

Notice of Public Meeting San Diego River Conservancy

A public meeting of the Governing Board of
The San Diego River Conservancy
will be held Friday,

March 21, 2025
1:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Meeting Locations

San Diego County Administration Center 1600 Pacific Highway, Room 302 San Diego, CA 92101	Natural Resources Agency HQ 715 P Street 20-105 (Farallon Room) Sacramento, CA, 95814
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Teleconference Line
877-336-1831, Code 2199399

Meeting Agenda

The Board may take agenda items out of order to accommodate speakers and to maintain a quorum, unless noted as time specific.

1. Roll Call

2. Approval of Minutes (*ACTION*)

Consider approval of minutes for the January 22, 2025, meeting.

3. Public Comment (*INFORMATIONAL*)

Any person may address the Governing Board at this time regarding any matter within the Board's authority and jurisdiction. Presentations will be limited to three minutes for individuals and five minutes for representatives of organizations. Submission of information in writing is encouraged. The Board is prohibited by law from taking any action on matters discussed that are not on the agenda; no adverse conclusions should be drawn by the Board's not responding to such matters or public comments.

**4. Chairperson’s and Governing Board Members’ Report
(INFORMATIONAL/ACTION)**

5. Deputy Attorney General Report (INFORMATIONAL/ACTION)

6. Health and Safety Report (INFORMATIONAL)

7. San Diego Regional Fire Foundation’s Proposal for Community Based Fire Preparedness and Prevention for 2025 (ACTION)

The San Diego Regional Fire Foundation, in collaboration with the local Fire Safe Councils and Chula Vista Fire Department, propose to implement fuel reduction activities in the County of San Diego. The request for funding consists of three main components for the proposed project:

1. Support 19 Fire Safe Councils for 2025.
2. The Wynola Estates Fire Safe Council seeks additional funds to create and maintain defensible space on approximately 144 acres and create a new evacuation route.
3. The removal of hazardous fuels on approximately 17 acres within the City of Chula Vista.

Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$877,807 from Proposition 68.

Presentation:

Joan Jones, Executive Director, San Diego Regional Fire Foundation
Frank Ault, Board Chairman, San Diego Regional Fire Foundation

Recommendation: Approve Resolution No. 25-01

8. San Diego State University’s One Water Living Learning Laboratory Request for Funding (ACTION)

San Diego State University requests funding associated with the escalated cost, construction of a concrete pad with canopy or roof over the outdoor areas, installation of a security system, and to purchase of several key pieces of equipment needed for basic laboratory functionality, and an equipment shed. Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$600,292 from Proposition 68.

Presentation:

Paul Jackson, Program Manager, Planning Design and Construction, San Diego State University

Natalie Mladenov, PhD., P.E., Dept. of Civil, Construction, & Environmental Engineering, San Diego State University

Recommendation: Approve Resolution No. 25-02

9. Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation’s Proposal to Remove Invasive Plants from Kumeyaay Lakes (ACTION)

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation’s proposed Project, in partnership with the City of San Diego’s Open Space Division, will remove floating water primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*) from Kumeyaay Lake at Mission Trails Regional Park and improve the native riparian habitat, enhance water quality, support wildlife and bird foraging areas and enhance access to nature. Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$175,503 from Proposition 68.

Presentation:

Jennifer Morrissey, Executive Director, Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

Recommendation: Approve Resolution No. 25-03

10. Executive Officer’s Report (INFORMATIONAL/ACTION)

The following topics may be included in the Executive Officer’s Report. The Board may take action regarding any of them:

- 2024 Climate Bond updates

Conservancy staff attended the following events & meetings:

2024 Climate Bond (Prop 4) workshops and meetings
Climate Bond Program Coordination Team meeting – CNRA
Department of General Services quarterly meeting
City of Chula Vista – Proclamation
Cleveland National Forest
SoCal Ignition Reduction People & Partnerships
Trans County Trail meeting (County of San Diego)
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
Crest Fire Safe Council & San Miguel FPD open house
Wynola Estates Fire Safe Council meeting
California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force
Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team Steering Committee
Fire Safe Council of San Diego County
Southern California Wildfire Resilience Partnership

11. Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Board meeting is anticipated to be held in person on Thursday, May 22, 2025, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

12. Adjournment

Accessibility

If you require a disability related modification or accommodation to participate in this meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, please call Wendell Thompson at 619-390-0568 or Wendell.Thompson@sdrc.ca.gov.

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 1

SUBJECT: ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: **2**

SUBJECT: **APPROVAL OF MINUTES (ACTION)**

The Board will consider adoption of the January 22, 2025, Board Meeting.

PURPOSE: The minutes of the Board Meeting are attached for review.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve minutes

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Minutes of January 22, 2025, Public Meeting
(Draft Minutes for Approval on March 21, 2025)

CONSERVANCY Board Member, Ben Clay called the January 22, 2024, meeting of the San Diego River Conservancy to order at approximately 1:00 p.m.

Item 1. Roll Call

Members Present

Christian Beltran	Department of Finance
Jennifer Campbell	Mayor, City of San Diego, Designee
Raul Campillo	Councilmember, City of San Diego, District 7
Ben Clay, Chair	Public at Large
Rebecca Fris	Wildlife Conservation Board
Ruth Hayward	Public at Large
Ray Lennox	Department of Parks and Recreation
Glen Lubcke	Department of Fish and Wildlife
Cody Petterson	Speaker of the Assembly (arrive 1:05 pm)
Elsa Saxod	Public at Large
Andrea Scharffer	Natural Resources Agency
Gary Strawn	San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
Lisa Adams	Department of Parks and Recreation
Dustin Trotter	City of Santee

Absent

Joel Anderson	Supervisor, County of San Diego, Second District
Emily Burgueno	Kumeyaay Diegueño Land Conservancy
Phil Ortiz	City of El Cajon

Staff Members Present

Julia Richards	Executive Officer
Wendell Taper	Associate Governmental Program Analyst
Dustin Harrison	Environmental Scientist
Hayley Peterson	Deputy Attorney General

Item 2. Approval of Minutes

Elsa Saxod moved for approval of **September 18, 2024**, minutes and Raul Campillo seconded. Roll Call: Ayes: Ben Clay, Ruth Hayward, Andrea Scharffer, Christian Beltran, Lisa Adams, Ray Lennox, Glen Lubcke, Cody Petterson, Dr. Jennifer Campbell, Raul Campillo, Dustin Trotter, Elsa Saxod (12-0-0)

Item 3. Public Comment (*INFORMATIONAL*)

Ben Clay welcomed Department of Finance Christian Beltran and asked if there were any comments. Julia Richards responded that the Conservancy has not received any written comments.

