

**CONEJO OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING**

**April 8, 2026
Civic Arts Plaza Board Room
2100 East Thousand Oaks Boulevard**

SUMMARY MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER AND FLAG SALUTE:

Chair Newman called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and led the Flag Salute.

2. ROLL CALL:

Director Engler, Director Huffer, Director Nickles, and Chair Newman were present. Vice Chair Sullivan was absent.

Also present were: Assistant City Manager Alikhan, CRPD Park General Manager Friedl, Assistant Attorney Koo, COSCA Administrator Stark, COSCA Analyst Huber, Senior Recording Secretary Goor, and via Zoom was Records Management Specialist Cyr.

3. PRESENTATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: None.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

5. CONSENT CALENDAR:

A. Approval of Minutes of February 18, 2026 Meeting

Motion by Director Engler to approve the Minutes of the February 18, 2026 meeting, carried 4 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Huffer, Nickles, and Chair Newman; Noes – None; Abstain – None; Absent – Sullivan.

6. ACTION ITEMS:

A. Authorization to Accept a Multi-Use Trail Easement in the North Ranch Open Space (Maestro Productions LLC)

- i. Find that the following actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, 14 CCR sections 15061 and 15317.
- ii. Approve Resolution No. 2026-01, authorizing acceptance of a trail easement from Maestro Productions LLC, and for the COSCA Co-Administrative Officer to execute all documents related thereto.

COSCA Administrator Stark stated the Hillcrest Ridge Trail is a COSCA trail in North Ranch Open space, and 480 feet is located on private property at 3948 Skelton Canyon Circle with no easement that grants access. The City is presently processing a development application and included a condition pertaining to granting a trail easement on the western portion of the property (APN 690-0-010-015). This will complete the formal protection of COSCA's existing Hillcrest Ridge Trail.

Speaker/Written Statement Cards: None.

Motion by Director Huffer to approve staff recommendations (to find that the following actions are exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, 14 CCR sections 15061 and 15317; and approve Resolution No. 2026-01, authorizing acceptance of a trail easement from Maestro Productions LLC, and for the COSCA Co-Administrative Officer to execute all documents related thereto); carried 4 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Huffer, Nickles, and Chair Newman; Noes – None; Absent – Sullivan.

- B. Approval of the COSCA Invasive Plant Management Plan (IPMP) and Adoption of the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS-MND) for the IPMP
- i. Review the whole of the record before it and find that the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR §15000 et seq.), and reflects the independent judgment and analysis of COSCA.
 - ii. Find that the Initial Study (IS) identified potentially significant impacts related primarily to biological resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials (herbicides), and that revisions to the IPMP (the "Project") and incorporation of mitigation measures would avoid or reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.
 - iii. Find that, based on the whole of the administrative record, there is no substantial evidence that the Project, as mitigated, may have a significant effect on the environment.
 - iv. Find that the mitigation and reporting measures identified in the MND have been incorporated into COSCA's Invasive Plant Management Plan and/or will be incorporated into the scope of work for specific elements of the IPMP.
 - v. Adopt Resolution 2026-02 establishing the COSCA Invasive Plant Management Plan and adopt the IS-MND.

COSCA Administrator Stark stated invasive plants are among the most pervasive threats to the ecological health of the open space system. They are non-native plants with no natural population controls, out-competing native plants without providing the habitat needs of local wildlife, resulting in habitat quality degradation. He detailed the IPMP which includes manual and mechanical removal, biomass reduction, habitat restoration, and targeted herbicide applications to reduce the spread and impact of invasive plants.

The Notice of Intent to adopt a programmatic Mitigated Negative Declaration had a 32-day public and agency review period that began on January 20, 2026 in accordance with CEQA Guidelines 15073. No comments were received. Based on the whole of the record including the Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration, and mitigation measures, COSCA staff determined that the IPMP, as mitigated, will avoid or reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.

COSCA Administrator Stark responded to questions on priorities, early detection, rapid eradication, certain species that are unlikely to be eradicated, potential grants, current funding, wildfire prone species, mitigation methods including chemical use methodology and reasons for not suggesting biological control methods, and how to avoid reinfestation post-treatment which can be found in the adaptive management section of the programmatic document. He responded to questions regarding the Chumash notification, and that the fire department has shown support in relation to dealing with mobile fuels with high ember loads.

COSCA Analyst Huber responded to questions, noting that outreach information regarding ornamental plants that can become problems, can be found through the California Invasive Plant Council Community Outreach, including their "Don't Plant A Pest" series of brochures, which include alternative suggestions.

It was suggested that several years from now, this is revisited with an eye to evaluate status and success. COSCA Administrator Stark noted that monitoring is part of that effort and that once native plant communities are re-established, they become more resilient.

Speaker/Written Statement Cards: None.

