

San Diego River Conservancy
Capital Outlay Proposals
2007-08

BCP-01 Land Conservation-Ag Lands

The Conservancy requests, \$2.5 million comprised of the following fund sources: (1) the remaining \$1,482,000 balance of the unallocated, unappropriated portion of Proposition 40 Section 5096.610(d) for Agricultural Land preservation (available for multiple departments); (2) \$600,000 of General Funds; (3) \$250,000 of future Park/Water/Conservation Bond funds; and (4) \$250,000 of Environmental License Plate Funds.

The purpose of the requested appropriation is to advance the Conservancy's *Land Conservation Program* by funding high priority projects which acquire, preserve and improve agricultural lands within the San Diego River Area. Specifically the funds will be used to (1) acquire agricultural lands in El Monte Valley that are currently on the market facing imminent risk of conversion to urban land uses; and (2) provide assistance to landowners as needed to preserve working landscapes. The Conservancy will employ acquisition in fee simple, conservation easements, assistance to farmers, grants to Conservancy partners, and other tools as needed for agricultural land preservation. The requested appropriation will be extensively leveraged with partner contributions.

I have several concerns with the request:

1. The request asks for 3 fund sources that are problematic. Generally, land conservancy's are not appropriated General Fund for acquisitions. The state General Fund is still in a deficit mode for 07-08 and the appropriation of limited General Fund dollars for land acquisition will probably not be a priority of the administration. In addition to the problems with General Fund, the ELPF is currently out of balance with expenditure exceeding revenues by in excess \$1 million annually. Finally, the request includes \$250,000 of future Park/Water/Conservation Bond funds. It is not policy of the Administration to appropriate from fund sources that do not already exist. In addition, the current bond proposal does not include any funding for the SDRC; therefore there would no source of the funds to appropriate from. .
2. While the use of the Prop 40 agricultural money may be a viable source, those funds have traditionally been expended by the WCB and the Department of Conservation. Each of those organizations has a viable farmland conservancy program. It may be appropriate for SDRC to partner agricultural projects with the WCB and Conservation.

Based on the preceding analysis I cannot support the request.