

San Diego River Conservancy Work Plan 2024



The San Diego River Conservancy (Conservancy) continues to work with and expand partnerships to implement projects in support of the Conservancy's mission and statute. The Conservancy has 3 full-time staff and 18 Governing Board members. The Conservancy's mission is to conserve land, protect resources, and native habitat, improve water quality, support natural flood conveyance and provide public access to outdoor recreation and educational opportunities. We accomplish this mission by implementing various programs under the Conservancy's strategic plan.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN: PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program 1: Conserve Land within the San Diego River Watershed

The Conservancy awarded \$3.1 million to Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation to acquire approximately 110 acres of inholdings within the East Elliot area of Mission Trails Regional Park, located in the City of San Diego. The land will be conserved in perpetuity and provide multi-benefits including public access to open space, outdoor recreation, and protect wildlife corridors. This acquisition supports the State of California's and Natural Resources Agency's path to conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030.

Program 2: Support and Encourage Recreation and Education

The Conservancy helps provide access to the outdoors including ADA accessibility, multi-lingual interpretive panels, informational kiosks, digital maps and educational engagement for various parks and open spaces. This program supports the Natural Resources Agency's outdoor for all initiative.

Campo Band of Mission Indians

Ralph Goff Community Park improvements include a new self-contained, 2-unit prefabricated accessible vault restroom with potable water, erosion control measures and one shade structure for the playground.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

Install 50 multilingual interpretive panels throughout the Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP). MTRP is one of the largest urban parks in the country consisting of 8,000 acres of natural and developed recreational areas. MTRP averages more than 2 million visitors annually.

County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation (County Parks) Cactus County Park & Lindo Lake's West Basin

Cactus Park improvements include one prefabricated restroom facility and upgrade three ballfields' lights, poles, and fixtures in the low income and historically underfunded community of Lakeside.

The Lindo Lake project will restore native habitat and improve accessibility. The



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County Park provides multi-use trails, picnic areas, skate park, and a playground. This grant will provide tree removal and relocation, installation of native landscape and cobble, install fishing pier, bird watching stations, site hardscapes to improve public facilities.

Lakeside's River Park Conservancy's

San Diego River Science Field Station will provide an indoor space to promote environmental science education and stewardship of the San Diego River. This living laboratory will be open to the public and is within walking distance to the San Diego River Trail. In addition, the field station will provide direct access to the river's riparian habitat and engage people in tactile learning experiences. Two collaborating school districts serve children from low income, disadvantaged neighborhoods and historically underfunded communities.

Program 3: Preserve and Restore Natural Resources

This program supports the Natural Resources Agency's path to protect biodiversity and build climate resiliency.

Invasive Non-native Plant Removal and Control Program

The Conservancy and its partners have been implementing this invasive non-native plant control and revegetation program for 15 years. This year, the Conservancy has fifteen active projects targeting over 814 acres of habitat. These activities provide multi-benefits including weed abatement, flammable fuels reduction and reduce the risk and intensity of wildfires.

Partnership agreements account for approximately 83 acres.

Table 1. Conservancy's Current Partnership Agreements

Grantee	Project
San Diego Canyonlands	79.5 acres in Tierrasanta Open Space/Brush Management Zone, Ruffin and Sandrock Canyon Phases 1 and 2
The San Diego River Park Foundation	0.5 acres in Mission Valley, Fashion Valley and El Capitan Reservoir
City of San Diego, Public Utilities Department	2.5 acres restoration in the headwaters of the San Diego River watershed at El Capitan Reservoir

Wildfire and Forest Resilience

The Governing Board of the Conservancy has approved 34 projects totaling over \$35 million to help reduce the risk and intensity of wildfires in the County of San Diego. The tables below list wildfire and forest reliance projects approved by the Conservancy Board.

Grants to Tribal Governments and organizations total amount awarded is \$2.8 million.



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Table 2. Project with Various Bands within the Kumeyaay Nation

Grantee	Project Description
Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians \$983,911	Procure one new Type 3 fire engine with 500-gallon water tank, firefighting equipment and personal protective gear.
Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy \$800,000	Procure fire-related vehicles and equipment, such as a skid steer with masticator to reduce flammable fuel loads and for use during wildfire events. Partners include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campo Band of Mission Indians • Sycuan Band of the Kumeyaay Nation • Manzanita Band of the Kumeyaay Nation • Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians • Jamul Indian Village
Barona Band of Mission Indians \$479,016	Procure and outfit a brush fire engine, with emergency radios and onboard wireless technology. Remove 40 large eucalyptus trees and install one greenhouse at Barona Indian Charter School.
Campo Band of Mission Indians \$560,619	Procure one Type 1 Fire Engine and associated equipment, ten communication devices, wildland personal protective equipment and other wildfire supplies.

