

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Legislative Report 2021-2022



January 20, 2023



**San Diego River Conservancy
11769 Waterhill Road, Bldg 2
Lakeside, CA 92040**

<https://sdrc.ca.gov/>



SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

11769 WATERHILL RD
LAKESIDE, CA 92040
PHONE (619) 390-0568
WWW.SDRC.CA.GOV
Julia.richards@sdrc.ca.gov



January 20, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of the State of California
The Honorable Members of the California State Legislature

Dear Governor Newsom and Members of the California State Senate and Assembly,

On behalf of the 17-member Board of the San Diego River Conservancy, we are pleased to submit our Legislative Report to the Governor and Legislature outlining the Conservancy's activities over the past two years, consistent with Assembly Bill 392 approved by the Legislature and signed by former Governor Jerry Brown in 2015.

The San Diego River Conservancy protects and preserves the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the San Diego River that extends 52 miles from the headwaters of the river near Julian, California west to the Pacific Ocean. The San Diego River and watershed encompasses 281,600 acres. Stakeholders include the US Forest Service, Kumeyaay Tribal Governments, the Department of State Parks and Recreation, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the City of San Diego, the City of Santee, the City of El Cajon, the County of San Diego, many non-profit organizations, and members of the public. These allies revere this precious asset in our region and work to protect and improve it.

Progress has been made through the hard work and dedication of those who work, live, and volunteer along the river, including federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials and local Native American tribes. Together we offer public access to public lands, recreational activities for all ages, protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat and species, nature-based restoration, and preservation of cultural and historic assets within the watershed. Our focus also includes anticipating and dealing with the impacts of climate change, carbon sequestration by newly planted native plants and trees and sea level rise, including saltwater intrusion at the mouth of the river.

On behalf of the Board and staff of the San Diego River Conservancy, we are pleased to submit this biennial report covering what we have accomplished and our goals for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. G. Clay".

Ben G. Clay, Chair
San Diego River Conservancy

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ruth Hayward".

Ruth Hayward, Vice Chair
San Diego River Conservancy

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

11769 WATERHILL RD
LAKESIDE, CA 92040
PHONE (619) 390-0568
WWW.SDRCA.GOV
Julia.richards@sdrc.ca.gov



January 20, 2023

The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of the State of California
Honorable Members of the California State Legislature

Dear Governor Newsom and Members of the State Senate and Assembly,

On behalf of the San Diego River Conservancy, thank you for your continued interest and support of work by the Conservancy to protect and enhance the unique history, natural resources, and cultural heritage within the San Diego River watershed. Attached is a Legislative Report on the Conservancy's progress for 2021 and 2022. The Conservancy was established in 2002, and now 20 years later the Conservancy serves as a catalyst for improvements within the San Diego River watershed by working with local jurisdictions, government agencies, tribal nations, academic institutions, nonprofits, and coalitions that share an appreciation of and vision for the river. The Conservancy leverages local, state, federal, and other funding sources through innovative partnerships to yield projects with multiple benefits.

The native people, the Kumeyaay have lived in the San Diego River watershed since time immemorial. Preserving their cultural and tribal heritage and providing enhancements to their communities is a priority of the Conservancy. We honor their ancestors and respect their traditional ecological knowledge to guides environmental stewardship and sustainability through relationships between humans and environmental systems.

The Conservancy prides itself on being a steward of the environment that fosters relationships with organizations with the commitment and capacity to restore and improve the river and its watershed through resource protection. In addition, the Conservancy works with its partners to support public access to public lands along the San Diego River Trail, which creates unique opportunities to experience nature and outdoor recreation.

There are so many people to thank for the completed and ongoing improvements to public access and trails, water quality and supply, and protection of resources within the San Diego River watershed, beginning with the members of the Conservancy's Governing Board and our dedicated staff. It is through the combined efforts of elected officials, government agencies, Native American Tribes, and the many stakeholders, including dedicated volunteers, that the health of the river and its watershed continues to improve.

The Conservancy's Board and staff members greatly appreciate the continued confidence and support the Governor and Legislature have placed in the San Diego River Conservancy Board and staff members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JL Richards", written in a cursive style.