Motion by Director Engler to approve staff recommendation (to review the whole of the record before it and find that the MND was prepared in compliance with CEQA [Public Resources Code §21000 et seq.] and the State CEQA Guidelines [14 CCR §15000 et seq.], and reflects the independent judgment and analysis of COSCA; find that the IS identified potentially significant impacts related primarily to biological resources, cultural resources, hazards and hazardous materials [herbicides], and that revisions to the IPMP [the “Project”] and incorporation of mitigation measures would avoid or reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level; find that, based on the whole of the administrative record, there is no substantial evidence that the Project, as mitigated, may have a significant effect on the environment; find that the mitigation and reporting measures identified in the MND have been incorporated into COSCA’s IPMP and/or will be incorporated into the scope of work for specific elements of the IPMP; and adopt Resolution 2026-02 establishing the COSCA IPMP and adopt the IS-MND); carried 4 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Huffer, Nickles, and Chair Newman; Noes – None; Absent – Sullivan.

- C. Approval of Appropriation from Woolsey Fire Recovery Fund for Targeted Invasive Plant Removal Projects, and Authorization for COSCA Co-Chief Administrative Officer to Execute Associated Contracts
- i. Find that the proposed project falls within the scope of actions described in the COSCA Invasive Plant Management Plan and its associated Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). With implementation of the mitigation measures adopted in the MND, the project, as mitigated, will avoid or reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. No additional CEQA review is required.
 - ii. Authorize staff to expend up to \$200,000 from the Woolsey Fire Recovery Fund for implementation of targeted invasive plant removal projects in selected open space areas, and authorize the COSCA Co-Chief Administrative Officer to execute associated contracts.

COSCA Analyst Huber presented the report noting invasive plant species are a threat to ecological processes, native plant communities, and the persistence of native plant species in COSCA open space. Areas under COSCA management are bordered by residential communities, rural areas, and vacant private lands, and COSCA lands require proactive monitoring and management to maintain the integrity of existing biological resources. With the growing prevalence of invasive species and impact of the Woolsey Fire, many COSCA areas are being increasingly affected. COSCA is requesting a \$200,000 appropriation from the Woolsey Fire Recovery Fund to target removal of 14 invasive plant species in 17 open space areas that she outlined. A competitive RFP process will be used for contractor selection.

COSCA Analyst Huber responded to questions regarding the scope of the project, and the basis for the fund request in terms of estimated project completion and details of what it includes. She also responded to comments on whether the amount being requested will be enough, and noted various treatment methods for various species present in various densities, with future tailoring possible in the future. Assessing the contractors was discussed as well.

Speaker/Written Statement Cards: None.

Motion by Director Nickles to approve staff recommendation (to find that the proposed project falls within the scope of actions described in the COSCA Invasive Plant Management Plan and its associated Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). With implementation of the mitigation measures adopted in the MND, the project, as mitigated, will avoid or reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. No additional CEQA review is required; authorize staff to expend up to \$200,000 from the Woolsey Fire Recovery Fund for implementation of targeted invasive plant removal projects in selected open space areas, and authorize the COSCA Co-Chief Administrative Officer to execute associated contracts); carried 4 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Huffer, Nickles, and Chair Newman; Noes – None; Absent – Sullivan.

- D. Authorization to Allow the Use of Prescribed Grazing on a Portion of the Rancho Potrero Open Space to Support Restoration of Native Grassland Habitat
- i. Find that the proposed project falls within the scope of actions described in the COSCA Invasive Plant Management Plan and its associated Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). With implementation of the mitigation measures adopted in the MND, the project, as mitigated, will avoid or reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. No additional CEQA review is required.
 - ii. Authorize COSCA staff to undertake a prescribed grazing program on 50 acres at the Rancho Potrero open space for natural resource management purposes, and to prepare an RFP/Q for grazing services.

COSCA Administrator Stark stated that the 303 acres of Rancho Potrero open space southwest of the City includes rocky outcrops, chaparral, and grasslands. A 50-acre portion of the grassland is dominated by invasive, non-native grasses that have outcompeted native bunch grasses, altering habitat quality for birds, other wildlife, pollinators, and native plant communities. He reviewed the issues invasive grasses cause, and the

positive effect that native perennial bunch grasses have. Administrator Stark also discussed the benefits of grazing over herbicides or mowing.

COSCA Administrator Stark responded to questions regarding preferred animals being sheep as they are preferential eaters, however goats may also be used for this high density, short duration program which will include performance metrics. He answered questions on the grazing animal confinement fencing used, and what type of plants might be eaten and what types might be preserved. It was noted this is a test case.

Speaker/Written Statement Cards: None.

Motion by Director Huffer to approve staff recommendation (to find that the proposed project falls within the scope of actions described in the COSCA Invasive Plant Management Plan and its associated Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). With implementation of the mitigation measures adopted in the MND, the project, as mitigated, will avoid or reduce all potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level. No additional CEQA review is required; and authorize COSCA staff to undertake a prescribed grazing program on 50 acres at the Rancho Potrero open space for natural resource management purposes, and to prepare an RFP/Q for grazing services); carried 4 – 0 by the following vote: Ayes – Directors Engler, Huffer, Nickles, and Chair Newman; Noes – None; Absent – Sullivan.

7. **COSCA UPDATES** (CRPD General Manager and/or City Manager):

A. Follow-up items, announcements, and upcoming issues:

CRPD General Manager Friedl complimented COSCA staff on their in-depth, comprehensive reports this evening, Chair Newman concurred.

8. **BOARDMEMBER COMMENTS:** None.

9. **CLOSED SESSION:** None.

10. **ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m. to the Regular Meeting of May 20, 2026.



David Newman, Chairperson

Minutes Approved: May 20, 2026