Table 3. Grant Awards for Wildfire and Forest Resilience

Grantee	Project Description
County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation	Fuel reduction and weed abatement throughout 10,000 acres of parks and open space owned and managed by County Parks.
United States Forest Service – Cleveland National Forest	Target approximately 2,081 acres to reduce fuel loads across, clear brush on 100 miles of roads, and hire additional staff to protect sensitive resources and implement prescribed fire. In addition, install a helicopter landing zone with three 10,000-gallon underground water tanks. In addition, this project will procure two utility vehicles and three pumps, one tracked chipper, backup generators, one above ground 30,000-gallon water tank and other fire communication equipment, tools and supplies.
San Diego Canyonlands	Fuel reduction activities across 1,110 acres to reduce fire risk on land owned by the City of San Diego's Open Space Division in the San Diego River watershed.
Lakeside's River Park Conservancy	Invasive removal and restoration to remove flammable fuel loads including invasive non-native vegetation across 212 acres in El Monte Valley on public and

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	private land and in the Wildland Urban Interface in Lakeside and other communities located in east San Diego County.
Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego	Provide defensible space and free chipping services for private property over 1,200 acres.
City of El Cajon	Targeting fuel reduction on 85 acres in Fletcher Hills Open Space and Hillside Park. Purchase a fire engine, compact track loader, brush cutter, develop a wildfire management plan, and provide training and education to firefighters.
San Diego State University Research Foundation	In partnership with SDSU's Soil Ecology and Restoration Group will remove highly flammable invasive non-native trees and vegetation across 9 acres.
San Diego Regional Fire Foundation	<p>Provide funding to thirteen Fire Safe Councils in the County of San Diego, through the SAFE grant program. Recipients include the following project partners include the following Fire Safe Councils: Alpine/Viejas, Alvarado Estates, Campo/Lake Morena FSC, Chula Vista, Cuyamaca Woods, Jamul, Julian, Kensington, Lakeside, Mt. Laguna, Pine Valley, Potrero and Tecate, Wynola Estates.</p> <p>In addition, partial funding for four fire engines, one chipper, one skid steer, one trailer, multiple VHF radios, firefighter wildfire PPE, supplies, and tools. Implement activities targeting invasive plant removal for hazardous fuels reduction to improve fire resiliency.</p>
San Diego Fire-Rescue Foundation	Targets 46 acres of road brushing and buffer for evacuation routes in the City of San Diego. Procure one truck, one 4x4 all-terrain vehicle, battery-powered equipment, atomizing nozzles, and use of an ecofriendly fuel treatment.
Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation	In partnership with the City of San Diego, this project targets 270 acres for invasive plant removal and fuel reduction activities in the regional park.
San Diego Audubon Society	Targets 65 acres for hazardous fuel reduction through invasive plant removal activities, maintain 8-acres of fuel breaks, provide fire related education programs and informational kiosk at Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary.
Girls Scouts San Diego	Project targets 144 acres for fuel reduction activities within the Girl Scouts' Camp Winacka and Camp



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	Whispering Oaks plus construction and staffing for a new nursery to propagate native trees.
Alpine Fire Protection District	Targeting 16 acres for hazardous fuels removal within Alpine Creek and procure one Type 6 Wildland Fire Engine.
City of Santee, Santee Fire Department	Project will outfit one Type 6 Fire Engine and procure personal protective equipment and provide wildland firefighting training for the Santee Fire Department. In addition, Santee will implement wildfire management strategies and reduce fuel loads across 426 acres along the San Diego River and leverage matching funds from a FEMA grant to manage vegetation within Santee's Wildland Urban Interface.

Program 4: Protect and Preserve Cultural and Historical Resources

To better protect and preserve sensitive cultural resources, additional funds were awarded to Cleveland National Forest to engage qualified Kumeyaay Cultural Monitors who have firsthand exposure to project activities. This \$150,000 grant provides compensation for qualified Kumeyaay cultural monitoring activities who oversee the Wildfire Resilience and Forest Health Project in the Conservancy's service areas.

Program 5: Enhance Water Quality and Natural Flood Conveyance

The Conservancy invested (\$5 million) for water quality and natural flood conveyance projects. Three of the 4 projects serve disadvantaged communities in the County of San Diego which are all located in the San Diego River Watershed. This program supports the California Natural Resources Agency's initiatives to protect biodiversity and build climate resiliency.

San Diego State University (SDSU) One Water Center

This project will install a modular lab system to serve as a testing, training, and research facility for water resources in the San Diego region, and involve students and professors at SDSU. The living learning laboratory will be located at SDSU's Mission Valley Park and within walking distance to the San Diego River.

City of El Cajon - Trash Full Capture Devices

While removing invasive plants along the river decreases the risk of fire and flood, the City of El Cajon will also install 70 full capture trash devices in disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities to improve stormwater quality draining through El Cajon.

City of El Cajon - Broadway Creek Restoration (Phase B)

This second phase of an urban stream restoration project runs through disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities and includes 400 linear feet improvements to native habitat and bank stabilization at Broadway Creek, a



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tributary to the San Diego River in El Cajon.

ADMINISTRATION/FISCAL DUTIES

- State Operations Budget \$411,000; Environmental License Plate Fund for FY 2023-24
- State Operations Budget \$431,000; Environmental License Plate Fund for FY 2024-25
- Prepare agendas, board materials and hold public meetings
- Liaison to the Governing Board members
- Coordinate and communicate with other state agencies, grantees, partners and the public
- Review, respond and participate in various planning efforts in the San Diego River watershed
- Support state priorities and approved plans that align with Conservancy purposes and mission
- Provide Bond accountability updates to state departments and databases, reports, cash projections and other relevant information as requested
- Leverage funds through grant agreements
- Prepare budgets, agreements, purchase documents, vendor payments, timesheets, accounting and various reports to other state agencies
- Process bills, input purchase orders and pay invoices in the Fi\$Cal system
- The Conservancy contracts out its accounting, budget and human resources services to the Department of General Services - Office of Fiscal Services, Contracted Fiscal Services and Office of Human Resources.