

January 31, 2025

California Department of Fish and Wildlife
South Coast Region 5
3883 Ruffin Road
San Diego, CA 92123

Subject: EPIMS-SDO-48171-R5 ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Pursuant to Fish and Game Code section 1602, the San Diego River Conservancy notified CDFW on February 21, 2024 of 15 projects applied for under the San Diego Conservancy's (Conservancy) Invasive Non-native Plant Control and Restoration Program. Permittee currently has 4 active projects beginning in 2024 and intends to undertake an additional 4 projects for a total of 8 active projects in 2025, described herein.

This agreement is effective September 4, 2024 through December 31, 2039 and Project activities are limited to the removal of invasive non-native vegetation, reduction of vegetative fuel loads, and restoration of portions of the San Diego River watershed to restore hydrologic function and reduce fire risk.

1. PROJECT ACTIVITIES PERFORMED DURING THE WORK YEAR AT EACH LOCATION

Four active projects throughout the San Diego River Watershed focus on invasive non-native plant removal and control, restoration and avoidance and minimization measures to protect sensitive species and natural resources. To date, none of the initiated projects are complete. The status of the four active projects and four projects pending biological surveys are as follows:

a. Vegetation Removal

Vegetation removal occurred in Lakeside along Los Coches Creek and other tributaries of the San Diego River. Herbicide was applied across 23.78 acres and approximately 97.7 tons of biomass was removed from 15 acres.

Biomass removal in Alpine Creek from previously stockpiled debris was removed November 2024 due to potential rains. All piles were hauled up to road areas and chipped into truck for material to be hauled away. On several occasions, as many as 7 staff members were on site to help haul out cuttings, chips and cut biomass. The area was raked up and floor cleaned. Significant growth of poison oak and poison ivy present prevented staff from entering densely vegetated areas.

Non-native vegetation removal at SDSU occurred August 2, 5, 26, and 28, 2024. *Acacia* sp., *Fraxinus uhdei* (Shamel ash), *Erigeron sumatrensis* (tropical horseweed), *Dittrichia*

graveolens (stinkwort), skeletal *Centaurea melitensis* (Maltese star-thistle) and mustards were removed using hula hoes, shovels, battery-operated hedge trimmers, and hand pulling. *Schinus terebinthifolia* (Brazilian pepper tree) and larger *F. uhdei* individuals were removed using loppers and a battery-operated chainsaw. Each individual was cut as close to the ground as possible, followed by the immediate saturation of the freshly cut stumps with Rodeo® water-safe herbicide at 100% concentration using a brush applicator bottle.

Non-native species were removed from the Del Cerro site on July 2, 3, 10, 19, 25, 30 and 31, 2024; and August 1, 2, 7, 9, 14, and 22, 2024 (Table 1). *Dittrichia graveolens* (stinkwort), *Melilotus indicus* (annual yellow sweetclover), *Melilotus albus* (yellow sweetclover), *Foeniculum vulgare* (fennel), *Pulicaria paludosa* (Spanish false fleabane), and *Helminthotheca echioides* (bristly ox-tongue) were removed manually by hand pulling and mechanically using battery-operated hedge trimmers. Approximately 20,946 liters of non-native biomass were removed from the site and disposed of at SDSU's green waste facility.

A site visit to Adobe Falls was conducted on July 7, 2024, to assess the effectiveness of the previous quarter's non-native vegetation abatement efforts. SERG personnel observed no regrowth of the non-native species removed in June 2024. Non-native species removal activities were conducted on 23 August 2024. *Pulicaria paludosa* (Spanish false fleabane), *Washingtonia robusta* (Mexican fan palm), *Erigeron bonariensis* (flax-leaved horseweed), *Ricinus communis* (castor plant), *Melilotus indicus* (sourclover), and *Schinus terebinthifolia* (Brazilian peppertree) individuals were hand pulled and their litter was left on site with the purpose of nutrient replenishment to the surrounding native species.