Julia L. Richards
Executive Officer
San Diego River Conservancy

Executive Summary

The San Diego River Conservancy was established in 2002 to conserve land, protect and preserve natural, cultural, and historic resources, and provide recreational opportunities for the public within the San Diego River watershed. The San Diego River starts at its headwaters in Julian, flowing southwest through the Cleveland National Forest before it enters the El Capitan Reservoir. The San Diego River continues westward from Lakeside through rural and urban areas to its terminus at the mouth of the river in Ocean Beach. The Conservancy's goals include conserving land, promoting outdoor recreation and education, and completing the San Diego River Trail from the Pacific Ocean to the Cuyamaca Mountains.

Over the years, the Conservancy's statute has expanded to include preserving cultural and tribal resources connected to the river. The Conservancy also aims to increase biodiversity through native habitat restoration while balancing the need for public access. In this Legislative Report, the Conservancy provides an overview of its highlights, sets out its operating budget, and summarizes its 2021-2022 accomplishments under each of the six programs within its strategic plan.

As discussed throughout the report, the Conservancy received funding in the Budget Acts of 2020 and 2021 for wildfire and forest resilience projects. In 2021 and 2022, the Conservancy awarded its regional partners \$18 million in grants. Grant funds are used to implement projects that reduce flammable fuel loads on public and private lands, reduce the risk and intensity of wildfires in the San Diego region and restore the ecological health of native habitats within the San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay and Tijuana River watersheds. Approved projects included:

- Procuring firefighting apparatus (fire engines and command vehicles) and equipment (fire hoses, fire-resistant protective clothing, helmets, respirators, ladders, power tools, hand tools, and communication equipment) to improve public safety, fire suppression and forest health
- Holding community events and conducting public outreach to support and encourage the establishment of defensible space for homeowners in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) zone

On October 26, 2021, San Diego River Conservancy Board Members and staff were invited to attend a ceremony to commemorate the Kumeyaay people and their connection to the San Diego River was held. The completion of The Iipay ~ Tipay Kumeyaay Mut Niihepok (Land of the First People) area in Old Town San Diego State Historic Park was attended by 12 Kumeyaay Bands. Kumeyaay tribal members performed bird songs in the traditional music of the Kumeyaay and elders blessed the area in their native language. Photo right includes Dave Toler, Jr., Senate President Pro Tempore Toni Atkins, Angela Elliott-Santos, Chairwoman (Manzanita Band of the Kumeyaay Nation), John Christman, Chairman (Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians), Johnny Elliot, Chairman (Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy), State Parks Director Armando Quintero.



I. Overview of the Conservancy's Highlights

In January 2021, the Governor's Forest Management Task Force issued California's Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan. This Plan centers on building an extensive network of fuel breaks around vulnerable communities, expanding home hardening, defensible space, and preparedness planning to create wildfire-adapted communities, and sustaining rural forested areas. Through the Conservancy's Directed Grant Program, the Governing Board awarded \$18 million through 12 grants to implement fuel reduction, road brushing, vegetation management activities, and improve forest health within the County of San Diego.

The Conservancy's Invasive Non-native Plant Removal and Restoration Program focused on removal of vegetation in the San Diego River area. The Conservancy Program's annual regulatory report for the fiscal year 2021-2022 identified 16 project sites within the San Diego River watershed with a total of 80 acres of invasive plant removal, control, re-treatment, and restoration from a combination of funding sources.

San Diego County continues to experience growth and development with an emerging need to provide outdoor open space recreation for its nearly 3.3 million residents. In the City of San Diego, approximately 1 mile of the San Diego River Trail will be constructed as San Diego State University (SDSU) redevelops an area of Mission Valley to expand its campus. The redevelopment includes a stadium, mixed use space, housing, a hotel, and more than 80 acres of community parks and open space. Due to a need for outdoor recreation, this area will include a 34-acre River Park comprised of active and passive recreation, a two-mile hike, and bike loop around the perimeter. Additionally, of new public spaces will require public facilities. The Conservancy awarded SDSU a grant to install a solid concrete precast gender-neutral restroom in the River Park directly adjacent to the San Diego River.

State Parks' Colorado Desert District is leading a new two-year pilot program, the Native American Conservation Corps, in partnership with the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County and the Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy. The Conservancy received a \$1 million allocation from the State Budget Act of 2021 to administer funds for State Parks and other partners to implement the pilot program. Various additional entities and individuals are assisting with the pilot program, including local tribal elders and leaders who provide information and share lessons on traditional ecological knowledge, prescribed burns, and forestry management.

