recruiting for a new Executive Director. A Search Committee composed of Board Members MacDonald, LaCava, and Khoury, and Legal Counsel Wayne Brechtel has held its initial meetings, with staff support from Executive Director Anderson and the JPA Office Manager in preparing the job description and advertising plan.

The position will be widely advertised with applications due March 13, 2026, and an anticipated June 1, 2026 start date.

JPA meetings from February through May 2026 will be held at Solana Beach City Hall. Meetings will return to the County Administration Building beginning June 2026. Updated location details will appear in agendas and on the JPA website.

The Chair reported that he conveyed the CAC's continued concern about Lake Hodges low lake level and increasing to its former elevation of 293 feet, noting that letters from supporting organizations were provided to the JPA Board.

Executive Director's Report –

Executive Director Anderson announced that the Valentine's Teas at Sikes Adobe will be held on February 14–15. She also noted that a series of Master Gardener classes will be offered at Sikes Adobe.

Anderson reported that the annual staff retreat was held in December 2025 at Powerhouse Park in Del Mar and shared a staff photo. She introduced two newly hired park rangers, Ranger Nico (returning to SDRP after previous service in 2010) and Ranger Alex, both bringing strong prior experience. She noted that experienced hires are essential to maintaining effective field operations.

Anderson concluded by expressing pride in the staff and confidence that the incoming Executive Director will lead the team successfully.

Public Comment –

Chair Khoury reported recent bird observations from an ESP event, noting more than 50 species identified, including a bald eagle.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

1. Update – Lake Hodges Dam and Lake Level

CAC San Pasqual Property Owners representatives Bob Dudley and Paul Bernstein (Raise Lake Hodges group) provided an update on their advocacy efforts to increase the Lake Hodges water level. This included continued outreach to regional agencies and stakeholders, including the Sierra Club, SDG&E, San Diego Fire officials, Santa Fe Irrigation District, and San Diego Public Utilities. The State Division of Dam Safety (DSOD) has not yet agreed to a meeting.

Public comments addressed dam condition, water quality, and inoperability of the hydroelectric pumps. Members raised questions about flood-zone impacts, wildfire history at Lake Hodges, and water quality associated with transfers to the Olivenhain Reservoir. Bernstein indicated that Santa Fe Irrigation District supports raising the lake and has systems in place to improve water quality.

Chair Khoury clarified the CAC's advisory role, noting that the City of San Diego holds decision-making authority over the dam and that Councilmember Marni von Wilpert is the primary City representative for the Hodges area. He also reported that the City's Hodges options report has been delayed until spring 2027.

The presenters introduced a motion requesting that the JPA Board advocate and request that City of San Diego support policies to:

1. Pursue an interim operating level of approximately 295 feet at Lake Hodges (about 40% capacity), subject to DSOD review, monitoring, and any appropriate mitigation measures.
2. Engage DSOD using a holistic, risk-balanced approach that evaluates seismic safety, wildfire risk, environmental damage, water security, and community protection.
3. Recognize that maintaining the lake at extremely low levels introduces escalating and foreseeable risks, particularly wildfire and ecological collapse; and
4. Proceed transparently and collaboratively with regional agencies, environmental organizations, fire authorities, and affected communities in evaluating this interim solution.

Bob Dudley moved to approve the motion, and Neil Meyer seconded the motion.

All in favor.

Abstentions: Pam Heatherington (Sierra Club) and Bill Adelson (Eastern Property Owner).

2. CAC Member Presentation – Ramona Trails Association

Romana Trails Association President Cheryl Wagner provided an update on the Ramona Trails Association's (RTA) activities and its role within the upper San Dieguito River watershed. She noted that RTA maintains trails and facilities at Ramona Community Park and continues to support Eagle Scout projects, including a new chicane/step-over and an informational kiosk along Santa Maria Creek.

Wagner reported that the Santa Maria Creek Greenway is incorporated into the Ramona Municipal Water District's Citizens Advisory Committee master plan, where she serves as a voting member. A

new Creek Health and Vegetation Management Subcommittee is working with the San Diego Green Infrastructure Consortium.

She outlined the watershed connection through Santa Maria Creek and Bandy Canyon to San Dieguito River Park, emphasizing Ramona's upstream significance. The County allocated \$1 million in FY 24–25 CINA funding for Greenway implementation planning, with continued funding under consideration for FY 27.

Wagner updated the committee on the Survey Road 97 trail and long-term plan to connect to the Coast to Crest Trail in San Pasqual Valley. A direct connection is currently constrained by a private property owner, and the County is expected to pursue an alternative, steeper alignment to avoid private property. Members noted that full connectivity could eventually create a significant regional trail loop linking Ramona Grasslands, Santa Maria Creek, Old Survey Road 97, and the Coast to Crest Trail.

Chair Khoury highlighted the importance of Santa Maria Creek, noting that the Santa Ysabel Creek officially becomes known as San Dieguito River at its confluence with Santa Maria Creek. He encouraged other CAC member organizations to give future presentations and thanked RTA for their update.

3. Progress Update – CTC Trail at Rio Run (aka Soccer Fields)

JPA Staff, Nathan Lacy, provided a brief update of the construction progress for Rio Run CTC trail segment adjacent to the Surf Cup soccer fields (former Polo Fields). Surf Cup Sport's contractor completed trail grading, scarification, and two culvert replacements. Fence-post holes were augured before the start of nesting bird season, and installation of lodge-pole fencing is underway. Drainage improvements were added by creating punch-throughs in an existing berm to address ponding issues. The contractor (RECON) collaborated with JPA staff on the progress and results.

Remaining work during nesting season will be limited to hand-tool fence installation, invasive species treatment, and monitoring. Construction will resume this September. Additional trail elevation adjustments may be needed in low areas. The east end where the Rio Run trail will connect to the Osuna Trail will be left in a partly finished condition in anticipation of the future trail connection, with service-access gates planned for contractor and ranger entry.

The project remains on schedule, with the trail anticipated to open in early 2027.

4. Status on Closing CTC Trail Gaps – Postponed to next CAC meeting.

5. Committee Reports

Project Review Committee – Vicki Touchstone reported that the PRC received a presentation from the City of Del Mar and its hydrologic consultant regarding the San Dieguito Lagoon Shoreline Protection Project (aka Living Levee) along the river inlet in Del Mar and adjacent to the Fairgrounds. The project aims to improve coastal resilience while incorporating multiple benefits, including enhanced trail connectivity along both sides of the river near Jimmy Durante Boulevard. A Mitigated Negative

Declaration is expected to be released soon for public review, which the PRC and JPA staff will review for consistency with the SDRP Concept Plan.

Trails Committee – Candy Bowman of the Trails Committee reported that the Trails Committee met in January. No major updates were reported beyond topics already discussed earlier in the meeting. The committee noted growing concern regarding a decline in equestrian use on trails, based on recent surveys, and intends to continue monitoring this trend. Director Anderson added that equestrian use may increase as more CTC Trail is built in the backcountry.

Interpretation Committee – No report.

INFORMATION

Horsepark Trail Repairs (oral report) - No report

Osuna Trail Segment of CTC Trail (oral report) - No report

Correspondence – None

Chair Khoury adjourned the meeting at 12:14 PM.