Invasive removal at Del Cerro, Adobe Falls and SDSU Wildfire Early Action Plan (WEAP) are currently paused due to permitting issues.

b. Re-Vegetation

Re-Vegetation occurred at Del Cerro reach of Alvarado Creek. SERG personnel collected *Pluchea sericea* (Arrow-weed) from Phase II on July 3, 2024, and *Prunus ilicifolia* (hollyleaf cherry) from Phase VII on August 23, 2024. These species will be stored at the SERG greenhouse for future out planting events.

Revegetation with cuttings in stretches of San Diego River Ecological Reserve and Carlton Oaks will probably not occur due to unfavorable rainfall in 2024-25.

c. Maintenance

Maintenance of herbicide treatment at Alpine Creek targeted periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) which is a low growing, sprawling plant that suffocates ground cover in riparian woodland understory. Additionally, Anton's staff is spraying herbicide treatment on poison oak and

bamboo areas. Spraying on castor bean and *Arundo* is also being applied. Poison-oak will be removed to allow for work to continue in the understory.

Herbicide treatment at Mission Valley & Carlton Oaks included re-treatment of scattered *Arundo donax* (giant reed) resprouts. Control of target perennial invasive non-native plants (foliar treated or drill and control) methods are passive. Treated perennial invasives: Mexican fan palm, Canary Island palm (young individuals, an invasive weevil is killing the mature trees), tree tobacco, Cape honeysuckle, Brazilian pepper tree, eucalyptus (multiple species), bottlebrush tree, green ash, pampas grass, Chinese elm and castor bean. Crews are on foot, and no vegetation is cut or removed.

2. OVERVIEW OF SURVEYING EFFORTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AT EACH LOCATION

PROJECT LOCATIONS EAST COUNTY & EL MONTE VALLEY (2 Projects, 6 Adjacent Sites)

a. Survey Sites 1-3. Mountain Valley Place, Los Coches, and Golden Circle

Surveys were conducted in two rounds, with the first round occurring on September 19 and 20, 2024, and the second on September 24, 2024. The biologists traversed the site on foot, thoroughly searching for sensitive plant and animal species, bird nests, and woodrat nests and burrows. Areas containing water were surveyed for sensitive aquatic species. Binoculars and field guides were used to identify all species encountered and up-to-date online databases were consulted to confirm the statuses of sensitive species.

Mountain Valley Place

The approximately 6-acre parcel is located on rural property near El Monty County Park in Lakeside, CA. The southern half of the site is developed, with several buildings in varying phases of renovation and other constructed areas. The San Diego River crosses the site northeast-to-southwest, roughly bisecting the parcel. Beginning south of the river and extending to the northern site boundary, the landscape is moderately to significantly disturbed but not developed, with a mixture of riparian scrub, coastal sage scrub (CSS), and oak woodland vegetation.

The site contains a high overall diversity of native species, as well as invasives and ornamentals, including non-native grasses, mustard (*Brassica* sp., *Hirschfeldia* sp.), saltcedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*), giant cane (*Arundo donax*), tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*), castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), Peruvian pepper tree (*Schinus molle*), and many others. The riverbed was dry and sandy. One sensitive plant species was found: white rabbit tobacco (*Pseudognaphalium leucocephalum*); California Rare Plant Rank [CRPR] 2B.2). Additionally, two potential and one confirmed woodrat nests and burrows were detected and mapped at Mountain Valley Place and Los Coches.

Los Coches Road (Panorama Cut)

The approximately 3-acre parcel is located across the road and slightly north from Los Coches Road, Lakeside, CA. The site is a densely vegetated riparian corridor along a creek. The muddy banks of the creek are mostly steep but occasionally flat. The vegetation community is best described as riparian forest, though the species composition is almost entirely non-native/invasive. A heavy cover of woody debris and leaf litter obscured the terrain throughout the site.

Water was present throughout the creek at the time of the surveys flowing at a height of 3 to 8 inches throughout its course. Invasive red swamp crayfish (*Procambrus clarkii*) were seen in several spots along the creek. The dominant vegetation onsite is large invasive riparian trees including eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus* sp.), Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), and date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*).

