

EXECUTIVE OFFICER SUMMARY REPORT  
**December 2, 2005**

- ITEM: **13**
- SUBJECT: **SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT PRESENTATION / PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**  
Officer Jim Needham (San Diego Police Department, Western Division) will provide an informational report on the San Diego Police Department's efforts to improve public safety along the San Diego Riverbed in Mission Valley. The presentation will emphasize specific ways in which Conservancy can partner with and support the Department. The Board may take an action. (*Officer Jim Needham*)
- PURPOSE: Information item. This item is included to inform the Board about (1) public safety issues currently present along the San Diego Riverbed in Mission Valley; and (2) partnership opportunities with the Police Department.
- DISCUSSION: **Background**  
Beginning in 1996, San Diego Police Department, Western Division has made regular sweeps of the San Diego Riverbed in an attempt to curb homelessness and criminal activity along the San Diego River.
- According to their statistics, during an aggressive three-month campaign last year, 161 arrests were made which generated over 1000 convictions for crimes ranging from assault/rape to drug offenses to trespassing.
- The Mission Valley Preserve is the 51-acre stretch of riverbed favored by the homeless. The Preserve begins just south of the YMCA on Friars Road and runs to Interstate 5. The riverbed is used as a base for criminal activity for several reasons including: (1) dense brush and vegetation which provides privacy for criminal activity; (2) a lack of access – it is difficult for the police and the general public to gain entry; and (3) location—the area is located near business and residences.

In addition to the criminal activity in the riverbed, trespassers are damaging the river's sensitive ecosystem. Hazardous materials found onsite include: paint, car batteries, human waste, chemicals (used for making drugs), spray paint, and biohazard waste.

Stepped up police enforcement and conviction, particularly those convictions with "stay-away" conditions, have decreased the homeless population. Unfortunately at this time however the San Diego Police Department does not have the resources to continue their aggressive presence. They are looking for partners and stakeholders interested in increasing public safety in the riverbed.

### **Partnership Opportunities**

A potential partnership between the Conservancy and the San Diego Police Department could take numerous forms. For example, funding could be provided to: 1) enhance police presence in the Riverbed; 2) conduct a large-scale mapping and removal effort of non-native invasive vegetation (i.e., from Mission Trails Regional Park to the ocean); or 3) provide funding for safety equipment to outfit two teams. These and other recommendations will be included in the Conservancy's upcoming Strategic Plan / Five-Year Infrastructure Plan for your review.

Personal safety equipment is sorely needed and estimated to cost approximately \$20,000. A non-native invasive vegetation removal project in the San Diego River would serve two important purposes: (1) restore the natural ecology of the riverbed; and (2) remove overgrowth which provides shelter and concealment to transients.

In any event, the Conservancy would coordinate closely with the City of San Diego, San Diego River Park Foundation, and Friends of Mission Valley Preserve, etc. to ensure that all new efforts compliment/build upon past or ongoing efforts. These three entities in particular have already made significant progress in the Preserve; yet a lot remains to be done. Recall that one of the three projects you previously approved for Proposition 40 River Parkways funding provides money to the City for restoration efforts in the Mission Valley Preserve.

LEGAL CONCERNS: None.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

SUPPORTING  
DOCUMENTS:

1. "*San Diego Riverbed Project*" Folder provided by the San Diego Police Department (will be provided at the meeting)

RECOMMENDATION: Accept Officer Needham's report.