

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS - LAND USE
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026**

MINUTE ORDER NO. 6

**SUBJECT: NOTICED PUBLIC HEARING:
IRON MOUNTAIN COUNTY PRESERVE - APPROVE ACQUISITION OF
APPROXIMATELY 380 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE PRESERVE FROM POWAY
IRON MOUNTAIN ESTATES AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION ([3/25/2026]
- SET HEARING; [4/22/2026] - HOLD HEARING) (DISTRICT: 2)**

OVERVIEW

On March 25, 2026(02) the Board of Supervisors Set a Hearing for April 22, 2026.

The County of San Diego (County) Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) enhances the quality of life in San Diego County by providing exceptional parks and recreation experiences and preserving significant natural resources. A core aspect of DPR's conservation program is acquiring open space lands to balance the conservation of plant and animal species with recreation, housing, development, and agricultural activities within the San Diego region.

DPR has identified approximately 380 acres to expand the existing Iron Mountain County Preserve, contribute toward DPR's goal of acquiring 500 acres of land per year, and ensure compliance with the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) goals. If acquired, the existing approximately 160-acre Iron Mountain County Preserve (Preserve) would be expanded to approximately 540 acres, conserving Diegan coastal sage scrub, chamise chaparral, and southern mixed chaparral habitat to help protect sensitive species, including Belding's orange-throated whiptail, Blainville's horned lizard, Cooper's hawk, and mule deer. Conserving these lands also supports housing by ensuring that development can be streamlined under the MSCP permit for compatible projects.

This acquisition would enhance conservation under the MSCP set by federal and State requirements for special-status species conservation. It would also support multiple County sustainability goals, habitat and biodiversity, biological connectivity, greenhouse gas reductions, and housing. Additionally, conservation of the property would provide flood control benefits and protection of water and air quality. The acquisition will add about 380 acres to the adopted MSCP South County Subarea Plan (Plan), contributing toward the remaining 16,262 acres needed to reach the Plan's 98,379-acre conservation goal. Additional benefits include supporting the County's Climate Action Plan through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 480 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, equivalent to taking about 90 cars off the road per year.

The County entered into an Option Agreement with the Poway Iron Mountain Estates, LLC (Seller) for the purchase of approximately 380 acres identified as Assessor's Parcel Numbers 322-011-05-00, a portion of 322-011-06-00, 322-040-04-00, and 322-041-06-00 (Property) for the appraised value of \$4,424,000 (approximately \$11,750/acre). If approved, DPR will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Poway to manage the Property for the County.

Today's request is for the County Board of Supervisors (Board) to set a hearing for April 22, 2026, to consider approval of the purchase of the Property, and to direct the Clerk of the Board to provide public notice of the hearing. If the Board approves this request, then on April 22, 2026, after making the

