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CVAG Contact Person: **Katie Barrows**

Phone: (760) 346-1127

E-Mail: kbarrows@cvag.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INDIO ADOPTS HABITAT PLAN, ALL CITIES NOW ON BOARD

With last night's unanimous vote by the Indio City Council, the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan has cleared a major milestone, adoption by all participating cities.

Indio, CA, October 18 – The Indio City Council has unanimously adopted the historic Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (CVMSHCP).

With Indio's council vote, all eight participating cities – Cathedral City, Coachella, Indian Wells, Indio, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage – along with the County of Riverside, Coachella Valley Water District and Imperial Irrigation District have now signed on to the Plan.

The Plan permanently conserves 240,000 acres of open space and protects 27 threatened plant and animal species across the Coachella Valley. City officials and their staff have commended the Plan's myriad of environmental, traffic relief and economic benefits derived from replacing a patchwork bureaucratic approval process with greater local control that expedites community infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges and freeways. Indio is in a unique position to gain from at least three I-10 freeway interchange projects streamlined by the MSHCP at Monroe, Jackson and Golf Center Parkway.

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“I am extremely proud to be part of this vote that will secure the future prosperity and natural heritage of the City of Indio, and the Coachella Valley, for generations to come,” said Indio Mayor Ben Godfrey. “The CVMSHCP unites our region in a common cause and is the model of regional cooperation.”

The successful local government votes, which started on September 10, move the Plan closer to implementation than ever before in its 12-year history. Before the end of this month, the CVMSHCP will go to State and Federal agencies for final permitting. Once final permits are issued, the CVMSHCP will provide a Valley-wide blueprint for growth and conservation over the next 75 years.

The current version of the Plan excludes Desert Hot Springs, which opted out of the original draft last year. However, Desert Hot Springs’ City Council recently authorized beginning negotiations to rejoin the CVMSHCP.

“I welcome Desert Hot Springs back to the discussion,” said Richard Kite, Chairman of the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG), “Our Valley is stronger when we all share in a united vision and regional prosperity.”

Since the CVMSHCP has been approved and adopted without Desert Hot Springs, adding the city would take a major Plan amendment. If an amendment were agreed to, it would follow an identical approval process as the CVMSHCP itself, an effort that is not likely to start before next year.

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A specific land use proposal known as the Palmwood development, just outside Desert Hot Springs, has been an ongoing issue in discussions regarding adding Desert Hot Springs to the Plan. The 1,766 acre project site has significant development constraints on land essential to the movement and habitat of vulnerable species, including the Desert Tortoise, Palm Springs Pocket Mouse and Burrowing Owl. The developers at Palmwood chose to file a lawsuit last week to undermine the Plan and challenge habitat and species protections.

“We are very disappointed Palmwood landowners and developers went the route of a lawsuit,” said John Wohlmuth, Executive Director of CVAG. “While CVAG remains open to discussions regarding development that is consistent with the Plan, the recent Palmwood lawsuit reveals their intent to pursue a flawed development that is in direct conflict with the region’s Plan for environmental and economic preservation. Our Plan is a quality of life and natural heritage priority for the people of the Coachella Valley.”

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