The San Diego River Conservancy staff continues outreach to tribal, disadvantaged, low-income and vulnerable communities to offer technical assistance for project development, to identify funding sources and to apply for grants.

II. Operating Budget

- \$428,000 State Operations Budget; California Environmental License Plate Fund for FY 2021-22.
- \$390,000 State Operations Budget; California Environmental License Plate Fund for FY 2022-23.
- The Conservancy's accounting, budget, and human resources services are provided by the Department of General Services – Office of Fiscal Services, Contracted Fiscal Services, and Office of Human Resources.

Current Bond Programs

State bond funds provide funding to the Conservancy through:

- Proposition 1: \$17 million allocated through the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014/23 projects approved.
- Proposition 68: \$12 million allocated through the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018/12 projects approved.

Budget Acts of 2021 and 2022

State General Fund allocations to the Conservancy through:

- The Budget Act of 2021 allocated \$25 million to the Conservancy for climate or wildfire resilience projects, community access, nature-based solutions, and a two-year pilot program for the Native American Conservation Corps.
- The Budget Act of 2022 allocated \$15 million to the Conservancy for programs and activities that advance wildfire protection and multi-benefit and nature-based solutions.

III. Summary of Conservancy Projects by Program Area

Program 1: Conserve Land within the San Diego River Watershed

The Conservancy approved a \$2 million grant to the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation to help acquire approximately 83 acres of in-holdings within the City of San Diego's Mission Trails Regional Park. The Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan adopted in 2019 reflected a vision for the park's future and outlined priorities for acquiring over 700 acres of private property in the East Elliott Community Planning Area. Acquisition of these parcels furthers the Park's Master Plan's priorities and

prevents future development, provides open space, protects water quality, and increases recreational benefits within the San Diego River watershed.

Program 2: Support and Encourage Recreation and Education

The Conservancy's mission includes providing recreational opportunities for the public. The Conservancy and its partners developed the San Diego River Recreational Trail Plan to achieve its long-term vision. Recreational facilities along the San Diego River Trail include the developed parks and open space, beaches, active sports fields, equestrian and polo fields, mountain biking areas, a bicycle motocross track, a disc golf course, campgrounds, the 8,000-acre Mission Trails Regional Park, the three-acre Santee Lakes Recreation Preserve, the 24,677-acre Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, and the 460,000-acre Cleveland National Forest which also includes wilderness areas with a multitude of critical habitats for animals and plants. In addition, there are five reservoirs within the watershed, some of which offer fishing, boating, and jet skiing opportunities.

Project Highlight: Lindo Lake County Park Improvement Project

The Conservancy awarded a grant to the County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation, to restore the East Basin in Lindo Lake's County Park (photo below). The project included trail improvements, the construction of a fishing pier and birdwatching stations, planting native trees, and treating stormwater runoff before it enters the lake. The Conservancy provided grant funding for the Lindo Lake project through Proposition 1 and Proposition 68.



It is important to note that the community of Lakeside is a disadvantaged and vulnerable community within the unincorporated area of San Diego County. In general, disadvantaged communities throughout California suffer the most from economic, health, and environmental burdens. The Lakeside community's median household income of approximately \$55,411 is around 70% of California's median household income, and the community contains disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged tracks (State Parks, 2020).

Project Highlight: San Diego River Science Field Station

The Science Field Station will provide an indoor space to promote environmental science and stewardship of the San Diego River. This living laboratory will be open to the public, is in a disadvantaged community, and will benefit students, teachers, and scientists of all ages. In addition, the facility will provide direct access to Lakeside's River Park Conservancy's riparian habitat to engage people in tactile learning experiences. Existing programs focus on 6th graders and will expand to reach all skill and knowledge levels. Two collaborating school districts serve children from disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged neighborhoods with a large immigrant population. When completed, the Science Field Station will provide a community meeting space with access to the San Diego River Trail. The approved grant amount of \$1,200,000 was provided from the Conservancy's General Fund allocation.

Below is a table of projects supporting recreational opportunities and facilities. Three of the four projects serve disadvantaged communities in the County of San Diego.