Ben Clay mentioned the partnership with the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation, San Diego Fire Rescue Foundation and the Lifeguard Service of city of San Diego, which is part of the Fire Department. They were thankful to receive drysuits and other lifesaving gear. The Conservancy is also working with the city of Imperial Beach to purchase similar equipment. It helps them perform their job.

There was also a fire by San Diego State University. The reason he mentioned that is the palm trees need to be removed in order to reduce the fire risk. That was private property, and the understory went up in flames. Another foam spray helps suppress fires and embers from spreading. He suspects it helps.

Item 4. Chairperson's and Governing Board Members' Report (INFORMATIONAL)

Item 5. Deputy Attorney General Report (INFORMATIONAL/ACTION)

Hayley Peterson, nothing to report. The FPPC report deadline has been set.

Julia Richards replied she will send an email out but was surprised that most board members submitted their reports early.

Item 6. Health and Safety Report (INFORMATIONAL)

No Report

Item 7. Election of Officers (ACTION)

Julia Richards The Conservancy's last election of officers was held in March 2023 and it's that time again. To explain to the Board Members who have not been through this process, I will turn it over to Deputy Attorney General, Hayley Peterson.

Hayley Peterson thanked Chair Clay and members of the Conservancy Board. Under Section 32636 of the San Diego River Conservancy Act, the Governing Board is required to elect from its members a Chairperson and Vice Chair. The term for each office is 2 years and the Conservancy's positions are up for election. The elected person may serve more than one term.

Elsa Saxod nominated Ben Clay for Chair and Raul Campillo for Vice Chair. She mentioned the Conservancy's last Vice Chair, Ruth Hayward, decided not to continue as Vice Chair.

Ben Clay took this moment to thank Ruth Hayward. She is a senior member and has been invaluable in terms of counseling not only to himself, but also to Julia on the history of the area because she grew up here and was an engineer with General Dynamics. They would compare stories, and she would provide guidance on items that have come up particularly in terms of directing the Conservancy. He thanked her for all her service. Although she will not be Vice Chair, she will stay on the Board.

Ruth Hayward stated she's really old. She thanked Chair Clay and joked she was born before California was a state.

Julia Richards thanked Ruth for all her help editing Conservancy's documents to make them look more professional. Julia asked for a round of applause.

Dustin Trotter moved for election of officers, minutes and **Cody Petterson** seconded. **Roll Call: Ayes: Ben Clay, Ruth Hayward, Andrea Scharffer, Christian Beltran, Lisa Adams, Ray Lennox, Glen Lubcke, Cody Petterson, Dr. Jennifer Campbell, Raul Campillo, Dustin Trotter, Elsa Saxod (12-0-0)**

Item 8. Overview of Tijuana Estuary's Plants and Animals (*INFORMATIONAL*)

Julia Richards thanked Chair Clay. The Tijuana River Estuary is a coastal wetland at the mouth of the Tijuana River in San Diego County, bordering Tijuana, Mexico. It covers approximately 2,500 acres and is one of the few remaining salt marshes in southern California. Many migratory birds and native species rely on the estuary as an essential breeding, feeding and nesting habitat. This location is under the path of the Pacific Flyway.

Julia introduced Dr. Jeff Crooks, Research Coordinator for the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve and the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association who will provide a presentation on this item.

Dr. Jeff Crooks thanked Julia for the introduction. He provided a brief overview and specifics of their program. Afterwards, he will be happy to answer any questions. They are part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System which is established by the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, a federal legislation between NOAA and California State Parks. The Non-profit he works for, Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association, is involved heavily down there as is the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge which is also a part of the Research Reserve. There are 30 of these reserves around the country including Alaska, Puerto Rico and one planned to be established in the Virgin Islands. These serve as living labs, places where research and science can be done to inform management of the coastal zone through such things as education, training, outreach and decision making, and on-the-ground stewardship.

The Tijuana River Watershed is about 1,700 square miles while $\frac{3}{4}$ is in Mexico. The Lower part of the Tijuana River Valley is in the United States. Most of it is in public ownership, County Parks, US Fish and Wildlife Service and State Parks. Of course, you can't talk about the Tijuana River without the pollution coming down.

The water quality of southern California systems are Mediterranean climates with warm dry summers and cool wet winters, although this winter, not so wet. They understand how these systems in southern California work. Typically, there is no year-round streams that flow down to the coast. They are intermittent streams associated with rainfall and a river flow. After the rain, and especially the dry summer months, the riverbed is dry. The San Diego River has a long record while the Tijuana River has a record of almost 100 years. The percentage of the days of the year with flow was shown as a graph. Some years it flowed year-round, but most of the time it was fairly dry. That shaped the nature of these systems because historically these systems were dry alluvial scrub with willows but not willow forests like there are now.

There is a relationship between the amount of water and the ecosystems. In the Tijuana River changes in the early 1980 showed perennial streams which are year-round flow. This dramatically changed the ecosystem and was converted from dry scrubby habitat to riparian forest which is there today. So, what caused these changes?

The way water is dealt with on both sides of the border influences that. The city of Tijuana started to grow, and the Colorado River aqueduct formed. Tijuana received additional sources of water inevitably running downhill causing year-round flows. By the 1990's the sewage infrastructure was built. Within the last few years, the sewage infrastructure has become compromised leading to more instream flows and trash.

The sediment management problems include eroded slopes, vegetation cut down and large volumes of sediment pouring into the southern part of the reserve. This has changed the estuary. Historic salt marshes have been buried in sediment and converted to upland habitat. In the norther part, there is a new wetland that has formed but historically it was deeper. In general, there is a dramatic loss of salt marshes particularly in the southern part near the border.

There was a loss of tidal prism. Every 6 hours the estuary fills with sediment brought in by the tide essentially lowering the volume of water by an estimated 70-80%. The function of the ecosystem related to circulation has changed, leading to increased risk of river mouth closure associated with El Niño events.

The ridgeway rail population was reduced and the 2016 El Niño storms showed a dramatic change in condition. Data loggers have been out there since 1996. Hypoxia or low oxygen levels resulted in fish kills. In September, the water treatment plant was fixed, thus decreasing the flows and showing recovery of the system. Now the flows are at 10-20 million gallons a day instead of 50-70 million gallons. Days-long period of low oxygen has been decreased, and biota is responding positively.

They do research and monitoring to track what is going on there. Their partners are from UC Santa Barbara, Scripps and SDSU. Big projects support repair and upgrading infrastructure on both sides of the border. They want to decrease the amount of flows. Whatever goes into the plant goes through the ocean outfall; however, whatever doesn't go through the treatment plant ends up directly in the estuary.