Golden Circle

The 0.2-acre parcel located in Lakeside, CA is a highly disturbed creek bed with almost 100% cover of invasive riparian plants in the southern portion and a combination of *Arundo donax* debris and agricultural litter in the northern portion. The small segment of the creek that parallels Los Coches Road before diverting northeast is much more open than the rest of the site.

The dominant vegetation on this site is giant cane (*Arundo donax*). A dense stand of *Arundo* completely covers the lower portion of the site but the upper portion contains mostly debris from the management activities that took place last year.

b. Survey Site 4. Oak Creek

The fourth project site is located at Oak Creek Drive, Lakeside, California. The parcel consists of an approximately 100 foot by 30 foot partially lined channel of Oak Creek on a residential property. A road bridge marks the northwestern site boundary. The channel is heavily vegetated, with muddy banks and walls on either side.

c. Survey Site 5. Industry Road Location

The project area surrounds the Lakeside River Park Conservancy head office and measures approximately 50 acres. The project area is a riparian corridor surrounding the San Diego River and contains an approximately 3-acre pond just north of the developed lot. Two rounds of general biological surveys were conducted by TDI Biologist Cai Leão on January 7 and January 10, 2025. The biologist traversed the site on foot where possible, thoroughly searching for sensitive plant and animal species, bird nests, and woodrat nests and burrows. Areas containing water were surveyed for sensitive aquatic species. Arroyo toads (*Anaxyrus californicus*) may exist in the vicinity, so the habitat viability for the species was evaluated to assess the potential of the species to occur onsite.

The lower elevation areas were partially flooded at the time of the surveys, with water depths ranging from zero to six inches and averaging around two inches. Typical emergent freshwater marsh vegetation dominates the floodplain areas, composed largely of cattails (*Typha* sp.) but containing other native emergent species such as hill lotus (*Acmispon parviflorus*), deerweed (*Acmispon glaber*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), tall cyperus (*Cyperis eragrostos*) and rough cocklebur (*Xanthium strumarium*), as well as non-natives such as brass buttons (*Cotula coronopifolia*) and umbrella plant (*Cyperus involucratus*). As the elevation increases in the shelves and fingers, the emergent vegetation gives way to willow riparian trees and shrubs, dominated by native willows (*Salix lasiolepis*, *S. laevigata*, and *S. gooddingii*). In the highest and driest areas, the vegetation is largely composed of sage scrub species, such as desert broom (*Baccharis sarothroides*), California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*), California sagebrush (*Artemisia californica*), and laurel sumac (*Malosma laurina*).

The site contains a high diversity of plant species, including several invasive species. Giant reed (*Arundo donax*), mustards (*Brassica* sp.), non-native grasses, and a few very small Mexican fan palms (*Washingtonia robusta*) were found. The invasive species with the greatest representation in the western half of the site is castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), which grows in a few very tall and moderately dense stands in the central eastern portion of the western side of the project area. Bird activity was high at the time of the survey, though the survey and work will have occurred outside of the nesting season. In the flooded portions of the western project area, California chorus frogs (*Pseudacris cadaverina*) were heard calling. They are likely to be breeding in permanently flooded areas at this time of year, though no tadpoles were observed. The site has signs of frequent use by mammals. The biologist observed California ground squirrels (*Otospermophilus beecheyi*), brush rabbits (*Sylvilagus bachmani*), coyote (*Canis latrans*) scat and the remains of a dead coyote, and rodent burrows. Insect activity was low at the time of the surveys.

There was no insect activity showing the presence of Crotch's bumblebee (*Bombus crotchii*) or other special status insects. Likely nesting sites were searched for pack rat (*Neotoma* sp.) nests. None of these species were detected or determined to have a high probability to occur. No sensitive plants or animal species were found. No bird nests were found. Based on the very dense vegetation cover and substrate type, the project area is poor arroyo toad breeding habitat. The potential to occur for arroyo toads at this site is low. The two amphibian species listed in the SAA are the western spadefoot toad (*Spea hammondi*) and the Baja California chorus frog (*Pseudacris hypochondriaca*). Additionally, the possibility of impact to arroyo toads, which may occur locally, was also considered. The parts of the site that contain water are marshy, quite unlike the sandy terrain with vernal pools preferred by spadefoots. Potential for spadefoots to occur is low.

d. Survey Site 6. Lakeview Road

Two rounds of general biological surveys were conducted by TDI Biologists Rob Hanna and Cai Leão on January 14 and January 15, 2025, at Lakeview Road, Lakeside, California. The project area is comprised of a small, forked segment of a stream in a residential neighborhood. The stream passes below Lakeview Road from the east via culverts.

