

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY'S GREENING SAN DIEGO PROGRAM



FINAL GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES SEPTEMBER 10, 2020

San Diego River Conservancy
11769 Waterhill Road
Lakeside, CA 92040

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The San Diego River Conservancy

The San Diego River Conservancy (“Conservancy”) is a state agency, established in 2002, to work specifically within the San Diego River watershed to implement multi-benefit projects that protect and enhance the San Diego River and its connected resources. The San Diego River Conservancy Act, the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, is contained in Division 22.9 of the Public Resources Code Sections 32630-32659.9. The Act authorizes the Conservancy to undertake projects and award grants to achieve the goals set forth in its statute. The Conservancy works along the entire length of the San Diego River, from its mouth in the City of San Diego at Ocean Beach to its headwaters in the mountains near Julian, California. This watershed, also includes all of the San Diego River Area including several streams, reservoirs, wetlands, estuary and uplands. The Conservancy is also able to help neighboring watersheds for the Otay River, Sweetwater River and Tijuana River. The Conservancy may assist these watersheds to identify and pursue grant funding to restore and enhance natural, historical, cultural, educational and recreational resources along the rivers and enhance public access to the rivers watersheds, pursuant to Senate Bill 1367 (2018), codified as Pub. Resources Code, Division 22.9, Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 32659).

The Conservancy provides technical assistance to help develop projects in the following areas:

- Conserve land
- Protect the natural and scenic beauty
- Improve water quality
- Enhance native plants to promote wildlife linkages/corridors
(<https://www.calflora.org/>)
- Increase pollinator habitat
- Remove invasive plant species from the river corridor and its tributaries
(<https://www.cal-ipc.org/>)
- Restore habitat and promote the re-establishment of the area’s native species
- Reduce flood and fire risk
- Complete connections or gaps along the San Diego River Trail
- Provide public access for the enjoyment of open spaces, trail facilities, campgrounds and other regional parks
- Preserve and protect cultural, tribal and historical education and interpretation

B. Greening San Diego Grant Program

General Purpose

The Greening San Diego Grant Program (Greening Program) provides funding for tree and vegetation planting projects and related green infrastructure to reduce and mitigate against Greenhouse Gasses (GHGs) and climate change. The Conservancy is interested in projects that contain a significant shade-tree planting component or to augment, expand, or better manage healthy urban, riparian and rural forests, parks and open space areas and provide multi-benefits.

Grant Program Guidelines

The Greening Program Guidelines (Guidelines) establish the process the Conservancy will use to solicit concept proposals. Project proposals must be consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, its Strategic Plan and the Guidelines' project selection criteria.

Comments should be emailed to dustin.harrison@sdrca.gov. Comments may also be mailed to the San Diego River Conservancy, 11769 Waterhill Road, Bldg. 2, Lakeside, CA 92040. The Guidelines will be revised based on the public comments and then presented to the Conservancy's Governing Board Members at an upcoming public meeting for approval.

II. PROGRAM REQUIRED CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY

A. Required Conditions

- The tree or vegetation planting component of the project must be completed within one year of signing the grant.
- There must be a commitment for active participation from community members or volunteers in the neighborhood where work is being completed. Community members must be involved in both the planning and implementation of projects.
- The project must demonstrate a nexus between important community needs and the benefits the project will provide.
- The project must provide co-benefits (e.g., improved air or water quality, workforce development, erosion control).
- If grantee is not the landowner, the grantee must enter into an agreement or **Right of Entry** with the land owner(s) to allow for access to the land for a minimum of five (5) years after grant end date for the designated entity(ies) providing maintenance on all plantings. Maintenance includes, but is not limited to: watering, structural pruning, mulching, fertilizing, or controlling plant pests and diseases, as outlined in the scope of work. If the grant is funded by State Bond funds, additional years may be required.
- Prior to disbursement of grant funds, grantee must install a sign

acknowledging name and logo of the San Diego River Conservancy. The sign must be installed for 5-20 years, depending on source of funding.

- **Maintenance and Operating Agreement:** Landowner/grantee is required to sign a minimum 8-year Memorandum of Agreement post a 2-year grant period with the San Diego River Conservancy to continue maintenance as defined above.
- The scope of work must identify appropriate species from the Conservancy's native tree list and include benefits through the iTree application and forms (e.g. carbon dioxide avoided, carbon monoxide sequestered, filtration, rain fall interception and avoided runoff) <https://www.itreetools.org/>
- All plantings and locations must be accurately mapped and provided to Conservancy in progress reports and in the final report.
- The applicant must comply with all applicable local and county ordinances.
- The applicant must comply with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations, including the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- No verbal changes in scope of work will be allowed; all amendments must be documented in writing.
- Project applicant shall use California Conservation Corps and their affiliated Certified Community Conservation Corps to implement projects where feasible (see appendix).