Tijuana Estuary Tidal Restoration Program (TETRP) began in the late 1980's as an effort to restore the tides recognizing this functional goal of increasing tidal action. The project is supposed to increase tidal prism by 2 million cubic feet and restore about 82 acres of wetland. A map of the footprint was shown. Funding from the State Coastal Conservancy has supported close to \$30 million with implementation starting next year. They have an EIR/EIS and they are going through final design and engineering permitting while working closely with State Parks. Most of it is in Border Field State Park and he hopes it will get done in the next couple of years. He asked the Board for questions.

Ben Clay mentioned this is one of the toughest issues facing San Diego. At the last meeting, the Conservancy heard about the aerosols near the border such as at Imperial Beach. It is hazardous, including the water. He noticed how Mexico is entitled to water from the Colorado River. In the past, most of the water was for the farmers. As Tijuana's population began to grow, the water was diverted to the city of Tijuana. He asked how we should deal with this.

Dr. Jeff Crooks responded moving water around is important. There is less thought about where that water ends up. Because of the sewage issues and poor water quality from runoff called "urban drool," the system has changed. The riparian forest fueled by additional water has altered the original native habitat. In terms of their restoration project, it will have water quality benefits. That's what wetlands do in addition to providing habitat. The added benefit will increase export of sediments.

Cody Petterson asked about potential market solutions of extracting sand such as economic benefits of cement or rock crushing.

Dr. Jeff Crooks stated it has been part of the consideration. The sediment capture basin that State Parks operates at Border Field State Parks catches about 60,000 cubic yards of sediment a year. The initial thought would be to defray some of the costs, but it hasn't panned out as most had hoped. The course stuff is what people want, but it drops out quickly leaving the fine-grained material which holds onto more contaminants.

Gary Strawn asked about the impacts of sea level rise on long-range plans.

Dr. Jeff Crooks replied, looking back at the planning documents which started in the late 1980's early 90's, they were already talking about this back then. What's interesting is the river mouth closures were associated with El

Niño events. Since El Niño water is warmer, it takes up more space. During those events, they saw the sea level rise about a foot above normal. In some ways it is a preview of everyday conditions coming in the next decades.

Ben Clay thanked Dr. Crooks and asked if every year we will need to dredge. If the IBWC gets fixed, does that take the pressure off?

Dr. Jeff Crooks noted some smaller systems naturally close on their own. So, closure is not the problem. When combined with contamination it becomes more of an issue. Tijuana is one of the few examples left of intact river mouths. The goal is to get the estuary to do the work and not have to dredge it out. Reducing the flow will help. In the past Tijuana was the reference site for the Salt Marsh San Dieguito Lagoon Mitigation Project, representing a comparison of estuarine systems. There needs to be a segregated storm system and sewer system. In the future, water will be too expensive to flow out without being reused.

Cody Petterson mentioned potential acquisition opportunities in that area with partners.

Item 9. 2024 Climate Bond – Proposition 4 (INFORMATIONAL/ACTION)

Julia Richards thanked Chair Clay.

On November 5, 2024, the voters approved “The Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024.” This is Proposition 4 which is also referred to as the 2024 Climate Bond. This voter-approved initiative underscores California’s commitment to building a resilient future and to help reduce the potential risk and intensity of wildfires. The bond also supports fulfilling the Conservancy’s mission to conserve land and protect native species, habitat and other valuable resources.

The Conservancy was allocated \$73.5 million. This breaks down into two pots of money: \$25.5 M for wildfire prevention, including reducing community wildfire risk and restoring the health and resilience of forests and landscapes. Then there is \$48 M to reduce the risks of climate change impacts upon communities, fish and wildlife, natural resources, and increase public access.

Round 1 will have \$11 million available for grants. Specifically, \$3M for wildfire and forest resilience and \$8M for nature-based solutions, protecting biodiversity and improving public access to public lands. The Conservancy has been contacted by several organizations and has begun outreach. Conservancy staff plans to meet with over 25 groups including governments and non-profit organizations in the Conservancy’s service areas. Engagement with communities will occur through meetings and online workshops. Eligible entities for the grant program include Tribal, local, state and federal governments as well as non-profit organizations.

Requirements from the bond language for the Conservancy’s allocations are as follows: 0.75% for Statewide bond costs, 7% for Program delivery/administrative support, 10% for Severely Disadvantaged Communities, 40% for Disadvantaged Communities and vulnerable populations.

“Disadvantaged community” is a community with a median household income less than \$57,000. A “severely disadvantaged community” is a community with a median household income less than \$44,000. And a “vulnerable population” is a subgroup of population within California which most suffer from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens. These burdens include poverty, high unemployment, air and water pollution, and the presence of hazardous waste as well as high incidence of asthma and heart disease.

Under the Conservancy’s grant program, projects must address the most critical statewide needs for public funding. Priorities include Conservation of wildlife and native habitat, supports adopted state plans and priorities, and assists historically underfunded communities. Project types include land conservation, resource protection,

wildfire preparedness, recreation including public access and water supply and flood management.

Sample restoration projects include control of erosion, stormwater capture, treatment, reuse, and storage, or to otherwise reduce stormwater pollution, the control and elimination of invasive species and harmful algal blooms and planting of native species, removal of waste and debris, prescribed burning and other fuel hazard reduction measures. Fencing out threats to existing or restored natural resources. And finally, improving instream, riparian, floodplain, or wetland habitat conditions.

The Conservancy is reviewing current grant guidelines and will hold workshops in February and March. Information received during outreach may be used to update the guidelines. Notice of funding availability (NOFA) to be posted online in February 2025 and Concept Proposals are due by May 30th. Full applications are due in the summer of 2025 by invitation only. These asterisks indicate tentative dates depending on guidance from the Natural Resources Agency, the Legislature and the Governor's Office.

Future grant rounds for the Conservancy's grant program plans to roll out approximately \$11 million every other year for 10 years. Notices and key action dates will be posted on the Conservancy's website. The amount of funds available depend upon the amount appropriated to the Conservancy each year. The amount awarded will depend on the quality of the proposed projects submitted.

The Conservancy will be reaching out to many organizations including Native American tribes. The Conservancy is proud to have been allocated this money and wants to make sure money is invested in restoration and nature-based solutions.

Ben Clay asked the Department of Finance how the state budget is looking. Are any of the bond funds at risk?

Christian Beltran responded through the governors briefing it is important to practice fiscal constraints at this time. They want to keep things tight, and they are doing the best they can with the resources they have. The funds are approved by the state of California and should not be impacted by federal actions.

