



The San Diego River Conservancy is making significant progress in fulfilling its mission, enhancing partnerships, and implementing projects aligned with its goals. The Conservancy's staff of three and its Governing Board prioritize the improvement of resources in the San Diego region through initiatives including land acquisition, recreational opportunities, preserving natural and cultural resources, and improving water quality. In collaboration with partner organizations, the Conservancy is working to complete the San Diego River Trail and supports conservation projects aimed at restoring native habitats, addressing climate change, and enhancing forest and fire resilience. Additionally, the San Diego River Conservancy Act empowers the Conservancy to assist neighboring watersheds, including the Sweetwater, Otay, and Tijuana Rivers. The strategic plan and Governing Board provide guidance for the Conservancy, while grant programs emphasize maximizing public benefit by leveraging local funding and volunteer efforts.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN: PROGRAM SUMMARY

Program 1: Conserve Land within the San Diego River Watershed

Land conservation supports the path to conserving 30% of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030. In 2025, the Conservancy seeks to conserve more open space parcels through the 2024 Climate Bond (Proposition 4).

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation (MTRPF)

After completing a 55-acre conservation acquisition in December 2024, MTRPF plans to complete another acquisition of 53-acres in the East Elliot section of Mission Trails Regional Park in the City of San Diego.

Program 2: Support and Encourage Recreation and Education

The Conservancy supports public access and outdoor recreation by helping to provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility, multi-lingual interpretive panels, informational kiosks, digital maps and educational engagement for local and regional parks and open spaces in San Diego County.

Lakeside's River Park Conservancy–San Diego River Science Field Station

The San Diego River Science Field Station is a living laboratory situated on 100 acres of restored riparian habitat in the unincorporated community of Lakeside. This unique facility offers local school districts, students, teachers, and scientists the opportunity to study the natural environment. It provides essential tools and resources to enhance scientific inquiry and workforce training for future stewards of the San Diego River. Construction is expected to be completed by 2025.



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County of San Diego, Department of Parks and Recreation

County Parks will remove hazardous material and improve the Historic Flume segment (Section 60A) of the San Diego River Trail through vegetation management, erosion control and other restoration activities.

Cactus County Park's Improvement Project will enhance restroom facilities, replace light poles, and install energy-efficient LED lights on three ballfields.

The Lindo Lake County Park Phase 2 Improvement Project aims to restore native habitats and enhance public access in the West Basin. This project includes the addition of native vegetation and the construction of recreational amenities, such as a fishing pier, two bird viewing stations, and an accessible trail.

Campo Band of Mission Indians

A new 2-unit prefabricated ADA accessible vault restroom will be installed with potable water, solar power, fencing, parking, erosion control measures and one shade structure for the playground at Ralph Goff Community Park on the Campo Reservation.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

Mission Trails Regional Park welcomes approximately 2 million visitors each year and spans over 8,000 acres of natural and developed areas. It features 60 miles of trails and offers camping at Kumeyaay Lake. This project aims to design, fabricate, and install 50 bilingual interpretive panels at various locations throughout the park. These panels will educate the public on the importance of protecting, understanding, and preserving the park's natural, cultural, and historical resources.

In addition, they recently submitted a proposal for visitor center improvements. Project components include shading around the building, creating a path to the loop trail, reconfiguring the trailhead and improving the parking lot with 13 additional parking spaces with ADA accessibility. (Proposal submitted)

Program 3: Preserve and Restore Natural Resources

San Diego County is home to the most threatened plant and animal species anywhere in the continental United States. Factors threatening biodiversity include invasive species, climate change, fire disturbances, and habitat fragmentation. As such, the Conservancy recognizes the need to protect biodiversity through its watershed-wide invasive removal program. The Conservancy's Invasive Non-native Plant Removal and Control permits were renewed with regulatory agencies last year, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's streambed alteration agreement.