B. Program Priorities

- **Leveraged funding:** May include in-kind funds or volunteer assistance. Applicants may utilize volunteer assistance as a primary component of matching funds.
- **Disadvantaged/Severely Disadvantaged (DAC/SDAC) community.** The project site is located within 1 mile of a DAC, SDAC as identified by a state agency, low income or vulnerable community, or engages at-risk populations and reaches individuals with diverse backgrounds.
- **Water Efficiency:** Projects with components that emphasize sustainable use or efficient conservation of water supplies, use of recycled water, or capture of stormwater for the plant establishment period.

C. Ineligibles expenses:

- Funds cannot be used to fulfill mitigation requirements for other projects.
- Funds cannot be used to fund acquisitions of land by eminent domain.
- Funds cannot be used to purchase beverages/water or food for human consumption or apparel (including promotional items t-shirts, stickers, etc.).

III. GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS

A. Grant Application

A grant application form will be posted on the Conservancy's website and may be updated periodically. The Conservancy may elect to solicit targeted proposals for specific types of projects.

B. Continuous Grant Solicitation Period

The Conservancy will accept proposals on an ongoing basis and will award grants based on the availability of funding in the fiscal year. After a concept proposal is submitted, Conservancy staff may consider inviting an applicant to submit a full application. Conservancy staff may meet with an applicant to provide technical assistance for the full application, conduct a site review and evaluate the full application.

C. Application Review and Evaluation

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on how well the proposed project meets the evaluation criteria set forth below. To be funded under Greening San Diego Program, an applicant must be an eligible entity.

Eligibility

1) Eligible applicants are:

- Public agencies, special districts, joint powers authority if at least one of the parties to the joint powers agreement qualifies as an eligible application, public college, public university
- Any nonprofit organization that qualifies under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation
- Indian Tribes that are either federally recognized or listed on the Native American Heritage Commission's California Tribal Consultation List.

2) The proposed project must be on publicly owned land within the jurisdiction of the San Diego River Conservancy and within one of the following watersheds:

- San Diego River
- Sweetwater River
- Otay River
- Tijuana River

Evaluation Criteria

Projects will be evaluated using the following criteria with a score of 100 points possible:

- 1) The extent to which the project achieves program priorities. (30 total points)
 - Leveraged funding (may include in-kind funds or volunteer assistance) (10 points)

- Disadvantaged/Severely Disadvantaged (DAC/SDAC) community, project site within 1 mile (10 points)
 - Water Efficiency/Reuse (10 points)
- 2) The extent to which the project provides for resiliency to climate change. (20 points)
- Carbon sequestration
 - Plant native trees/vegetation
 - Soils/amendments/crop rotation
 - Wetlands creation/enhancement
 - Sea level rise/ flood management
- 3) Promotion and implementation of approved state plans and priorities (Including but not limited to the Governor’s Executive Orders, California Water Action Plan, Forest Carbon Plan, Wildlife Action Plan, Safeguarding California – California’s Climate Adaptation Strategy (Safeguarding California), the 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan (Scoping Plan) and the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) and other related state plans (10 points)
- 4) The extent to which the project achieves Conservancy goals (statute and strategic plan). (10 points)

The Conservancy’s adopted Strategic Plan 2018-2023

http://sdrc.ca.gov/webmaster/arc/docs/StratPlan_update_2018-2023_Final.pdf

Strategic Plan

- Land acquisition
- Recreation
- Education/interpretation
- Habitat conservation
- Water quality, supply and flood conveyance
- Outreach/ engagement
- San Diego River Consortium

Statute: “The San Diego River Conservancy Act”

Division 22.9 of the Public Resources Code Sections 32630 – 32659.9.

- 5) The extent to which the project provides multiple benefits (10 points)
For example: improves air or water quality, workforce development, expands wildlife corridors, increases native habitat for sensitive species, increase urban canopies, reduce heat island effects, improves erosion control, project links to public access, and community improvements.
- 6) Government and community support (10 points)

Support from the public/private entities, jurisdiction, or department in which the project is proposed and the extent to which the public, nonprofit groups, landowners, and others will contribute to the project.

7) Project readiness (10 points)

Demonstrates the ability of the grantee to start and finish the project within grant terms.

Scoring Summary

Criteria	Points
Program priorities	30
Climate change/resiliency	20
State priorities/plans	10
Conservancy Statute and Goals	10
Multiple Benefits	10
Community, Non-Profit and/or Government	10
Project readiness	10
Total Possible Points	100

D. Returned Applications

The State reserves the right to reject an applicant during the grant process that is in violation of law or policy of any other public agency. Potential violations include, but not limited to, being in default of the performance requirements in other contracts or grant agreements issued by the State, being engaged in or under investigation for criminal conduct that could poorly reflect on or bring discredit to the State, or failing to have all required licenses. The State further reserves the right to reject any applicant who has a history of performance issues with past grants or other agreements with any public entity, including the grantor.