The two segments converge at a point east of the properties. The vegetation community surrounding the creek is a combination of riparian scrub and valley oak woodland that is typical of the region. Coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*), arroyo willows (*Salix lasiolepis*), red willows (*Salix laevigata*), and blue elderberry (*Sambucus mexicana*) line the outer banks. Directly along the banks and emerging from the shallow water is mostly giant cane (*Arundo donax*) and Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*). There is also a moderate amount of castor bean (*Ricinus communis*) and some tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*). Water was present in the stream at a depth of 3-5 inches.

Biologists observed rodent burrows and the remains of a dead striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*). There was no insect activity showing the presence of Crotch's bumblebee (*Bombus crotchii*) or other special status insects. Likely nesting sites were searched for pack rat (*Neotoma* sp.) nests. None of these species were detected or determined to have a high probability to occur. No sensitive plants or animal species were found. No bird nests were found.

PROJECT LOCATION ALPINE CREEK

Surveys were conducted on September 24 and November 5-9, 2024. Weather during the various days of the surveys was calm, except for an intervening light rain for a few hours which did not seem to increase the flow volume in the channel during the time of inventory. Diegan Coastal Sage Scrub on the northern periphery of the drainage and the Southern Coast Live Oak Riparian Forest being the principal focus of the clearing. Soils are mapped as Fallbrook sandy loam (FaD2) and Visalia sandy loam (VaC) with Las Bancas Tonalite geology and elevation range from 1,632'-1,524'.

76 plant species were observed, of which 28 (36.8%) were non-native. Canary Island Palm *Dittrichia* infestation below dam and Trash for Clean-up. Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is a particularly pernicious species, requiring constant monitoring and eradication. Towhees were observed foraging on the ground and red-breasted sapsucker and scrub jay were also on site.

The channel was flowing clear at about 5 gallons a minute in Alpine Creek. Notably, Engelmann oak was observed, *Juncus textilis* marsh area and *Carex spissa* marsh were found at the dam impoundment. Habitat of Harbison Dun Skipper is present as clumps of *Carex spissa*. The incised channel from roadway runoff exposed tonalite in the channel below the dam and a broken spillway was accessed along Midway Dr. Discussion occurred

as to the extent of clearing and possible nesting avoidance for the area of Coastal Sage Scrub. The clearing of sage scrub with a mosaic, as proposed, would leave areas of potential habitat.

PROJECT LOCATIONS MISSION VALLEY & CARLTON OAKS

a. Survey Site 1. Ward Road

The project site was surveyed over two consecutive days on October 7-8 from 7 am to 2 pm. The weather was clear and temperatures ranged from 72 to 85 F.

The project area is a mix of freshwater riparian vegetation with dominant riparian and bottomland habitat. Riparian habitat is a mix of forest/woodland (willow and cottonwood), scrub (mulefat/sandbar willow), and open herbaceous vegetation. Some areas have high native woody plant cover, while other areas have high cover of non-native palms and Brazilian peppertree. Extensive *Arundo* cover once existed on the site, but this has been greatly reduced to a trace level of cover, so it is important to continue control of this species to stop it from re-establishing. A large portion of the site had historic gravel/sand extraction, which left large bodies of open water and bog and marsh habitat (dominated by *Typha* and *Scirpus*) over portions of the site.

During the survey, the following non-avian wildlife were observed: coyote (2), ground squirrel (5), western fence lizard (3), bull frog (7), crayfish (4), domestic dog (3), houseless humans (12). No active burrows were observed, no wood-rat middens were observed. Insect activity was low, only three species of plants were actively blooming (*Baccharis sarathroides*, *Pluchea odorata*, and Spanish false fleabane). Insects detected: house fly, European honeybee, hornet, dragonfly, red admiral butterfly. No bumblebees were detected during surveys.