Andrea Scharffer commented keep running everything through Agency and keep doing what you're doing, including cash flow projections. They will let us know if anything changes.

Item 10. Conservancy Reports: 2023-2024 Legislative Report and 2025 Annual Report (*INFORMATIONAL*)

Julia Richards thanked Chair Clay.

The San Diego River Conservancy Act requires the Conservancy to submit a written report to the Legislature on the status of all projects by strategic program areas. In addition, the Conservancy prepared an annual report looking forward into the calendar year 2025. Reports are included in the board material and will be posted to the Conservancy's website.

Dustin Harrison, Senior Environmental Scientist Specialist, will provide an overview of these two reports.

Dustin Harrison thanked Julia. For the Legislative Report 2023-2024 the San Diego River Conservancy's legislative report covers investments from calendar years 2023 and 2024.

\$51.3 million supported the implementation of several projects throughout the Conservancy's service areas.

The funding amount by strategic program areas are as follows: \$3.1 million for Land Conservation, \$6 million for Recreation and Education, \$28.4 million for Natural Resources, \$3.1 million for Cultural Resources, \$8.6 million for Water Quality Improvements, and \$2.1 million for Public Outreach.

The pie chart represents approximately \$51 million in investments during 2023-2024: The majority of grant funding, or 55% was awarded for natural resources related projects, which focused on wildfire and forest climate resilience, including invasive non-native plant removal projects. This is followed by 17% investments for water quality enhancements and 12% for recreational improvements.

A map of project locations color-coded by program area was shown. Although most of the projects were implemented in the San Diego River watershed, 13 projects were located in the neighboring Sweetwater, Otay and Tijuana River watersheds.

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation is in the process of acquiring 108 acres of land for conservation purposes to support Program 1. The first acquisition of 55 acres was completed in December 2024 and the Foundation is working with willing sellers to secure an additional 53 acres in 2025.

San Diego State University improved recreational facilities at the River Park in Mission Valley, including the construction of gender-neutral restrooms shown on the left and installation of 11 interpretive signs inspired by Kumeyaay culture and other design elements on the right.

In 2023, the Conservancy provided grant funds to manage approximately 2,000 acres of various vegetation treatment activities in the County of San Diego. Treatments conducted by the Cleveland National Forest, County Parks, and several Fire Safe Councils included off-site biomass removal, pile burning, chipping, and thinning.

Additionally, Barona Band of Mission Indians and City of Santee grant awards included brush rigs to access remote offroad areas in the rural and wildland urban interface areas of San Diego.

Lastly, the city of El Cajon was awarded funds and restored a section of Broadway Creek by stabilizing the channel and installing native vegetation. Phase B is underway and includes the installation of a box culvert, bank stabilization and planting native vegetation.

The Annual Workplan for 2025 shows the amount awarded for active projects by program area and organizational type. Natural Resources projects received the majority of funding totaling just under \$16 million, with the majority awarded to non-profit organizations.

County Parks and Rec received \$4.5 million to enhance recreational facilities at Lindo Lake County Park, Cactus County Park and the Flume Trail.

A special shout out to San Diego Regional Fire Foundation for helping disseminate funds to various Fire Departments and Fire Safe Councils in San Diego County. They are the recipient of more than \$3 million over the last couple years for wildfire and forest resilience projects.

In addition, water quality improvements in El Cajon include installation of 70 trash full capture devices at 70 locations. And finally, Cleveland National Forest received \$1.2 million for wildfire equipment, PPE and communications devices. The Conservancy looks forward to furthering the goals and increasing the beneficial impacts local entities have, especially with the Climate Bond allocation.

Ben Clay talked about the rains last year and the amount of water rushing down. He went to San Diego State University's new Snapdragon Stadium and witnessed no flooding. He said it used to be called Lake Qualcomm. He invited others to go down and see the park for themselves. He also felt large water storage tanks at Three Sisters Falls Trailhead (Cha' Chaany Hamuk) were a good idea getting folks ready for future fires.

Cody Petterson given the current events, it's incredible all these organizations are turning into Fire Safe Councils. They are adapting to the ecosystems society is faced with.

Item 11. Executive Officer's Report (*INFORMATIONAL/ACTION*)

Julia Richards announced there are just a few more items.

The Conservancy is proud to partner with Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation and City of San Diego to conserve more land for the regional park.

In addition to the 108 acres funded by the Conservancy, Councilmember Raul Campillo noted on social media, the City of San Diego has acquired 320 acres of land in this park since 2020. The Conservancy applauds the efforts by the City of San Diego and the Foundation to protect these native habitats.

Ben Clay thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Item 12. Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Board meeting will be held Wednesday, March 19, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Item 13. Adjournment

Ben Clay adjourned the meeting at 2:12 pm

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 3

SUBJECT: **PUBLIC COMMENT (*INFORMATIONAL*)**

PURPOSE: Any person may address the Governing Board at this time regarding any matter within the Board's authority. Presentations will be limited to three minutes for individuals and five minutes for representatives of organizations. Submission of information in writing is encouraged. The Board is prohibited by law from taking any action on matters that are discussed that are not on the agenda; no adverse conclusions should be drawn by the Board's not responding to such matters or public comments.

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 4

SUBJECT: **CHAIRPERSON'S AND GOVERNING BOARD
MEMBERS' REPORTS (*INFORMATIONAL/ACTION*)**

PURPOSE: These items are for Board discussion only and the Board will take no formal action.

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 5

SUBJECT: DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL REPORT
(INFORMATIONAL/ACTION)

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 6

SUBJECT: HEALTH AND SAFETY (*INFORMATIONAL*)

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 7

SUBJECT: **SAN DIEGO REGIONAL FIRE FOUNDATION'S
PROPOSAL FOR COMMUNITY BASED FIRE
PREPAREDNESS AND PREVENTION FOR 2025
(ACTION)**

The San Diego Regional Fire Foundation, in collaboration with the local Fire Safe Councils and Chula Vista Fire Department, propose to implement fuel reduction activities in the County of San Diego. The request for funding consists of three main components for the proposed project:

1. Support 19 Fire Safe Councils for 2025.
2. The Wynola Estates Fire Safe Council seeks additional funds to create and maintain defensible space on approximately 144 acres and create a new evacuation route.
3. The removal of hazardous fuels on approximately 17 acres within the City of Chula Vista.

Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$877,807 from Proposition 68.