necessary findings, the Board will be asked to authorize the Director, Department of General Services to purchase the Property from the Seller for the appraised value of \$4,424,000. The total one-time County cost, including property acquisition, staff time, and initial stewardship is \$4,924,000. Funds for one-time costs are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 Operational Plan. The annual costs to manage the Property are \$74,000, including ongoing stewardship, fire abatement, and supervision of the Preserve, which are also included in the FY 2025-26 Operational Plan. The Board is also requested to authorize the Director of DPR to execute a Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Poway to manage the Property.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Find that the proposed acquisition of real property identified as APNs 322-011-05-00, a portion of 322-011-06-00, 322-040-04-00, and 322-041-06-00 is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15301, 15311, 15313, 15316, and 15325 of the State CEQA Guidelines.
2. Authorize the Director, DGS, or designee, to exercise the Option Agreement to purchase real property identified as APNs 322-011-05-00, a portion of 322-011-06-00, 322-040-04-00, and 322-041-06-00 from the Poway Iron Mountain Estates, LLC for the appraised value of \$4,424,000.
3. Authorize the Director, DGS, or designee, to execute all documents, including escrow documents, necessary to complete the purchase of real property identified as APNs 322-011-05-00, a portion of 322-011-06-00, 322-040-04-00, and 322-041-06-00.
4. Authorize the Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, to execute a Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Poway for the City's management of the Property, and to take any actions necessary to administer the agreement.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Department of Parks and Recreation Conservation Program's acquisition of properties with high-quality habitat is anticipated to result in positive public health impacts by improving water and air quality for all residents. The acquisition of the Property is within the community areas of Ramona and Poway and will contribute acreage to multiple sustainability efforts, including expanding the adopted MSCP South County Subarea Plan Area by approximately 380 acres and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 480 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year, equivalent to taking about 90 cars off the road per year. Acquisition of conservation land reduces emissions that would have occurred if the land were developed and prevents the loss of critical habitat. Under the MSCP, the County partners with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to ensure the unincorporated area's rich biodiversity is conserved while allowing housing development to occur through the County's permitting process. The MSCP allows private development projects that meet MSCP requirements to rely on the County's permits under the Federal Endangered Species Act, California Endangered Species Act, and State Natural Community Conservation Planning Act, eliminating the need for individual project-by-project permitting under these regulations. This streamlines development and housing timelines and reduces project costs by balancing development with conservation at a regional scale.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed acquisition will contribute to multiple County of San Diego (County) Sustainability Goals. Acquisition of the approximately 380-acre property supports County Sustainability Goal No. 3 and the County's Climate Action Plan by contributing to greenhouse gas reductions by approximately 480 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year through preservation of open space. The proposed acquisition also supports County Sustainability Goal No. 4, by expanding opportunities for community members to access outdoor recreation and nature, and County Sustainability Goal No. 6 by expanding open space adjacent to native ecosystems and habitats. By conserving the property under the MSCP, this action balances regional habitat conservation with housing development by streamlining environmental permitting and focusing development in less environmentally sensitive areas. This provides more opportunities for housing development, supporting the County's General Plan goals and meeting the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA).

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the FY 2025-26 Operational Plan in the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Acquisition Fund and Finance Other. If approved on April 22, 2026, this request will result in total one-time project costs for the Property of \$4,924,000 in FY 2025-26, which includes \$4,424,000 for property acquisition; \$40,000 staff time and appraisal reports to complete the transaction; \$10,000 for closing and title costs; and \$450,000 in one-time land improvement costs (including \$350,000 for comprehensively updating the existing Iron Mountain County Preserve Resource Management Plan and initial species monitoring, and \$100,000 to conduct initial stewardship that features signage, access control, vegetation management, land surveying, and other supplies and services and ongoing management). The funding source is available prior year General Fund fund balance in the MSCP Acquisition Fund (\$2,924,000) and Unlocked Reserves (\$2,000,000). On March 3, 2026 (13), the Board approved the recommendation of Unlocked Reserves for MSCP. There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years in FY 2025-26.

Total annual ongoing costs for assessments, monitoring, operations, and management of the Property are estimated at \$74,000: approximately \$20,000 for adaptive management and biological monitoring, and \$54,000 for operating and management costs of the site. Ongoing costs and funding sources are included in DPR's FY 2025-26 Adopted Operational Plan based on existing General Purpose Revenue (GPR).

If approved, the County will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with the City of Poway for management of the Property, excluding habitat monitoring activities required by the MSCP, which will be managed by the County. If Poway should ever cease to manage the Property, the County's estimated annual costs would increase by \$16,500 for ongoing operations and maintenance, for a total of \$90,500. The funding source would be DPR GPR and would be included in future Operational Plans.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

This action would support the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), which benefits development throughout the region by streamlining permitting for projects that meet MSCP requirements. Streamlined permitting positively impacts economic development, housing, and businesses that are required to complete biological mitigation in accordance with State and federal regulations.

ACTION:

ON MOTION of Supervisor Montgomery Steppe, seconded by Supervisor Desmond, the Board of Supervisors closed the Hearing and took action as recommended, on Consent.

AYES: Aguirre, Anderson, Lawson-Remer, Montgomery Steppe, Desmond

State of California)
County of San Diego)

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a full, true and correct copy of the Original entered in the Minutes of the Board of Supervisors.

ANDREW POTTER
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors



Signed
by Andrew Potter