

San Diego River Conservancy 2004 Accomplishments

1. First Projects / Governing Board Actions

1. Acquisition of Eagle Peak Preserve (in headwaters)
2. Restoration of Mission Valley Preserve (adjacent to estuary)
3. Construction of Bicycle Pathway (Ocean Beach to Mission Valley)
4. Pursuit of Six Priority Acquisitions in City of San Diego
5. San Diego River Wetlands Creation Project

The Governing Board recently voted to “formally endorse” and recommend the expenditure of Proposition 40 funds for the first three projects above. The Board found each project to meet the purposes and priorities of the San Diego River Conservancy Act and found each to be a high priority element of the San Diego River Park. The Conservancy is partnering with the San Diego River Park Foundation on the first project and with the City of San Diego on the remainder. With the Board’s recommendation, the Foundation and the City of San Diego are now applying to the Resources Agency for Proposition 40 River Parkways funds earmarked for the San Diego River. The City of San Diego also requested and received the Governing Board’s “informal support” to move forward with (1) negotiations / investigations on six additional priority acquisitions; and (2) implementation of a Wetlands Creation Project proposed by the City as mitigation for sanitary sewer maintenance.

2. Five-Year Infrastructure Plan

The Conservancy is currently developing its Five-Year Infrastructure Plan. The four-fold purpose of the Plan is to (1) direct the Conservancy’s course for the next five years; (2) define and establish Conservancy Programs, Projects, and Priorities; (3) estimate and document the Capital Outlay needed to achieve the Conservancy’s mission over the next five years; and (4) provide the basis for the Conservancy’s future request for a Capital Outlay line-item and the funding needed to achieve its mission. The Plan is being funded by the Conservancy’s reappropriated FY 03/04 remaining Support Budget. Progress to date includes:

- Currently in process of securing consultant services;
- Governing Board agrees to plan type and “programmatic” (rather than land use master plan) approach;
- Background research has been completed (e.g., review of Strategic Plans and policy documents of other agencies, etc.)
- Considerable informal consultation with other agencies and Strategic Planning experts.

3. Eight Pre-Proposals (Grants or Federal Appropriations)

The Conservancy has submitted the following eight pre-proposals for capital outlay funds:

1. Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project Pre-Proposals

- a) San Diego River Revolving Fund Project
- b) San Diego River Acquisitions Project
- c) San Diego River Estuary Hydrologic Assessment Project
- d) San Diego River Estuary Restoration Project

2. Proposition 50 Integrated Regional Water Management Project Pre-Proposals

- a) San Diego River Area Acquisitions
- b) San Diego River Area Restorations
- c) San Diego River Area Improvements

3. Federal 2006 Appropriations Pre-Proposal

- a) San Diego River Park Acquisitions (The Conservancy is partnering with the USDA Forest Service on the acquisition of 5-10 strategic parcels in the headwaters / Cleveland National Forest.)

4. GIS-Based Parcel Inventory

The Conservancy has secured its first GIS-based Parcel inventory of its entire 52-mile jurisdiction. Consisting of aerial photos, maps, and a parcel profile database, the inventory was designed specifically for, and gifted to, the Conservancy by the San Diego County Assessor, Recorder and Clerk.

5. Key Planning / Policy Documents

Numerous key planning and policy documents have been under development by the Conservancy's major partners for the past few years and are final or nearly final (e.g., City of San Diego's Draft Master Plan for San Diego River Park; San Diego River Park Conceptual Plan; County's San Diego River Watershed Management Plan; Santee's River Park Plan; and Lakeside's River Park Conceptual Plan, etc.). Staff has reviewed and submitted extensive comments on most of these documents. The Governing Board has been briefed on and has "accepted" these planning documents as the starting point for the Conservancy's Five-Year Infrastructure Plan. In addition, the Conservancy is currently providing comments on a significant proposed redevelopment project along the San Diego River (Grantville Redevelopment Project Draft EIR).

6. Introductory Presentations / Community Outreach / Tours, etc.

The Executive Officer has initiated an outreach effort to introduce the Conservancy to its key partners and the community, share its mission, and ask for support. This effort consists of a series of presentations, formal and informal meetings, media coverage, and a series of watershed tours for the Governing Board and public. Outreach efforts to date include Local Agencies; San Diego River Park Foundation; elected officials and staff; Mission Valley Community Council; San Diego River Coalition; Lakeside's River Park Foundation; land owner groups; San Diego River Watershed Workgroup; nonprofit and stakeholder groups; USDA Forest Service / Cleveland National Forest; US Department of Interior / National Park Service; US Environmental Protection Agency; Trust for Public Lands; local land brokers and various consultants; all other state conservancies; The Nature Conservancy; San Diego County Bar Association; and the San Diego Environmental Professionals Group, etc. This process is ongoing and many more strategic contacts are planned.

7. \$240,000 Settlement Award

The Conservancy anticipates receiving \$240,000 of a recent settlement agreement between the City of San Diego and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board. The check will be made payable to the Conservancy for the purpose of providing funding for water quality related projects within the San Diego River Watershed. The agreement will settle the

City's liability for unauthorized discharges from the sanitary sewer to waters of the State, including the San Diego River.

8. **Preservation of Unused FY 03/04 Support Budget**

The Conservancy, with the support of the Resources Agency, Department of Finance, and the local state legislators, was successful in preserving its unused FY 03/04 Support Budget. The funds were reappropriated for use in FY 04/05 and are being utilized to develop (and subsequently implement) the Conservancy's Five-Year Infrastructure Plan. The Conservancy also requested and was granted an extension of the deadline for encumbrance and expenditure of the Proposition 40 River Parkways Funds earmarked for the San Diego River and included in the Resources Agency budget.

9. **Executive Officer**

The Conservancy's Governing Board hired its first Executive Officer in late April 2004.

10. **State Agency Set-up, Delegation of Authority, Office Facility, Equipment, Supplies**

The Conservancy has established the administrative and functional framework for a new state agency; adopted a Delegation of Authority for its Executive Officer; secured office facilities, basic equipment, and supplies; and initiated an upgrade of its website.

11. **Executive Assistant**

The Executive Officer hired an Executive Assistant (Associate Governmental Program Analyst classification) in late December 2004. The search process included consideration of 60 qualified applicants (from as far away as Washington DC); eight initial interviews and three follow-up interviews.

12. **Draft Planning of Mission / Goals**

The overall mission of the San Diego River Conservancy is to protect and restore the San Diego River for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Pursuant to its enabling statute, the Conservancy was created for a wide range of specific purposes including to provide, restore, protect, and enhance: open space, wildlife habitat and species, wetlands, water quality for all beneficial uses, natural floodwater conveyance, cultural resources, public access and recreation, and educational and scientific opportunities. The mission, which includes the development of a 52-mile long San Diego River Park and Trail, will be accomplished through the acquisition and management of strategic public lands (or conservation easements). The San Diego River Park Trail will connect with the California Coastal Trail, Trans-County Trail, and many other important regional and local trails.

As stated above, the Conservancy is in the early stages of establishing a programmatic approach to achieving its mission in which a Program is developed around each statute objective and implemented through a series of prioritized projects.