The following avian species were observed, none were nesting: American crow, black phoebe, song sparrow, common yellowthroat, scaly-breasted munia, Bewick's wren, house finch, Anna's humming bird, house wren, bushtit, Nuttall's woodpecker, black crowned night heron, mourning dove, orange-crowned warbler, California towhee.

Least Bell's vireo's are migratory and they are not currently present at the project site. LBV's have been detected at the site during the summer in previous years. No California gnatcatchers were observed/detected. In the nesting season, they would be nesting in upland areas adjacent to the riparian habitat, but these areas are outside the project area. They are not nesting during this time of year. No tri-colored blackbirds were observed/detected. They would not be nesting during this time of year. No nesting colonies have been observed in previous years.

No Crotch's bumble bees (or any other bumble bees) were observed. This is a time of extremely low bumblebee activity. Gyne flights will occur later in winter. Most of the

riparian habitat has very dense vegetation cover and vegetation litter. Most areas have no open soil for nests (floodplain areas) or the substrate is not suitable. Significant portions of the site are heavily scoured (active channel). Terraces, which are limited in extent (as they have been developed) have some open soil substrate. Extensive compacted trails from transients are present in these areas, so crews will use pre-existing trails when passing through these areas.

Ponded water and very low baseline water flows were observed in the low flow channel. No sensitive resources were observed (most wildlife was non-native- bullfrogs and crayfish, small ponded water features had high cover of azolla). Crews will not be entering standing or flowing water. No impacts to aquatic habitats will occur.

b. Survey Site 2. Carlton Oaks, Santee (Arundo Removal)

The project site was surveyed twice, October 10th and then again on October 12th. The weather was clear, temperatures ranged from 75 to 87 F.

The project area is a mix of freshwater riparian vegetation types with a mix of forest/woodland (willow and cottonwood), scrub (mulefat/sandbar willow), and open herbaceous vegetation. Some areas have high native woody plant cover, while other areas have high cover of non-native palms and Brazilian peppertree. Extensive *Arundo* cover once existed on the site, but this has been greatly reduced. A large portion of the site had historic gravel/sand extraction, and this has left large bodies of open water and bog and marsh habitat (dominated by *Typha* and *Scirpus*) over portions of the site. Significant areas have also been converted to a golf course, with the river and creek confined to an unnaturally narrow configuration.

During the survey, the following non-avian wildlife were observed: coyote (8), ground squirrel (3), western fence lizard (7), bull frog (2), crayfish (2), houseless humans (7). No active burrows were observed, one wood-rat midden was observed (it was not near a treatment area). Insect activity was low overall, only four species of plants were actively blooming (*Baccharis sarathroides*, *Pluchea odorata*, eucalyptus trees, and Taiwanese rain tree). Insects detected: house fly, European honeybee, dragonfly, monarch. No bumblebees were detected during surveys.

The following avian species were observed, none were nesting: American crow, black phoebe, song sparrow, common yellowthroat, scaly-breasted munia, house wren, house finch, Anna's humming bird, bushtit, Nuttall's woodpecker, osprey, Cooper's hawk, mourning dove, red-winged blackbird, orange-crowned warbler, California towhee, spotted towhee, phainopepla, lesser goldfinch, red tailed hawk, bushtit, scrub jay, ruby-crowned kinglet, yellow-rumped warbler, western bluebird.

Least Bell's vireos' are migratory and they are not currently present at the project site.

No California gnatcatchers were observed/detected. No tri-colored blackbirds were observed/detected. No nesting colonies have been observed in previous years.

No Crotch's bumble bees (or any other bumble bees) were observed. This is a time of year with extremely low bumblebee activity. Gyne flights will occur later in winter. Most of the riparian habitat has very dense vegetation cover and vegetation litter. Most areas have no open soil for nests (floodplain areas) or the substrate is not suitable. Significant portions of the site are heavily scoured (active channel). Terraces, which are limited in extent (as they have been developed) have some open soil substrate. Extensive compacted trails from transients and recreation trails are present in these areas.