Invasive Non-native Plant Removal and Control Program

The Conservancy and its partners have been implementing this invasive non-native plant control and restoration program for 15 years. At no cost, the Conservancy allows for local entities to use its existing permits under a “Partnership Agreement.” Partners such as City of San Diego, Public Utilities Department show commitment by managing El Capitan Reservoir, while the San Diego River Park Foundation and volunteers are dedicated to maintaining downstream areas at Fashion Valley Mall and Mission Valley Preserve. These activities provide multi-benefits including weed abatement, hazardous fuels reduction, reduced flood and fire risk, as well as native habitat restoration.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation identified 2.1 acres of floating primrose-willow (*Ludwigia peploides*), an invasive non-native aquatic plant threatening native habitat and water quality at Kumeyaay Lake. Manual removal and herbicide treatment will keep this unwanted species out of the water body. Moreover, *Ludwigia* species change their environment by lowering dissolved oxygen. In the summer, high biological oxygen demand within dense stands leads to oxygen depletion, negatively affecting aquatic organisms. (Concept submitted)

Wildfire and Forest Resilience

Recently, the Conservancy has utilized General Funds for wildfire resilience, specifically to fund vegetation removal aimed at addressing invasive non-native plant species infestations in the watershed. Grant awards support fuel reduction activities, including road brushing, the creation of fuel breaks, and pile burns. To further reduce the risk and intensity of wildfires in San Diego County and assist residents in preparing for such events, project partners and local jurisdictions will procure personal protective equipment (PPE), fire engines, 4x4 trucks, brush removal tools, and fire suppression equipment.

In addition, Heartland Communications is set to install a very high frequency (VHF) radio repeater tower at the Barona Band of Mission Indians’ cellphone tower. This installation will enhance communication services in remote dead zones.

Table 1. Wildfire Projects with Bands of the Kumeyaay Nation

Grantee	Project Description
Barona Band of Mission Indians	Remove approximately 40 large mature eucalyptus trees across 1 acre and plant fifteen 15-gallon willow trees on the school campus.
Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians	Procure a Type 3 Brush Engine.

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Grantee	Project Description
Campo Band of Mission Indians	Procure a Type I Fire Engine, 10 P-25 compliant handheld radio devices, tools, supplies and PPE.
Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians	Procure one off-road firefighter UTV, 26 P-25 compliant VHF portable radios, a chipper, PPE, tools, and other equipment needed for emergency rescue, wildfire response and hazardous fuels treatment.

Table 2. Grants for Wildfire and Forest Resilience

Grantee	Project Description
City of El Cajon	Create a Vegetation and Wildfire Management Plan, conduct fire and rescue training, and reduce fuel loads across 40 acres.
Cleveland National Forest	Hire additional personnel to oversee fuel reduction across 1,855 acres. Conduct prescribed fires and pile burns across 72 acres, road brush 77 miles with an additional 56 miles of road maintenance and procure wildfire equipment.
Heartland Communications Facilities Authority	Install a VHF radio repeater tower at the Barona Band of Mission Indian’s cellphone tower to increase communication capabilities.
San Diego Regional Fire Foundation	Reduce fuel loads across 40 acres in Wynola Estates and partially fund a Type 3 Brush Fire Engine for use by the Santee Fire Department.
San Diego Regional Fire Foundation	Reduce hazardous fuel loads on 4.5 acres in the Otay Valley Regional Park and Trail, adjacent to residential and commercial properties in the City of Chula Vista.
San Diego Regional Fire Foundation	Funding for Project SAFE to support 13 fire safe councils to reduce wildfire risk and the purchase of a chipper for use by Alpine Fire Protection District.
San Diego Regional Fire Foundation	Support for 10 fire departments to help procure three fire engines, various supplies, tools and equipment including one Type 3 Brush Fire Engine and partial funding for two Type 6 Fire Engines, one commercial hand-fed chipper, one skid steer chipper with attachments, and one trailer, sixteen sets of National Fire Protection Association certified PPE, twenty fire shelters worn by wildland firefighters and designed to protect firefighters in emergency situations, 308 VHF P-25 compliant radios and replace aging fire hose, nozzles, hose clamps, hose packs, and hand tools.
Alpine Fire Protection District	Approximately 16 acres targeted for fuel reduction along 24 parcels adjacent to Alpine Creek.

