

**SAN DIEGUITO RIVER PARK
CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Minutes of August 7, 2026**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Khoury
Rich Risner
Candice Bowman
Kelly Clemshaw
Udo Wahn
Gary Welch
Liz Gabrych
Dorothy McLin
Patty Heyden
Victoria Touchstone
Beatrice Darimont
Jennifer Disser
Julie Klein
Pam Heatherington
Pat Whitt
Jeff Barnouw
Kristina Leyva
Bill Adelson
Neil Meyer

REPRESENTING

CAC, Chair
American Society of Landscape Architects
Carmel Valley Planning Board
Del Dios Town Council
Del Mar Lagoon Committee
Friends of Sikes Adobe
League of Women Voters
Lomas Serenas Property Owners
Ramona Trails Assoc.
Rancho Bernardo Planning Board
San Diego Bird Alliance
San Diego Mountain Biking Assoc.
San Diego Trails Alliance
Sierra Club
Torrey Pines Community Planning Group
Coastal Property Owner
Coastal Property Owner
Eastern Property Owner
Eastern Property Owner

VISITORS/STAFF PRESENT

Leana Bulay
Dewanda Vandermost
Nathan Lacy
Crystal Trull
Mark Hennenfent
Kim Godwind
Mary Yang
Maggie Zakor
Paul Lebidine

San Dieguito River Park JPA
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San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy
San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy
Al Tarkington Memorial Osprey Project
Al Tarkington Memorial Osprey Project
Resident of The Lakes community
Resident of The Lakes community

Roll Call and Introductions

Chair Khoury called the meeting to order at 10:35 AM. A roll call was taken with a quorum of 19 committee members present to begin the meeting.

Chair Khoury welcomed attendees, including visitors from The Lakes community and Crystal Trull, Executive Director of the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy.

Approval of Minutes – 6/5/2026

No amendments or changes were requested for the draft minutes. Neil Meyer made the motion to approve the minutes and Jeff Barnouw seconded the motion.

All members were in favor.

Abstain: None

Chair's Report -

Chair Khoury reported on actions taken at the June 26, 2026 JPA Board meeting.

Highlights included:

- Approval of Executive Director Leana Bulay's employment agreement.
- Continued progress on the Osuna Bridge project, including relocation of the proposed bridge alignment to avoid conflicts with an Olivenhain Municipal Water District recycled water pipeline.
- An ongoing easement dispute involving a privately owned 1.4-acre parcel near Interstate 5 and Via de la Valle was discussed.
- No response has yet been received from the City of San Diego Public Utilities Department regarding the JPA Board's correspondence concerning Lake Hodges water levels.

Chair Khoury introduced Crystal Trull, Executive Director of the San Dieguito River Valley Conservancy. Ms. Trull announced her appointment as the Conservancy's permanent Executive Director and discussed continued collaboration between the Conservancy and the JPA. She also invited CAC members to attend the River Valley Fest scheduled for October 11, 2026.

Executive Director's Report –

Executive Director Bulay provided updates regarding staffing, educational programming, volunteer activities, wildlife monitoring, interpretive projects, and upcoming public events.

Highlights included:

- Promotion of Calei Heaslet to Senior Interpretive Ranger and hiring of new Interpretive Ranger Gaby Busalacchi.
- Completion of a new Watershed Explorers vehicle wrap.
- Ongoing wildlife monitoring through camera trap programs.
- Establishment of monthly volunteer orientations.
- Completion of a new Kumeyaay interpretive panel scheduled for dedication on September 11, 2026.
- Continued planning and development of interpretive displays throughout the River Park.
- Progress on the Sikes Adobe pavilion project and facility repairs.

Upcoming programs include Coastal Cleanup Day, the Volcan Mountain Symposium, River Valley Fest, Wilderness First Aid training, the Native Plant Sale, Red Nose Run, and the return of the Artisan Fair.

Public Comment –

Maggie Zakor and Paul Lebidine, residents of The Lakes community adjacent to the 4S Ranch area, provided comments regarding a proposed residential development known as the McCrink Option Property Project.

The speakers expressed concerns regarding potential impacts to wildlife habitat, wildlife corridors, watershed resources, traffic, wildfire risks, and the proposed conversion of land previously identified as open space or recreational use.

Nathan Lacy explained that the proposal falls within the JPA's planning review area and is expected to be brought before the Project Review Committee for review. Committee members provided information regarding CEQA review opportunities and other agencies involved in the permitting process.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

1. Al Tarkington Memorial Osprey Project

Kim Godwin and Mary Yang presented the Al Tarkington Memorial Osprey Project proposal. The project would honor longtime River Park supporter Al Tarkington through the installation of an osprey nesting platform near the W-19 Restoration Area and Tidal Trail. Additional future project components may include a wildlife camera, viewing area, interpretive signage, and educational opportunities. All project funding, installation, and long-term support would be provided by the Al Tarkington Memorial Osprey Project group.

Presenters noted that:

- Ospreys have been regularly observed utilizing the area.
- The proposed site provides suitable fishing access and visibility while minimizing conflicts with existing utility infrastructure.
- The project supports wildlife habitat enhancement, public education, and River Park conservation goals.

Following discussion, the committee expressed support for the proposal.

Pam Heatherington made a motion to support the Al Tarkington Memorial Osprey Project proposal for an osprey nesting platform within the San Dieguito River Park and forward the recommendation to the JPA Board. Jeff Barnouw seconded the motion.

All members were in favor.

Abstain: None

2. Park Updates

JPA Environmental Planner Nathan Lacy provided updates regarding several ongoing projects:

Rio Run Trail

- Construction remains paused during nesting season.
- Work is scheduled to resume September 15, 2026 and be completed by early 2027.
- The trail will connect to the future Osuna Bridge project.

Osuna Bridge

- Engineering, permitting, mitigation planning, and grant funding efforts continue.
- Additional funding is being pursued due to increased project costs.

Coast to Crest Trail Gap Studies

- Planning continues for trail connections in the Santa Ysabel Gorge and East San Pasqual Valley areas.
- Staff are evaluating campground locations, access requirements, and potential trail alignments.

Hubble Gateway Monument

- Planning has shifted the monument location closer to the ranger station due to changing coastal development conditions.

San Pasqual Valley Trail Planning

- Staff are evaluating alternative trail routes associated with possible future changes at San Pasqual Academy.

3. **Committee Reports**

- a. **Project Review Committee** – No formal report. Nathan Lacy reported that several development proposals are expected to come before the committee in the coming months, including the McCrink Option Property Project and a proposed senior living development in Rancho Santa Fe.
- b. **Trails Committee** – Candice Bowman reported that the committee recently conducted a field visit along the Tidal Trail to identify locations for future interpretive signage. The committee also discussed opportunities for additional wildlife interpretation, including osprey-related exhibits, and is planning a future field visit to the Osuna Bridge project area. Members also discussed placement of the future Maggie Brown memorial bench.
- c. **Interpretation Committee** - Liz Gabrych reported that the committee has not met during the summer and is scheduled to reconvene the following week.

INFORMATION

Correspondence – None

Chair Khoury announced that the September 4, 2026 CAC meeting has been canceled due to the Labor Day holiday weekend.

The next meeting will be held on **October 2, 2026**, and will feature a presentation by Anne Van Leer, Executive Director of the Escondido Creek Conservancy.

Chair Khoury adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.