Ponded water and very low baseline water flows were observed in the low flow channel. There are also large water features left over from sand mining activities. These areas were observed, no sensitive resources were observed (most wildlife was non-native- bullfrogs and crayfish). Crews will not be entering standing or flowing water. No impacts to aquatic habitats will occur.

PROJECT LOCATIONS DEL CERRO, ADOBE FALLS AND SDSU

a. Survey Site 1. Del Cerro Stretch of Alvarado Creek (Rev-vegetation)

Soil Ecology and Restoration Group (SERG) personnel conducted a botanical survey on December 12 and 13, 2024. The site was divided into a grid of four quadrants, which each contained four sub-quadrants. SERG personnel toured the site and recorded each species encountered and which sub-quadrants contained the species.

Personnel also surveyed for Crotch's bumble bees on December 2, 2024, at Del Cerro stretch of Alvarado Creek. Personnel toured the site and recorded flowering plant species and any bumble bee sightings. No bumble bees were observed.

b. Survey Site 2. Adobe Falls (Phase 7)

SERG personnel will complete all required focused surveys to allow work to resume on the site. Once surveys have been completed at Adobe Falls, non-native species abatement efforts will continue throughout the next quarter.

A site visit to SDSU was conducted on October 9, 2024, and SERG personnel surveyed for Crotch's bumble bees on December 2, 2024. Personnel toured the site and recorded flowering plant species and any bumble bee sightings. No bumble bees were observed.

c. Survey Site 3. SDSU WEAP

SERG personnel will complete all required surveys to allow work to resume on the site. Once surveys have been completed, non-native species removal from the site will continue throughout the next quarter.

PROJECT LOCATION NAVAJO CANYON

On October 22 and 23, 2024 wetland habitat and aquatic vegetation was identified in the northern drainage of Navajo Creek. Non-vegetated channel with adjacent sensitive coastal sage scrub habitat was also mapped. The California gnatcatcher, cactus wren, and woodrat midden were detected onsite and flagged for avoidance.

Once bio surveys are completed, invasive non-native vegetation removal will resume.

3. DISCUSSION OF THE APPLICABILITY AND ADEQUACY OF AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES IN PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES

Qualified biological monitors performed pre-activity surveys at each site and were present during all work near water, such as streams and ponds. Before the start of work, all workers received environmental education from a qualified biologist, covering best management practices to avoid impacts to environmentally sensitive areas.

PROJECT LOCATIONS EAST COUNTY & EL MONTE VALLEY (Two projects, 6 sites)

Three woodrat nests and one great horned owl roost were mapped and avoided. Project activities at this site should not have impacts on any sensitive or protected species.

No sensitive plant species or bird nests were found on this site, but at least two potential woodrat burrows were detected. These did not appear to be active (no droppings, recently excavated materials, tracks, etc.) but care should be taken to avoid disturbing them regardless. It is very likely that there are more burrows and/or nests present onsite but were undetectable due to the dense cover of plant litter throughout most of the site.

Additionally, a great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) was observed roosting on a eucalyptus tree near the center of the site. No nest was found in the canopy but the owl pellets and feathers below the tree suggest that it is a common visitor to this roost. It is possible that a nest was obscured in the dense canopy, but the great horned owl breeding season is from late January to the end of July so any nest would be inactive.

While direct impacts should be avoided to frogs wherever possible, Baja California chorus frogs will be sheltering in crevices and burrows during the daytime and should be relatively protected from vegetation clearing activities. Additionally, frogs of this species will be concentrated near the water during the breeding season, which lasts for roughly the entire cool half of the year. Since project activities are likely to happen away from the water, there should be no impact to the species.

Site 5. Lakeview Road

Potential for spadefoots to occur at this site is very low. Based on very dense vegetation cover and substrate type, the project area is also poor arroyo toad breeding habitat. The potential to occur for arroyo toads at this site is low. While the site itself would be potential arroyo toad habitat in a different location, it is part of a very small and isolated stream segment with no connectivity. Consequently, the potential to occur for arroyo toads is very low. Baja California chorus frogs have a very high potential to occur at the site, as they are generalists and the habitat quality for this species is good to excellent at this site. While direct impacts should be avoided to the species wherever possible, these diminutive frogs will be sheltering in crevices and burrows during the daytime and should be relatively protected from vegetation clearing activities. No tadpoles were found in the stream and no frogs were heard calling during the surveys, so it does not appear that breeding has started yet if they are present on site.