Table 1. Recreation and Education Projects, Strategic Plan Program 2

| Proposition 68 The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 | |
|---|--|
| Grantee: San Diego State University (SDSU) | Title: SDSU Mission Valley Site Development and River Park – A solid concrete precast gender-neutral restroom |
| Agreement Period: 3/2022 – 1/2024 | Amount: \$738,000 Status: In Progress |
| | |
| Grantee: Lakeside's River Park Conservancy | Title: A Pocket Park on the San Diego River Trail |
| Agreement Period: 1/2022 – 12/2022 | Amount: \$147,150 Status: Complete |
| | |
| Grantee: Lakeside's River Park Conservancy | Title: Design and Planning for the San Diego River Science Field Station |
| Agreement Period: 4/2020 – 4/2023 | Amount: \$250,000 Status: In Progress |
| | |
| Grantee: County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation | Title: Lindo Lake County Park Improvement Project, East Basin |
| Agreement Period: 12/2020 – 3/2023 | Amount: \$250,000 Status: In Progress |
| | |

Program 3: Preserve and Restore Natural Resources

Wildfire and Forest Resilience Program

California is facing a growing forest and wildfire crisis. Decades of fire suppression, coupled with the increasing impacts of global warming and climate change, have dramatically increased the size and intensity of wildfires in the state. However, the Governor and the Legislature have been forward-thinking and created the Wildfire Early Action Plan (Plan) to provide funding for state agencies to immediately implement protective measures at a regional level to improve the protection of life and property for all Californians.

From May 2021 through November 2022, the Governing Board of the Conservancy approved approximately \$18 million in funding for projects to help reduce the risk and intensity of wildfires in San Diego County. These fuel reduction efforts will decrease the wildfire risks around the communities, homes, infrastructure, critical habitat zones, and other highly valued resources, including wildlife passages and disadvantaged communities. These projects will provide new vehicles and fire-related apparatus to help reduce the risk of fire by implementing fuel reduction, vegetation management, defensible space, and fuel breaks targeting the removal of diseased, dead, and dying trees. Some of the fire equipment to be purchased under this program includes fire engines, brush rigs, command vehicles, skid steers, and masticators. This equipment helps reduce flammable fuel loads, which slows or stops the fire in these areas and strengthens the protection of places in San Diego County's backcountry. The Conservancy funded projects include:

- **United States Forest Service – Cleveland National Forest**

The Cleveland National Forest's (CNF) Wildfire Resilience and Forest Health Project will reduce fuel loads across approximately 1,855 acres, 100 miles of road brushing, and hire additional employees for two years to protect sensitive resources. In addition, the project includes the installation of a helicopter landing zone and three 10,000-gallon underground water tanks that will provide a local source of water to help reduce wildfire severity and improve the safety of visitors and first responders in the upper San Diego River watershed. (Grant amount \$3,715,632). Photos below show CNF pile and prescribed burns.



- **County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation**

This project focuses on the immediate need to conduct fuel reduction and perform weed abatement throughout 10,000 acres of developed parks and open space lands owned and managed by County Parks and includes the procurement of equipment necessary for project implementation. Areas served include the following river watersheds: San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay, and Tijuana. (Grant amount \$3,450,000)

- **Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians**

This project will replace a 17-year-old Brush Rig (Type 3 fire engine) and include vegetation management activities. This type of fire apparatus is built and equipped 4-wheel drive units specially adapted for fire suppression in wildland terrain. In addition, fire hydrants are sparse in many wildland areas, and this engine can carry 500 gallons of water, making them better equipped to protect communities. The Viejas Reservation is located within the Wildland-Urban Interface in rural San Diego County, and surrounded by the Cleveland National Forest and within the very High Fire Threat Zone, as identified by CAL FIRE. (Grant amount \$620,000)

- **Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy**

Through the Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy, the Campo Band of Mission Indians, the Campo Fire Protection District, the Jamul Indian Village, the Manzanita Band of the Kumeyaay Nation, the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, and the Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation will use wildfire funds to procure fire-related equipment, such as a skid steer with masticator (photo right) and vehicles to use during wildland fire events. These tribal reservations are in the High Fire Threat Zone, as identified by CAL FIRE. (Grant amount \$800,000)



- **Barona Band of Mission Indians**

The Barona Band of Mission Indians, in partnership with the Barona Fire Department, will use wildfire funds to purchase a new Brush Rig, including a pump, and water tank. Barona will also use funds to install emergency lighting, emergency radios and onboard wireless technology to provide up to date information during a wildfire or other emergency events via the onboard mobile data computer. The Barona Reservation is in the High Fire Threat Zone, as identified by CAL FIRE. (Grant amount \$350,000)

- **Resource Conservation District (RCD) of Greater San Diego County**

The RCD of Greater San Diego County will reduce the threat of wildfires by providing defensible space and free chipping for private landowners or homeowners. These fuel reduction activities include removing dead, dying, and diseased trees within 100 feet of defensible space around structures. This project has treated over 1,200 acres of private property and served 400 homes to date.