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Grantee	Project Description
San Diego Fire-Rescue Foundation	Procure one Pierce Mini Pumper (F-550 Vehicle or similar), one tow behind chipper, and other fire related equipment and supplies to manage brush on 526 acres of land on property owned by the City of San Diego's Parks and Recreation/Open Space Division.
San Diego Fire-Rescue Foundation	Purchase one F-350 Vehicle, one ATV (4X4), battery-powered trimmers, chainsaws, handheld blowers, chargers, batteries, 7 Mighty Fire Breaker 275-gallon totes w/ MFB-31-CitronTech® and one treatment refill, 10 backpack sprayers and atomizing nozzles, GPS tracking and mapping, and implementation of fuel reduction activities and firebreaks.
Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation	Fuel reduction activities on target trails and grasslands totaling 270 acres in the City of San Diego. Provide volunteer training for ongoing control of invasive plants, purchase of one electric utility terrain vehicle (UTV) and 2 walk-behind trimmer mowers. This project includes educational outreach and establishing a volunteer group to conduct follow-up activities.
Girls Scouts San Diego	Fuel reduction across 144 acres in Julian located at Camp Winacka and Camp Whispering Oaks. The project includes construction and staffing for a new nursery in the San Diego River's headwaters.
San Diego Bird Alliance (formerly San Diego Audubon Society)	Reduce hazardous fuel loads across 65 acres, maintain 8 acres of fuel breaks, provide fire related education programs and update informational kiosk at Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary.
Cleveland National Forest	Fuel reduction including road brushing, chipping, and prescribed fire, along with associated equipment, tools, and supplies to mitigate risk of fire. Purchase communication equipment to respond to wildfire emergencies.
Lakeside's River Park Conservancy	Fuel reduction across 150 acres in El Monte Valley, Los Coches Creek and other tributaries to the San Diego River in east county.
City of Santee, Santee Fire Department	Procure firefighter PPE, outfit one Type 6 Fire Engine and provide wildland firefighting training for Santee's Fire Department.
City of Santee, Santee Fire Department	Remove flammable fuel loads across 415 acres in the Wildland Urban Interface including brush thinning, reduction of non-native vegetation and debris removal. The Conservancy's funding will be leveraged with

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Grantee	Project Description
	California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services to implement a Fire Hazard Mitigation Project.
Nature Collective	Treatment of <i>Arundo donax</i> across 500 acres and installation of willow and mulefat cuttings across 15 acres.
San Diego State University Research Foundation	Reduce 9.1 acres of fuel loads including invasive non-native vegetation along Alvarado Creek which runs through San Diego State University.

Program 4: Protect and Preserve Cultural and Historical Resources

To better protect and preserve sensitive cultural resources, funds were awarded to Cleveland National Forest to engage qualified Kumeyaay cultural monitors with specialized traditional ecological knowledge of the San Diego and Tijuana Rivers watershed to work on Forest Service projects. This program supports initiatives to strengthen tribal partnerships.

Program 5: Enhance Water Quality and Natural Flood Conveyance

The Conservancy invested \$4.7 million in water quality and natural flood conveyance improvement projects. Also, a significant portion of this funding directly serves disadvantaged communities in the San Diego River Watershed.

San Diego State University (SDSU) One Water Living Learning Laboratory

This Project will install a modular laboratory at SDSU’s River Park at Mission Valley to serve as a testing, training, and research facility. The living learning laboratory will be located within walking distance to the San Diego River.

City of El Cajon

The second phase of an urban stream restoration project for Broadway Creek, a tributary to the San Diego River is underway. The project’s goals include improvements to native habitat and bank stabilization. Additionally, another separate project in the City of El Cajon will install 70 full capture trash devices. Both projects in El Cajon benefit disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities.

San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

This project will coordinate and prepare a report memorializing efforts being taken in the Tijuana River watershed related to the Minute 320 Binational Core Group (steering committee) and its member agencies.



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

The Conservancy seeks ways to assist its partners that align with their goals and mission. For example, there are numerous beneficiaries for PPE, wildfire equipment and communications devices in the San Diego River and adjacent watersheds.

San Diego Regional Fire Foundation

This project provided personal protective equipment (PPE) for the lifeguards and firefighters of the City of Imperial Beach. Situated at the mouth of the Tijuana River, Imperial Beach faces several challenges, including having one of the most polluted rivers in the United States, which ultimately flows into the Pacific Ocean. Lifeguards rescue individuals in distress, whether in the Tijuana River or the ocean, and firefighters also operate in these environments.

San Diego Fire-Rescue Foundation

The City of San Diego's River Rescue Team required 30 new dry suits to help facilitate emergency rescues in the San Diego, Otay, Sweetwater and Tijuana Rivers.

ADMINISTRATION/FISCAL DUTIES

- State Operations Budget \$428,000; Environmental License Plate Fund for FY 2025-26
- Prepare agendas, board materials and hold public meetings
- Liaison to the Governing Board members
- Coordinate 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 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 control 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.