

# **SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY**

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**Staff Recommendation**  
**SDRC Resolution 20-04**  
May 14, 2020

## **PROPOSITION 68 GRANT**

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to provide up to \$250,000.00 to the County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation (County Parks) to improve Lindo Lake County Park trails, facilities, and restore native habitat.

**LOCATION:** Lindo Lake County Park is a 55-acre park located on Vine Street south of State Route 67 and west of Lake Jennings in the unincorporated community of Lakeside, San Diego County California.

**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:** Staff recommends that the San Diego River Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to the San Diego River Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code, § 32630 et seq.):

The San Diego River Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$250,000.00 (two hundred fifty thousand dollars) to implement projects focused on creating and enhancing park and trail facilities, providing public access, enhancing river parkways, and protecting forests and wetlands specifically as follows:

- County of San Diego: Two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000.00) for recreational enhancements such as provide ADA access to trails, install fishing pier, bird viewing station, native habitat restoration, irrigation and hardscaping within the County of San Diego's Lindo Lake Park.

Prior to the disbursement of funds, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a scope of work, budget and schedule, and the names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the San Diego River Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines for the Conservancy's Proposition 68 grant program.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the San Diego River Conservancy Act, including Section 32649.

**PROJECT SUMMARY:** The Lindo Lake Restoration is a large project designed to benefit both the environment and the community of Lakeside by restoring aquatic function and enhancing park facilities. The Proposed Project will occur in two phases: Phase 1 will restore the east basin to provide additional recreational resources for the public, and Phase 2 will restore the west basin. The scope of this application is only for Phase 1.

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More than 35 years of sediment accumulated in the east basin of Lindo Lake, and now 99,000 cubic yards of sediment will be excavated to increase lake volume to a maximum depth of 10 feet. To inhibit sedimentation in the newly deepened lake, stormwater best management practices (BMPs), including sediment basins and stormwater treatment/ filtration systems will be constructed at all inlet locations. The proposed project will also improve public amenities and public access to Lindo Lake County Park which include trail improvements (around the east basin), a fishing pier, bird watching station, picnic tables, benches.

The addition of accessible pedestrian trails and pathways will improve public access. The improvements include making 100% of the trail network surrounding the perimeter of the lake ADA accessible with a maximum 4.8% slope. Visitors will access connections to existing sidewalks through a network of 10-foot wide ADA accessible paths constructed of stabilized decomposed granite that allow for stormwater infiltration, as well as through the installation of ADA accessible paths connecting to a new accessible pedestrian curb ramp at the intersection of Lakeshore Drive and Petite Lane.

Providing additional amenities including expanded accessible trails, viewing platforms along the lake perimeter, and benches and trash receptacles throughout the site will provide additional public benefit by providing desired amenities to support community interests.

## **Fishing pier**

A fishing pier in the east basin sized 12-feet by 16-feet, will extend from the causeway into the lake and will be equipped with railings and benches to provide a new public amenity at the lake to support the community's recreation interests. Fishing at Lindo Lake has long been a favorite community activity, including annual fishing tournaments, but has been suspended due to current poor water quality.

## **Bird watching station**

Two Bird watching stations, sized approximately 19-feet wide by 8-feet high and constructed of lumber slats, will be located to allow park visitors to observe waterfowl and other wildlife. The bird watching stations will allow observation of wildlife in closer proximity than was previously available while minimizing disturbance of natural behaviors. Lindo Lake has historically provided important habitat for native and migratory birds. The improvements of this project will restore this habitat to a healthy condition. Observing and admiring the wildlife of the lake is regularly enjoyed by many community members and park visitors.

## **Site hardscape & furnishings**

Lindo Lake County Park provides the public much needed access to nature and recreation. Hardscaping includes a decorative or practical structure in a landscape. Hardscape is a critical part of landscape design, providing definition and a sense of organization to the natural areas and features. Hardscape elements can define the use of a space, and lead visitors through different zones of soft scaping, as with a trail or pathway that winds through a park area and into open space, or viewing station. Many members of the community enjoy walking the park's existing trails daily.

## **Landscape irrigation**

Water efficient irrigation will be installed around the east basin to support establishment of native trees and drought tolerant plantings.

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## **Landscape planting**

Native terrestrial and aquatic habitat for different species will be improved as landscape elements and will stabilize banks to reduce erosion. Restoring native habitat provides benefit to the birds and wildlife corridor. In addition, the local community and park visitors enjoy the natural setting and wildlife of Lindo Lake.

Ongoing maintenance and operations will be funded by the County of San Diego General Fund. County Park staff will perform ongoing site analysis and management to maintain Lindo Lake's improvements. Regular ongoing maintenance will include site, landscape and infrastructure maintenance and repair, stormwater management, and site patrolling, observation and reporting.