In addition, the Conservancy helps to improve the safety of local communities through grants to six Fire Safe Councils within the County of San Diego. (Grant amount \$3,500,000)

- **San Diego Canyonlands**

The San Diego Canyonlands project will reduce the fire risk within land owned by the City of San Diego's Open Space Division in the San Diego River watershed and tributary canyons. Approximately 1,110 acres will benefit from the fuel reduction activities to reduce fire risk while maintaining habitat values throughout the Serra Mesa and Tierrasanta communities in the City of San Diego. (Grant amount \$1,000,000)

- **Lakeside's River Park Conservancy**

Lakeside's River Park Conservancy will reduce flammable fuels in El Monte Valley on public and private land in the Wildland Urban Interface area of the unincorporated community of Lakeside. The project will take place on approximately 62 acres across CAL FIRE's High Fire Threat Zone in the County of San Diego. Lakeside neighborhoods include disadvantaged and low-income tracts. (Grant amount \$500,000)

- **City of El Cajon**

The City of El Cajon will implement wildfire management strategies across 85 acres and purchase a new Type 1 Fire Engine. In addition, El Cajon will implement a three-pronged approach that includes developing a vegetation and wildfire management plan, a training and education program, and activities to clear and reduce flammable fuels near the Fletcher Hills Open Space and Hillside Park. El Cajon serves people from disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged neighborhoods with a large immigrant population. El Cajon is in the High Fire Threat Zone, as identified by CAL FIRE. (Grant amount \$3,125,000)

- **San Diego State University Research Foundation**

The San Diego State University campus is adjacent to Alvarado Creek, a channelized urban stream with substantial non-native vegetation that contributes to an increased risk of fire and flooding in this area. Removing highly flammable invasive non-native trees and vegetation and implementing restoration efforts will reduce the risk of fire, which has occurred numerous times. In addition, this project will control vegetation across 9 acres in CAL FIRE designated high-fire risk area immediately adjacent to the campus and nearby homes. (Grant amount \$656,815)

- **City of Santee**

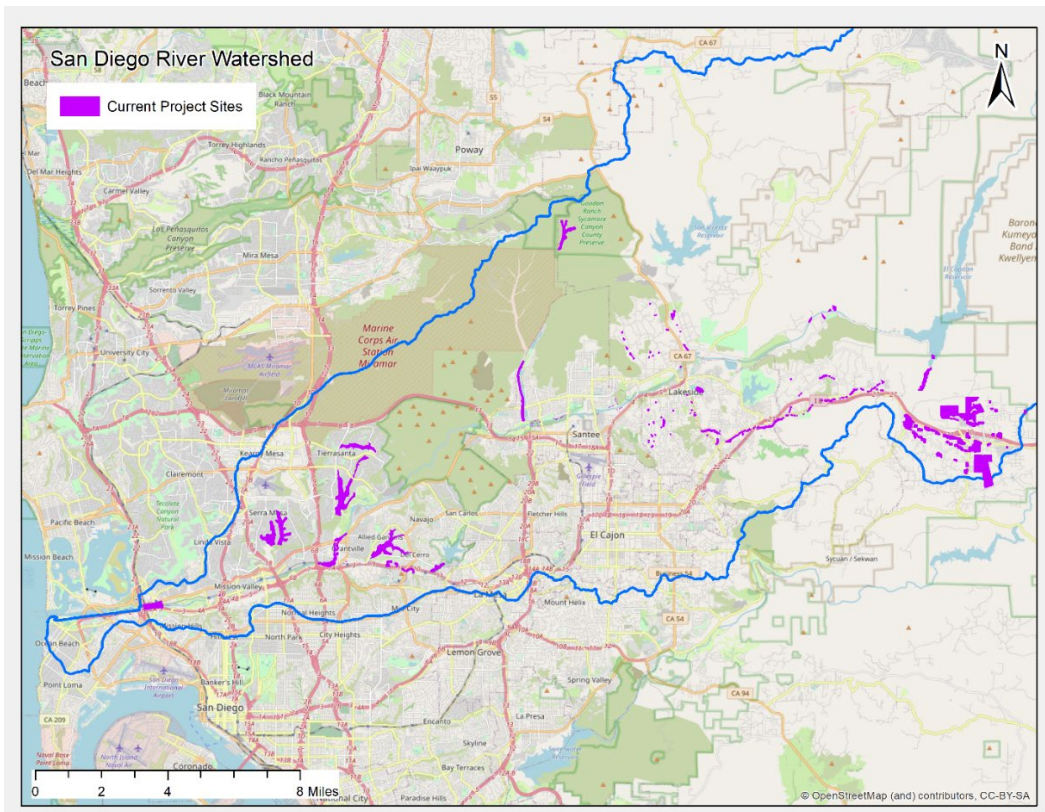
The City of Santee will implement wildfire management strategies and reduce fuel loads on 11 acres along the San Diego River. Removing flammable brush will provide more defensible space adjacent to existing residences, parks, and trails. In addition, Santee will procure a light Brush Rig for use by the Santee Fire Department. (Grant amount \$500,000)