Presentation:

Joan Jones, Executive Director, San Diego Regional Fire Foundation
Frank Ault, Board Chairman, San Diego Regional Fire Foundation

Recommendation: Approve Resolution No. 25-01

Resolution No: 25-01

**RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF
THE SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY**

**AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO GRANT \$877,807.00 FROM PROPOSITION
68 TO SUPPORT 19 LOCAL FIRE SAFE COUNCILS AND REDUCE FLAMMABLE FUEL
LOADS ON 144 ACRES IN WYNOLA AND ON 17 ACRES IN THE CITY OF CHULA VISTA**

WHEREAS, the mission of the San Diego River Conservancy is to further the goals of its enabling legislation by conserving and restoring the lands and waters of the San Diego River watershed and the and the San Diego Rivers Watershed Consortium area; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of California created the San Diego River Conservancy for the purposes of acquiring, conserving, restoring and managing public lands; and

WHEREAS, Proposition 68 was approved by voters on June 5, 2018 for the purposes of creation and rehabilitation of state and local parks, natural resources protection projects, climate adaptation projects, water quality and supply projects, and flood protection projects; and

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy was allocated \$12,000,000 under Proposition 68, "the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018," (Public Resources Code section 80000 et seq.) with funds made available by Public Resources Code section 80110, subdivisions (b)(5); and

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of this grant program, establishing necessary procedures and guidelines in accordance with statewide priorities and plans; and

WHEREAS, San Diego Regional Fire Foundation applied to the San Diego River Conservancy for a grant requesting funding for the following:

- Support local Fire Safe Councils
- Hazardous fuel reduction on approximately 144 acres in Wynola Estates
- Hazardous fuel reduction on approximately 17 acres in the City of Chula Vista

Hereinafter referred to as the "Project."

WHEREAS, this Project is consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, Program 3 Preserve and Restore Natural Resources and Program 6 Expand the Organization's Capacity and Public Outreach.

WHEREAS, San Diego River Conservancy staff have reviewed the grant application, met with the applicant and recommends funding in the amount of \$877,807.00 to implement the Project; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board, based on the accompanying staff report:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of San Diego River Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code, Division 22.9, [Sections 32630-32659.9])
2. The San Diego River Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$877,807.00 (Eight

Hundred Seventy-Seven Thousand Eight Hundred and Seven Dollars) from Proposition 68 grant funds to San Diego Regional Fire Foundation to implement the Project.

3. The proposed Project is consistent with the purposes and intent of Proposition 68.
4. Appoints the Executive Officer, or her designee, as an agent to execute all agreements, grants, sub-contracts and other documents needed for the completion of the Project.
5. Prior to the disbursement of funds, the County shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a scope of work, budget and schedule.

Approved and adopted on March 21, 2025. I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution Number 25-01 was duly adopted by the San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: _____

Nays: _____

Absent: _____

 Julia L. Richards
 Executive Officer

San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board Members Roll Call Vote

Name	Ayes	Noes	Abstained
CNRA: Andrea Scharffer			
DOF: Stephen Benson			
CADFW: Glen Lubcke			
Dr. Jennifer Campbell, SD Mayor Designee			
Joel Anderson, County Supervisor			
Raul Campillo, Vice Chair			
Ben Clay, Chair			
Ruth Hayward			
J. Cody Petterson			
Emily Burgueno			
Elsa Saxod			
DPR Designee, Ray Lennox			
DPR Designee, Nicole Van Doren			
Dustin Trotter			
Phil Ortiz			

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
SDRC Resolution 25-01
March 21, 2025

DIRECTED GRANT PROGRAM

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to provide up to \$877,807.00 to the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation (SDRFF) for 2025 Community Based Fire Preparedness and Prevention to support local Fire Safe Councils (FSCs) and conduct critical fuels mitigation work on approximately 144 acres in Wynola Estates and 17 acres in the City of Chula Vista adjacent to residents and open space areas.

LOCATION: Wynola Estates is a residential neighborhood located near Julian at the headwaters of the San Diego River in the County of San Diego surrounded by natural areas including the Cleveland National Forest to the west and Santa Ysabel Preserve East to the north along State Route 78. The Fire Safe Councils are within the Conservancy's service areas. The project land located in the City of Chula Vista is near the Sweetwater River.

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS: Staff recommends that the San Diego River Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to the San Diego River Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code, § 32630 et seq.):

The San Diego River Conservancy (Conservancy) hereby authorizes the disbursement of funding for projects focused on enhancing river parkways, protecting resources, restoring native habitat and fire protection and suppression, specifically as follows:

To the San Diego Regional Fire Foundation, the sum of \$877,807.00
(Eight Hundred Seventy-Seven Thousand Eight Hundred and Seven Dollars) to use as follows:

- Support local Fire Safe Councils
- Hazardous fuel reduction on approximately 144 acres in Wynola Estates
- Hazardous fuel reduction on approximately 17 acres in the City of Chula Vista

Hereinafter referred to as the "Project."

For the purposes of this report, we will discuss each of the 3 components separately.

If the proposed Project is approved, the grantee shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a scope of work, budget and schedule. The names and qualifications of any contractors retained in carrying out the project will be provided.

Staff further recommend that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

Based on the staff report and attached exhibits, the San Diego River Conservancy hereby finds that:

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the San Diego River Conservancy Act, including Section 32649.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Guidelines for the Conservancy's Directed Grant program.
3. The proposed Project is consistent with Proposition 68 (Budget Act of 2023).

BACKGROUND:

SDRFF is a non-profit organization that aims to strengthen the fire and emergency services system in San Diego County and protect lives, property, and the environment. For over 30 years, it has provided resources through its grant programs to over 40 fire departments, including about 250 fire stations and over 40 fire safe councils (FSCs). The FSCs, Wynola Estates, and Chula Vista Fire Department worked together with SDRFF to design this proposed Project and are requesting additional support to carry out their missions and protect lives and property from catastrophic wildfires.

The majority of eastern San Diego County is rural wildland urban interface (WUI) which is most at risk for property loss from major wildfires. The less populated WUI areas are where wildfires first reach urban areas, making fire departments the first line of defense against encroaching wildfires. For example, to date in 2025, two fires broke out and burned more than 6,000 acres combined: a small brush fire in Julian and the Border 2 Fire on Otay Mountain near Chula Vista. Over 1,000 personnel, 3 water tenders, 39 hand crews and 16 engines were quickly deployed to contain these fires.

The Chula Vista Fire Department has a fuels crew that removes hazardous fuels to minimize the threat of wildfires in high wildfire risk WUI and densely populated areas. This work removes flammable vegetation, combustible growth and creates defensible space around structures which is a high priority.