E. Grant Awards

Grants will be awarded when authorized by the Conservancy Board. The Conservancy Board meets approximately 6 times a year in public meetings. Recommended awards will be posted on the Conservancy’s website at least 7 days prior to the public meeting. The staff recommendation to the Conservancy will document how the project meets all of the required criteria included in these guidelines.

After Board approval a grant agreement will be prepared and signed by the Conservancy and the grantee. Grants shall have a 2-year performance period followed by a Memorandum of Agreement with a minimum 5-year period for plant establishment and maintenance. Expenses incurred before the Conservancy grant agreement is executed are not reimbursable. The agreement will include requirements of the grantee and information about how and when funds can be disbursed.

F. Board Meetings

No grant shall be awarded unless the Conservancy Board has approved the grant at a public meeting. The Conservancy typically holds six public meetings per calendar year. The meeting schedule will be published on the Conservancy's website. The agenda for each public meeting will be published on the Conservancy's website ten days in advance of the meeting. Conservancy staff will prepare a staff report for each proposed grant and present to the Conservancy Board at a public meeting. The staff report will describe the project and explain how the project is consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, the Conservancy Program Guidelines, the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, State Plans and Priorities and the evaluation criteria in the Greening San Diego Grant Program Guidelines.

G. Grant Agreement

Once the Conservancy's Governing Board approves a grant at a public meeting, Conservancy staff will prepare a grant agreement setting forth the terms and conditions of the grant. This will be a reimbursable grant. The grantee must sign the grant agreement and comply with conditions in order to receive funds.

IV. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Funding Availability

The amount of funds available will depend upon the amount appropriated to the Conservancy by the State Legislature each year. The amount awarded will also depend on the quality of the proposed projects submitted.

B. Grant Provisions

Following Conservancy Board approval of a grant, staff will prepare a grant agreement with detailed conditions specific to the project. The grant agreement must be signed by the grantee before funds will be disbursed. Several typical grant agreement provisions are:

- Actual awards are conditional upon funds being available from the state through the Budget process.
- Grantees must submit a detailed project work plan, design layout, planting pallet and budget.
- Grant funds will only be paid in arrears on a reimbursement basis.
- Grantee or Landowner must agree to a 5 to 20-year Memorandum of Agreement for continued operation and management agreement depending on source of funds.
- Grantees must maintain liability insurance during grant term and include the San Diego River Conservancy as an "additional insured."

C. Environmental Documents

Grant applicants should consider whether their proposed project will trigger the need for an environmental impact report, negative declaration or whether a CEQA exemption applies. The applicant shall address whether CEQA applies and the status of CEQA compliance in the concept proposal and full application.

Applicant should list and discuss any other potential permits needed for the project.

D. Loss of Funding (*not a complete list*)

The following are examples of actions that may result in a grantee's loss of funding:

1. Grantee fails to execute a grant agreement within six (6) months of grant issuance.
2. Grantee withdraws from the grant program.
3. Grantee fails to submit required documentation within the time periods specified in the grant agreement.
4. Grantee fails to submit evidence of CEQA compliance as specified by the grant agreement.
5. Grantee changes project scope without prior approval from the Conservancy.
6. Grantee fails to complete the project.
7. Grantee fails to demonstrate sufficient progress.

E. State Audit and Accounting Requirements

Audit Requirements

All projects are subject to audit by the State of California annually and for three (3) years following the final payment of grant funds. If the project is selected for audit, the grantee will be contacted. Grantee shall provide all books, papers, accounts, documents, or other records of the grantee related to the project for which the funds were granted.

The grantee must retain and provide the project records, including the source documents and canceled checks and also provide an employee with knowledge of the project to assist the auditor. The grantee must provide a copy of any document, paper, record, or the like, requested by the auditor.

Accounting requirements

The grantee must maintain an accounting system that:

- Accurately reflects fiscal transactions, with the necessary controls and safeguards,
- Provides a good audit trail, including original source documents such as purchase orders, receipts, progress payments, invoices, time cards, canceled checks, etc.
- Provides accounting data so the total cost of each individual project can be readily determined.

F. Records Retention

Project records must be retained for a period of three (3) years after final payment is made by the State. All project records must be retained by the grantee at least one (1) year following an audit. Grantees are required to keep source documents for all expenditures related to each grant for at least three (3) years following project completion and one year following an audit. A project is considered complete upon receipt of final grant payment from the State. If funding provided by State Bonds, additional years may be required.

Inquiries: Please direct questions by email to dustin.harrison@sdrca.gov or by phone to 619/390-0571.