Invasive Non-Native Plant Removal Program

Conservancy partners are currently implementing fuel reduction projects through weed abatement, brush management, and actively supporting healthy ecosystems. The Conservancy began its Invasive Non-native Plant Removal and Restoration Program in 2009. As a result, the Conservancy and its partners have been reducing flammable biomass in the San Diego River watershed for over 11 years. Removing invasive plants along the river decreases the risk of fire and flood and can also act as a fire break along trails and property lines.

Since the program's inception in 2009, the Conservancy has overseen the restoration of more than 375 acres of riparian and upland habitat in the San Diego River watershed. This multi-benefit program continues to protect the public and decrease the risk of flood and fire. In addition, the program restores native habitats for sensitive and endangered species resulting in increased biodiversity.

Annually, the Conservancy enters into multiple partnership agreements to allow other organizations to use its permits for invasive non-native plant removal within the San Diego River watershed. These agreements are available to public agencies, non-profits, and other stakeholders at no cost through an established partnership agreement to implement projects with specific deliverables that must be met.



Map 1. Invasive Non-native Plant Removal and Restoration Program & Partnership Agreements 2021-22 (235 acres)

In addition, the Conservancy oversees removal restoration projects, gathers information on locations, and submits annual reports to the Army Corps of Engineers and other regulatory agencies to document past and future work. Below is a list of completed and ongoing invasive removal and control projects from 2021 and 2022 in the San Diego River watershed:

Table 2. Invasive Non-Native Plant Removal & Habitat Restoration Projects, Strategic Plan Program 3

| Proposition 1 The Water Quality Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 | |
|--|--|
| Grantee: Lakeside's River Park Conservancy | Title: East County <i>Arundo</i> Removal Project <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 9/2019 – 10/2022 | Amount: \$420,000 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: City of Santee | Title: Habitat Restoration and Erosion Control at Walker Preserve |
| Agreement Period: 6/2017 – 6/2021 | Amount: \$256,665 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: City of San Diego, Public Utilities Department | Title: Chaparral Canyon Habitat Restoration and Vegetation Management |
| Agreement Period: 4/2019 – 5/2022 | Amount: \$382,513 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: San Diego State University Research Foundation | Title: Restoration of the Del Cerro Section of Alvarado Creek |
| Agreement Period: 2/2019 – 7/2021 | Amount: \$910,709 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: Lakeside's River Park Conservancy | Title: Lower Sycamore Creek <i>Arundo</i> Control <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 9/2019 – 7/2021 | Amount: \$212,600 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: San Diego Canyonlands | Title: Ruffin/Sandroek Canyon Habitat Restoration |
| Agreement Period: 11/2019 – 2/2022 | Amount: \$514,400 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: San Diego County Department of | Title: Sycamore Canyon/Goodan Ranch Preserve Targeted Invasive |