PROJECT LOCATION ALPINE CREEK

Pacific SW Biological Services identified San Diego sedge and flagged for avoidance. Modifications to an area has been flagged and identified with contractor for avoidance.

Habitat for Encinitas baccharis (*Baccharis vanessae*) does not occur in the action area. No calls from California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*) were heard despite playing recorded vocalizations.

No high-quality habitat was noted in the cleared or intact areas. Clearing of upland areas will require consideration of Harbison Dun skipper. No removal of sedge clumps should occur, only retention of plants for regrowth and stabilization of habitat made available for this endemic insect.

The English Walnut (*Juglans regia*) has a fallen crop of walnuts under its canopy It provides a food source for ground squirrels, raccoons. No removal of these trees is recommended. A single *Fraxinus*, assumed to be the cultivated Shamel Ash (*F. udhei*) is a similar case that will be monitored.

PROJECT LOCATIONS MISSION VALLEY & CARLTON OAKS One project (two locations)

Timing of work and avoidance measures avoided take of any wildlife or native perennial vegetation.

PROJECT LOCATIONS DEL CERRO, ADOBE FALLS, SDSU WEAP

Worked paused due to permitting issues. Expected to resume work once bio surveys are completed in 2025.

PROJECT LOCATION NAVAJO CANYON

Worked paused due to permitting issues. Expected to remove large and young fan palms once bio surveys are completed and funding is secured.

AVOIDANCE AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

No protected species were impacted by project activities. There were no active nests at any of the project sites and all activities in 2024 occurred outside of the nesting season. At sites where sensitive biological resources were found, the resources were carefully mapped and marked to avoid impacts. For example, the eucalyptus in which the great horned owl was found was not cut. For sensitive species that were not detected at sites where they could occur, the potential to occur was considered to ensure that no undetected individuals would be impacted. No relocations of any plant or animal were necessary and there was no incidental take of any sensitive species.

Chemicals, fuel, oil, runoff, wastewater, and all other pollutants were never allowed to enter waterways or soil. Fueling was done away from the water and there was no body contact or equipment contact with water. There were no spills or contamination events. No alterations to streambeds or banks occurred outside of the removal of non-native vegetation. Staging areas were set up away from sensitive biological resources and streams.

Arborists were careful to avoid the deposition of plant debris in streams. When this was not possible due to the positioning of target trees in or overhanging the streambed, fallen plant debris was removed in a timely manner by either Arborists or a clean-up crew employed by the Conservancy. Following the completion of work at each site, all equipment and materials were removed and the sites were left clean and tidy.

4. SUMMARY OF FEES PAID PER PROJECT ACTIVITIES FOR THE WORK YEAR

The 2024 application filing fee and fee per project totaled \$14,430, but originally consisted of a Standard Agreement, of five years or less with a base fee of \$6,580.50. It was later determined that the Conservancy's environmental restoration program is best categorized as a long-term routine maintenance project with a \$8,883.75 base fee plus \$369.75 per project per calendar year. The proposed 15 projects for calendar year 2024 are as follows:

Active

- East County
- El Monte Valley
- Alpine Creek
- Mission Valley & Carlton Oaks

Pending Bio Surveys

- Del Cerro
- Adobe Falls
- SDSU WEAP
- Navajo Canyon

Not covered under this permit

- Mission Valley East & West
- El Capitan Reservoir
- Fashion Valley Mall
- Mission Trails Regional Park
- Lindo Lake
- Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary
- Ruffin Canyon

Despite applying for 15 projects, only 4 are currently active, 4 are pending biological surveys expected to start 2025, and 7 other projects have either gone on a different permitting route or have not begun project implementation. With the Conservancy's ongoing grant program, new projects may be awarded throughout the year by the Conservancy's governing board. The above project list is subject to change.