PROJECT NEED:

Many areas in the watersheds of the San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay and Tijuana Rivers are at high risk of fire per CAL FIRE's fire threat severity map because of overgrown, dead or dry vegetation. Communities that adapt to higher risk standards with home hardening measures and activities to reduce vegetation and fuel sources can limit damage, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

The proposed Project is a critical measure in establishing defensible space around residential homes in Chula Vista and Wynola Estates as well as supporting vulnerable neighborhoods by supporting FSCs. Additionally, defensible space provides more areas for firefighters to position themselves and their equipment in order to defend homes from wildfire.

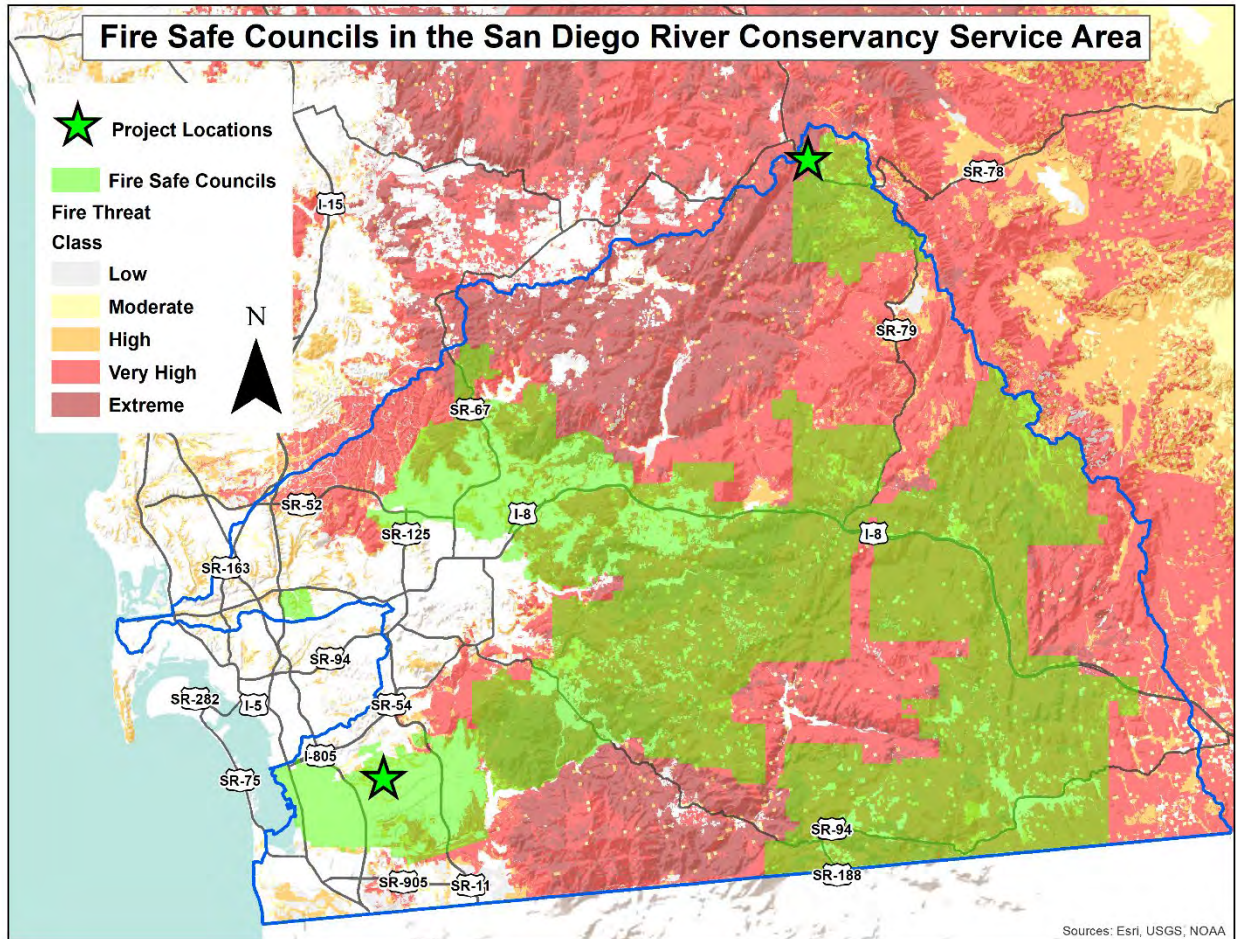
SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The proposed Project will increase wildfire preparedness and prevention in communities within the watersheds of the San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay and Tijuana Rivers.

The proposed project consists of three components:

- Support local FSCs
- Reduce hazardous fuel on approximately 144 acres in Wynola Estates
- Reduce hazardous fuel on approximately 17 acres within the City of Chula Vista



Map 1. San Diego Regional Fire Foundation Project Sites (2025): Local Fire Safe Councils, Wynola Estates and City of Chula Vista overlaid with Very High and Extreme Fire Threats

Fire Safe Council component

The SDRFF manages an annual grant program, Project SAFE, in which FSCs request funding, which is often the only funding source many of these FSCs receive as they are volunteers who lack the time and expertise to write grants.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY



Image 1. SAFE Grant Program Photo 2024

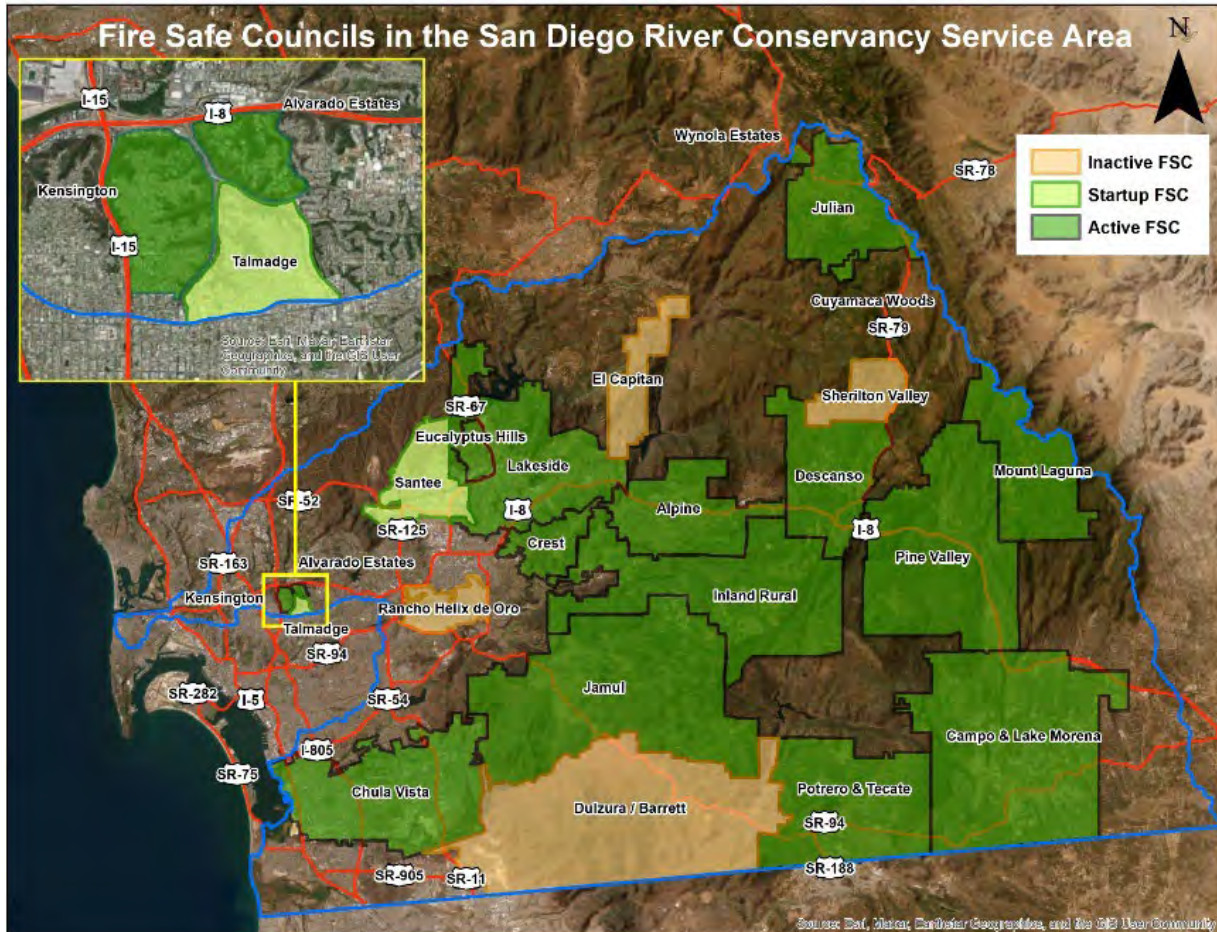
These FSCs conduct activities which include hazardous fuels reduction such as establishing and maintaining fuel breaks, defensible space clearing, chipping, and conducting wildfire preparedness, prevention and safety education in their local communities.

As shown in the below schematic, these committed FSC volunteers invested 14,000 hours – valued at \$500,000 - and provided wildfire preparedness and prevention programs in 2023. Furthermore, these services are provided to disadvantaged residents including those with low income, elderly, veterans, and people with disabilities.



SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

The proposed Project requests \$237,000 for local FSCs, an average of \$12,500 each. The volunteer FSCs in the Conservancy's service areas include but are not limited to Alpine/Viejas, Alvarado Estates, Campo/Lake Morena, Chula Vista, Crest, Cuyamaca Woods, Descanso, Eucalyptus Hills, Inland Rural, Jamul, Julian, Kensington, Lakeside, Mt. Laguna, Pine Valley, Potrero/Tecate and Wynola Estates with startups in Santee and Talmadge, as seen on the map below.



Map 2. Fire Safe Councils

Wynola Estates component

The Wynola Estates Fire Safe Council (WEFSC), located in rural east San Diego County, completed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan in 2024, emphasizing fuel treatment and creating a buffer between the community and the dense vegetation surrounding it. The WEFSC knows the importance of reducing hazardous fuel loads including dead, dying, and diseased trees, especially near steep terrain in this back country area. Since residents are mostly elderly, they cannot perform vegetation work or are on fixed incomes. The area has high fire risk due to vegetation on steep slopes located next to Inaja Memorial in the Cleveland National Forest. The proposed Project will help protect the headwaters of the San Diego River and help prevent wildfire ignitions from spreading.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

In the past, areas near Wynola Estates have experienced devastating wildfires and extensive damage. Recognizing the grave wildfire threat, a majority of Wynola Estates residents have created a 100' defensible space around their homes over the past few years. Improving defensible space around structures reduces the risk and intensity of flames, radiant heat, and embers from wildfire spreading to other areas.

Previously, the Conservancy awarded a \$156,905 grant plus \$15,690 was provided from the Wynola Water District to the SDRFF for Wynola Estates Phase 1 to create a 300' shaded fuel break on approximately 36 acres along the Wynola Estates perimeter.

The proposed project requests \$481,310 for Wynola Estates Phase 2. Phase 2 will remove an additional 144 acres of hazardous vegetation throughout the community, creating defensible space. Vegetation management will be conducted according to Cal Fire standards. Chipped vegetation will be hauled to Julian Farm & Orchard located directly east of Wynola Estates.

The Conservancy staff reviewed permit compliance, and SDRFF and the WEFSC obtained written permission from individual landowners to access private property to remove hazardous fuels.