**SITE DESCRIPTION:** The project is located near the geographic and population center of the community of Lakeside, which is named after Lindo Lake. Lindo Lake is the only natural lake in the County of San Diego and the surrounding park provides recreation, education, interpretation and community gathering opportunities for Lakeside and adjacent communities. The lake includes two basins, separated by an earthen dike. Other major features of the park include the Lakeside Community Center, Lakeside Teen Center, playgrounds, picnic and barbeque areas, a ball field, outdoor fitness stations, tennis courts, an all-wheel park, an historic boathouse, and walking trails.

The current vegetation of the east basin consists of various tree species scattered along the perimeter and a variety of exotic and noxious herbaceous growth. Once seasonal water and runoff have evaporated and infiltrated, the basin is mowed during the growing season to prevent odor from decaying materials and pests from breeding.

**PROJECT HISTORY:** An effort to improve Lindo Lake has been underway since an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was certified in 1976. Subsequently, a SEIR was prepared to conform to a Park Master Plan dated January 1983. Since that time, additional environmental regulations enacted at the local, state, and federal level occurred. Pursuant to CEQA Section 15163, a new SEIR was prepared to address these changes.

Extensive environmental analysis guided design of the project to ensure compatibility with and enhancement to the local natural environment. The SEIR, certified on May 1, 2019, identified potential project-related impacts to biological resources, cultural resources, and hazards/hazardous materials. A Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program has been adopted to ensure compliance with avoidance and minimization measures in accordance with Section 21081.6 of the Public Resources Code and Section 15091 of the CEQA Guidelines.

**PROJECT NEED:** The Lindo Lake Restoration project is needed to restore the ecological health of the lake and to restore the environmental quality of the site for the Lakeside community.

The sloped banks and the perimeter of the basin will be stabilized with cobble and native planting approved by the Resource Agencies. Planting design and site design have been developed to provide healthy habitat for multiple wildlife species. Restored planting areas will be temporarily irrigated using a high-efficiency water conserving irrigation system until plant establishment. County Park staff will maintain the restoration areas to ensure a healthy and thriving condition. County Park staff will also monitor the restoration areas and report status to the Resource Agencies ensuring the requirements of the project permits are achieved. Without this project, the lake will continue to deteriorate, worsening habitat conditions for

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local and migratory wildlife and further degrading the quality of the project site.

Public safety will be enhanced through the implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design enhancing site visibility and access, as well as through the installation of ADA accessible paths.

**PROJECT FINANCING:** The total project amount is \$7,525,000. The applicant is requesting \$2,000,000 from the Conservancy for planning, design, implementation and construction. Conservancy staff recommends \$250,000 in funding specifically for the following project tasks:

Task	Category	Description	Amount
1	Non-construction	Project management and administration	\$25,000
2	Construction	Fishing pier and bird watching station(s)	\$25,000
3	Construction	Site hardscape & furnishings	\$55,000
4	Construction	Landscape irrigation and planting	\$145,000
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>

Additional funds include in-kind contributions and applicant's funds. The project will be managed, administered and maintained by County Department of Parks and Recreation (County) staff. A dedicated County Park Project Manager will oversee construction operations. Staff from County's Resources Management Division will coordinate the mitigation and monitoring requirements of the SEIR and Agencies. Staff from County's Operations Division will coordinate with the Park Project Manager through site observations and operational matters during construction. An estimated 1,872 staff hours will be required to complete the tasks listed above. These staff hours represent a cost to the County of \$219,024 are in addition to grant funding.

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this project is an appropriation from Proposition 68 grant funds.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:** This project would be undertaken consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Public Resources Code, §§ 32630-32659.9).

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):** Consistent with Program 2: Support and Encourage Recreation, Program 3: Preserve and Restore Natural Resources, Program 5 Enhance Water Quality and Program 6: Expand the Organization's Capacity and Public Outreach from the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Update 2018-2023.

## **CONSISTENCY WITH PURPOSES OF THE FUNDING SOURCE**

The extent to which the project achieves one or more of the purposes of Proposition 68, Division 45 of the Public Resources Code, Chapters 1-13, Sections 80000-80173.

The proposed project has completed permits and entitlements to provide improvements for facilities, trails, open space and native habitat restoration which provide for public access and leverages funds.

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## ALIGNMENT WITH STATE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

### A. *California Water Action Plan Update (2016)*

- i. Action 4 – Protect and restore important ecosystems
- ii. Action 6 – Expand water storage capacity and improve groundwater management

## CLIMATE CHANGE CONSIDERATIONS

The Lindo Lake Restoration project addresses climate change adaptation as it relates to warming trends. Deepening the lake to a maximum depth of 10-feet will result in lower water temperatures, and improved water quality and aquatic habitat. The project helps the community of Lakeside prepare for the impacts of climate change by mitigating against GHG and sequestering carbon by planting 267 trees across 12 acres of parkland with regionally appropriate drought-tolerant plant species. Planting native shade trees will reduce heat island effect within the urban park and its trails and improve green infrastructure.