| | |
|---|--|
| Parks and Recreation | |
| Agreement Period: 11/2019 – 6/2022 | Amount: \$203,000 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: San Diego State University Research Foundation | Title: San Diego State University's Adobe Falls, Phase V |
| Agreement Period: 2/2022 – 2/2024 | Amount: \$600,000 Status: In Progress |
| Grantee: San Diego Canyonlands | Title: Ruffin/Sandrock Canyon Habitat Restoration, Phase 2 |
| Agreement Period: 3/2021 – 4/2023 | Amount: \$600,000 Status: In Progress |
| State General Fund – Budget Act of 2021 | |
| Grantee: San Diego Canyonlands | Title: Navajo Canyon Palm Removal Restoration and Trail Improvement Project |
| Agreement Period: 9/2022 – 12/2024 | Amount: \$600,000 Status: In Progress |
| Proposition 68 The California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 | |
| Grantee: San Diego State University Research Foundation | Title: Revegetation Water Quality Hydrology Geomorphology and Bioassessment in Alvarado Creek |
| Agreement Period: 1/1/2022 – 12/30/2023 | Amount: \$467,691 Status: In Progress |
| Grantee: City of El Cajon | Title: Broadway Creek Restoration Phase A <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 12/2019 – 1/2023 | Amount: \$250,000 Status: Complete |
| Grantee: City of El Cajon | Title: El Cajon Transit Center Community Connection Improvements <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 4/2020 – 10/2023 | Amount: \$250,000 Status: In Progress |
| Grantee: City of El Cajon | Title: Main Street Greenstreet Gateway Improvements <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 12/2020 – 9/2023 | Amount: \$250,000 Status: In Progress |

Cuyamaca Rancho State Park Reforestation Project

The 2003 Cedar Fire burned 273,246 acres, constituting over 13% of San Diego County in total, destroyed 2,820 buildings, killed 15 people, and decimated approximately 75% of the 209,118-acre San Diego River watershed. Conifer mortality in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park was high due to the fire severity and extremely high temperatures, which resulted in very low seed cone survival. In response, State Parks established a reforestation program in 2009. Subsequently, in 2019 and 2021 the Conservancy's Governing Board invested a total of \$1 million in State Parks' reforestation efforts in the San Diego River's upper watershed for treatment on approximately 622 acres. This reforestation project provides multi-benefits, including improved forest health, restoration of sensitive wildlife habitats and corridors, carbon sequestration, increased resiliency to future fires, reduced run-off, and increased water infiltration in the upper San Diego River watershed.

Program 4: Protect and Preserve Cultural and Historical Resources

The Conservancy has partnered with Kumeyaay tribes and the Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy to implement projects under the Wildfire and Forest Resilience program discussed above under Program 3 and the Native American Conservation Corps discussed below under Program 6.

Additionally, to better protect and preserve sensitive cultural resources associated with the Cleveland National Forest's Wildfire Resilience and Forest Health project, additional funds were awarded for engaging qualified Kumeyaay Cultural Monitors who will have firsthand exposure to project activities so that they may make recommendations to the archaeologist onsite, as well as directly report their observations to their tribal leadership. In the past, Cleveland National Forest did not have funding to pay for cultural monitors, who often volunteered their services and expertise. This \$150,000 grant provides compensation for qualified Kumeyaay cultural monitoring activities within the Cleveland National Forest.

Program 5: Enhance Water Quality and Natural Flood Conveyance

The Conservancy has continued to collaborate with its partners on projects and programs that improve water quality and supply within the local watersheds of the San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay, and Tijuana Rivers.

Below is a table of water quality and natural flood conveyance enhancement projects. Three of the four projects serve disadvantaged, severely disadvantaged and low-income communities in the San Diego County.

Table 3. Water Quality and Supply, and Flood Conveyance Projects, Strategic Plan Program 5

| Proposition 1 Water Quality Supply and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 | |
|--|---|
| Grantee: City of El Cajon | Title: Wells Park Sustainability Improvements <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 12/2019 – 4/2023 | Amount: \$400,000 Status: In Progress |
| | |
| Grantee: City of El Cajon | Title: Broadway Creek Restoration Phase A <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 12/2019 – 1/2023 | Amount: \$750,000 Status: In Progress https://www.facebook.com/CityOfElCajon/videos/1809168449416774/ |
| | |
| Grantee: San Diego County Department of Parks and Recreation | Title: Lindo Lake Improvement Project, East Basin <i>(*located in a Disadvantaged Community)</i> |
| Agreement Period: 4/2021 – 3/2023 | Amount: \$600,000 Status: In Progress |
| | |
| Grantee: The San Diego River Park Foundation | Title: San Diego River Cleanups Events & Outreach |
| Agreement Period: 12/2021 – 5/2022 | Amount: \$9,000 Status: Complete |
| | |

Program 6: Expand the Organization's Capacity and Public Outreach

Native American Conservation Corps

State Parks developed a two-year pilot program for local Native American tribes to participate in training for fire and forest resiliency activities in San Diego County. The program's goal is to increase employment opportunities for local Native Americans with their respective tribes, State Parks, U.S. Forest Service, or other local organizations.

Through this project, State Parks will increase their capacity for reforestation, prescribed burning, restoring wildlife habitat, and reducing hazardous fuels in the upper watershed of the San Diego, Sweetwater, and Tijuana Rivers. The lead for this project is the California Department of Parks and Recreation's Colorado Desert District.

The program provides on-the-job training at Cuyamaca Rancho State Park in basic wildland fire, chainsaw use in the wilderness, basic first aid and CPR, GPS training,



plant identification, and traditional ecological knowledge. Many partners provide training, including the Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County, Tribal Elders, Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy, Cleveland National Forest, and others. After participants complete training, some individuals will return to their tribal communities to work, and others have received opportunities to work on fuel crews for State Parks and neighboring tribes. The photo shows cohort 1 participants in the spring of 2021 on a worksite in Cuyamaca Ranch State Park.

Below is a table of projects supporting recreation and associated facilities. Three of the four projects serve disadvantaged communities in the County of San Diego.

Table 4. Public Outreach & Capacity Building Projects, Strategic Plan Program 6 State General Fund – Budget Act of 2020

| | |
|--|---|
| Grantee: California Department of Parks and Recreation | Title: Native American Conservation Corps Leveraged/In-Kind funds \$354,000 |
| Agreement Period: 11/2021 – 5/2023 | Amount: \$450,322 Status: In Progress |
| Grantee: Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County | Title: Native American Conservation Corps Matching funds of \$287,000 |
| Agreement Period: 11/2021 – 5/2023 | Amount: \$484,678 Status: In Progress |
| Grantee: Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy | Title: Native American Conservation Corps |
| Agreement Period: 11/2021 – 5/2023 | Amount: \$65,000 Status: In Progress |

Carbon Assessment for the San Diego River Watershed and Consortium Areas

The Conservancy provided funds to San Diego Canyonlands and Dudek to partner on a study to develop a finer-scale resolution of local habitat and vegetation growth patterns to track potential carbon sequestration and identify focus areas for future restoration projects. In addition, the study included a literature review and analysis to calibrate measurements for carbon stock and sequestration rates for the San Diego River watersheds and Consortium areas. (Grant amount \$65,000)

San Diego State University

The Conservancy and San Diego State University continue to find partnership opportunities for project advancement to support the missions of both organizations. The San Diego River Research Center concept includes having San Diego State University and other partner organizations gather data and share information related to local river watersheds. Recent publications include:



- *Chemical and microbial markers for discriminating sanitary sewer contamination in coastal, urban streams.* Pinongcos, F. et al. (2022)
<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acsestwater.2c00265>
- *Surface Water Quality After the Woolsey Fire in Southern California.* Barron et al. (2022)
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11270-022-05844-x>
- *Persistence of fecal indicators and microbial source tracking markers in riverbank soils.* Calderon, J. et al. (2022)
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11270-022-05542-8>
- *Upland and riparian surface soil processes in an urban creek with native and non-native vegetation after fire.* Kinoshita, A. et al. (2022)
<https://www.mdpi.com/2571-6255/5/2/32/htm>
- *An assessment of ambient water quality, sanitation, and hygiene challenges for individuals experiencing homelessness at encampments located along river margins.* Verbyla et al. (2021)
<https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/full/10.1089/ees.2020.0319>
- *Groundwater-surface water interactions and flux of organic matter and nutrients in an urban Mediterranean stream.* Mladenov, N. et al. (2021)
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34914998/>
- *Fluorescence-based monitoring of anthropogenic pollutant inputs to an urban stream in Southern California, USA.* Mendoza, L. et al. (2020)
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969720307166?via%3Dihub>

- *Detection, quantification, and simplified wastewater surveillance model of SARS-CoV-2 in the Tijuana River.* Rocha, A. et al.
https://www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/research/coast/funding/Pages/SARS-COV-2_in_Natural_Waters.aspx
- *A case study of soil moisture and infiltration after an urban fire.* Alkin, Q. and Kinoshita, A. (2020)
<https://www.mdpi.com/2571-6255/3/2/22>

Map 2. The San Diego River Watershed (County, State, Federal, Tribal and Municipal Jurisdictions)