## MULTIPLE BENEFITS

The Lindo Lake Restoration Project restores and protects the natural resources of Lindo Lake including water quality and native riparian/aquatic habitats. As Lindo Lake is the heart and namesake of the Lakeside community, improving its condition through this project strengthens and celebrates the community's historic connection to the only natural lake in the county of San Diego. The restoration of the aquatic and terrestrial habitats of the lake will improve the ecological condition and support the population of native and migratory wildlife. Stormwater best management practices will be installed at each of the existing inlets to capture sediment and prevent pollutants from entering the lake.

The east basin will be dredged, improved, expanded, and built to support ease of maintenance to prevent sedimentation from entering the lake in the future. The improved water quality of the lake benefits the San Diego River and San Diego Watershed as overflow water from the lake flows to the San Diego River during heavy rain events. Recreation amenities including ADA accessible paths, viewing areas, a fishing pier, bird watching stations, benches, and trash receptacles will be installed to support and expand upon the current recreation interests of the community. The amenity improvements will be ADA accessible to provide opportunity for greater community inclusion throughout the park.

## PROJECT READINESS

Project advertisement and award of bid is expected spring 2020. Construction is expected to begin by spring 2020 and completed by fall 2021.

Multiple site visits and analysis were performed by County staff, design consultants, and environmental consultants to document opportunities, constraints and potential designs. Multiple concepts were provided to the community for consideration through a series of public meetings to have an informed understanding of community interests and concerns. Of the proposals, Concept 3 was publicly approved and recommended by the Lakeside Community Planning group in 2016.

The County hired a consultant to take the publicly approved concept plan and create an engineered concept plan. This plan was refined and per CEQA, a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) was made available for public comment, response to

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comments were prepared and the final SEIR was certified by the County Board of Supervisors on May 1, 2019.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT, NON-PROFIT AND OR GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND COLLABORATION

Multiple years of public outreach and collaboration with community members and public groups have made this project possible. The Project's compatibility is demonstrated by support from organizations such as the Lakeside Revitalization Committee, the Lindo Lake Subcommittee, and the Lakeside Community Planning Group, which the project concept plan was publicly approved in 2016. On March 5, 2019, the Lindo Lake Subcommittee of the Lakeside Revitalization Committee voted unanimously to continue to support the concept and on March 6, 2019, the Lakeside Community Planning Group unanimously voted to recommend the advertisement, bid and award of construction for phase 1. With the completed design, the project was presented to and approved by the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors on May 1, 2019.

## DISADVANTAGED OR SEVERELY DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITY

According to California State Parks' Parks for All Californian's project, Lindo Lake and Lindo Lake County Park are located in a disadvantaged community and within 1.5 mile radius of a severely disadvantaged community in Lakeside.

## LEVERAGED FUNDING

The County of San Diego has approved a total of \$7,525,000 for the Lindo Lake Improvements project. Approximately \$5,525,000 was previously allocated to funding the construction of Phase 1 (East Basin). The project funds were appropriated through the County Operational Plan which is a County-wide plan updated each fiscal year outlining efforts to be undertaken, including capital development projects such as the Lindo Lake Improvements – Phase 1 (East Basin) project. The remaining project funds are for related project expenses including design, environmental analysis, inspection, and project management.

### Leveraged/ Matching Funds (do not include in-kind services):

Source of funds	Amount (\$)	Estimated commitment date
County of San Diego FY15-16 Operational Plan 8/4/15 (14) Land Use and Environment Group Fund Balance	250,000	8/4/15
County of San Diego FY16-17 Operational Plan 8/2/16 (15) General Fund Fund Balance	950,000	8/2/16
County of San Diego FY18-19 Operational Plan 6/26/18 (12) General Fund Fund Balance	4,325,000	6/26/18

## COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

A Supplemental Environmental Impact Report was prepared through collaboration among County staff and environmental consultants. Upon public review and comment responses, the final SEIR (Lindo Lake Restoration Project: COFD7494-00004; SCH NO. 1990010240) was certified by the County Board of Supervisors on May 1, 2019.

Clean Water Act Section 401 and 404 permit applications have been submitted to the California Regional Water Quality Control Board and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. A Section 1602 Streambed Alteration Agreement application has been submitted to the California Department of

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Fish and Wildlife. Permit authorization is expected by February 2020. Additionally, biological, archaeological, and a Qualified Archaeological Monitor will be present throughout ground disturbing activities. A purchase agreement for water to fill the improved east basin is currently being negotiated between the County and the local water purveyor, Helix Water District. Furthermore, a DPR Project Manager will manage construction and be available to coordinate with the Conservancy as needed.