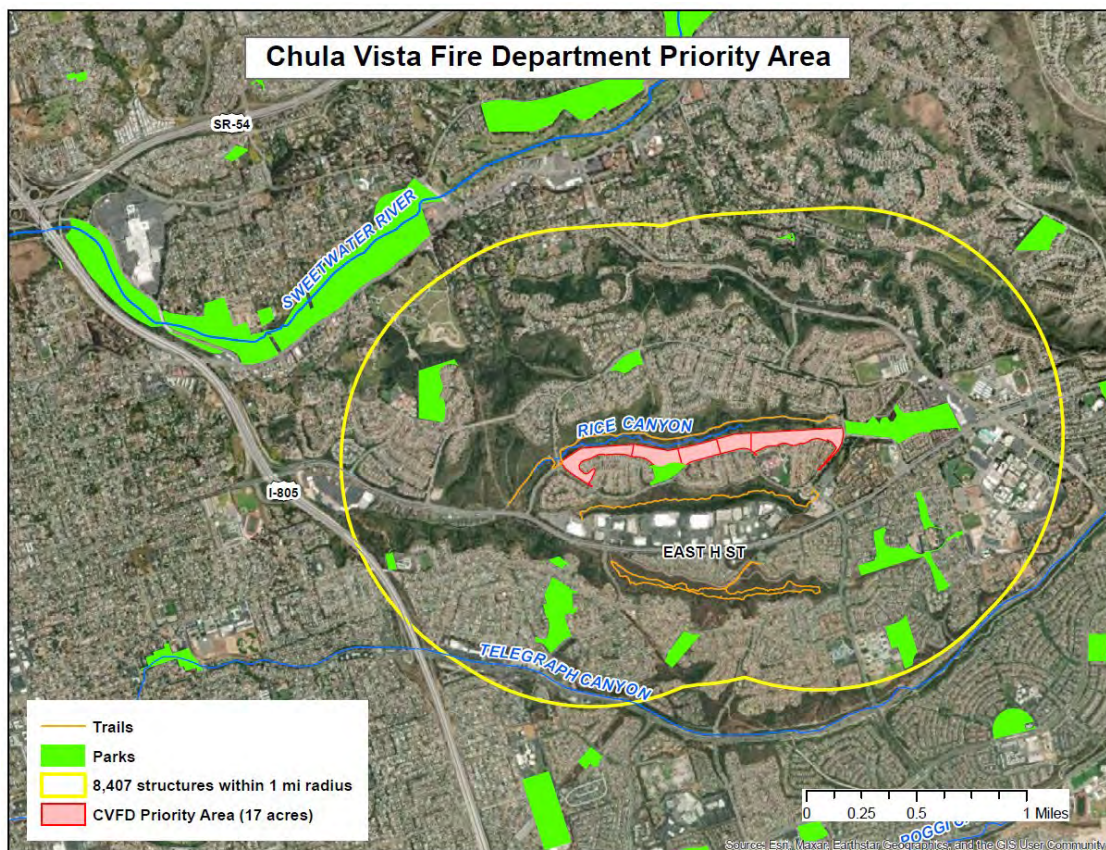
Wynola Estates currently has only two roads exiting the community to Highway 78. If blocked by wildfire, there is no way for residents to get out. This request includes \$85,000 to construct a 24' wide evacuation safety road on the southeast edge of the community that would tie into roads on the adjacent Julian Farm & Orchard to reach Highway 78. Fire engines could also use this road to access the community. The property owners along the evacuation road have provided approval to access their properties. Cal Fire has provided a letter of support for both the Wynola Estates Fuels Mitigation and evacuation road.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Chula Vista Fuels Mitigation component

Chula Vista Fire Department (CVFD) Fuels Crew requests \$45,000 to support their brush management efforts. The CVFD will contribute \$90,000 (67%) of the total project cost (\$135,000). Over 45 acres within Rice Canyon have been identified as the CVFD's top priority needing hazardous fuel reduction and they have targeted 17 acres on the northern-facing slope of the canyon, located within 100 feet of homes. There are 8,407 structures within a 1-mile radius of Rice Canyon.

Rice Canyon in Chula Vista is a critical area that requires hazardous fuel reduction to address the increasing threat of wildfires. As one of the city's largest canyons and in its most densely populated areas, Rice Canyon's proximity to residential neighborhoods, schools, and businesses, along with its ecological significance, makes mitigation efforts essential for protecting lives, property, and natural resources. Additionally, the seasonal creek in Rice Canyon contributes significantly to the Sweetwater River. Thus, the health and fire resilience of Rice Canyon can greatly impact the Sweetwater River. The Fuels Crew will utilize the chipper and skid steer, which were partially funded by the Conservancy last year, thereby reducing the need for outside contractor fees.



Map 4. Target Acreage in Rice Canyon, City of Chula Vista

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

DELIVERABLES:

- Semi-annual progress reports with photo documentation of before and after implementation.
- Accounting of vegetation treatment: Acres of hazardous fuels removed, or alternatively volume (cubic feet) of chipped vegetation, fuel/brush cleared, and weight (tons) of vegetation removed, or other measures agreed upon.
- Accounting of FSC community wildfire education and preparedness events, address signs, home hardening programs or other measures agreed upon.
- Final Report.

Table 1. Estimated Budget and Anticipated Schedule

Task #	Description	Amount	Schedule
1. Fire Safe Councils: 2025	Local Fire Safe Councils	\$237,000	Throughout term of agreement
2. Wynola Estates	Hazardous fuels reduction and new evacuation route	\$481,310	Throughout term of agreement
3. Chula Vista Fire Department	Hazardous fuels reduction within the City of Chula Vista	\$45,000	Throughout term of agreement
4. Program Administration and Management	Oversight, management and administration of Project including invoice preparation, reporting and communications	\$114,497	Throughout term of agreement
TOTAL		\$877,807	

PROJECT FINANCING: The total Project amount is \$1,935,873. Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$877,807 to implement the proposed Project. The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this project is Proposition 68.

LEVERAGED FUNDING: The Sunrise Power Link will provide \$472,000 of funding to FSCs. In-Kind Contributions of \$27,000 include EDCO providing dumpsters for FSC community clean up events and San Diego County providing chipping services for FSCs. The Wynola Water District will provide \$24,066 for hazardous fuels reduction. Wynola Estates FSC will invest 1,150 hours of volunteer labor valued at \$45,000 (\$39/hour) over the grant period to conduct project communication, obtain project authorizations, participate in meetings, and oversee the fuels reduction work. The Fire Safe Councils will contribute approximately 10,250 hours of volunteer labor valued at \$400,000 and Chula Vista Fire Department will provide an in-kind match of \$90,000.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Table 2. Leveraged Funds

Task / Description	Request to the Conservancy	Matching & In-Kind Contributions	Volunteer Hours (\$39/hour)	Project Cost
1. Fire Safe Council Support 2025	\$237,000	\$499,000	\$400,000	\$1,136,000
2. Wynola Estates Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project	\$481,310	\$24,066	\$45,000	\$550,376
3. Chula Vista Fire Department Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project I	\$45,000	\$90,000	\$0	\$135,000
4. Program Administration and Management (15%)	\$114,497	\$0	\$0	\$114,497
TOTALS	\$877,807	\$613,066	\$445,000	\$1,935,873

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION: This Project would be undertaken consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation (Public Resources Code, §§ 32630-32659.9).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S): The Project is consistent with Program 3 Preserve and Restore Natural Resources, and Program 6 Expand the Organization’s Capacity and Public Outreach of the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan Update 2024-2028.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE FUNDING SOURCE: Proposition 68 is for wildfire and climate resilience, watershed protection, natural and cultural resource protection, and community access projects. The funding is immediately available for shovel-ready projects.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE CONSERVANCY’S DIRECTED GRANT PROGRAM:

This Project achieves one or more of the purposes:

- Located in the San Diego River watershed
- Protecting resources
- Reducing flood and fire risk

ALIGNMENT WITH PLANS AND PRIORITIES

A. California Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan

Supports the goals of fuel reduction, vegetation management, defensible space, and fuel breaks to reduce fire risk.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

B. California Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP)

The Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan emphasize the need for federal, state, and local agencies to work collaboratively with communities in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects and place priority on treatment areas identified by the communities themselves.

C. Safeguarding California Plan–2018 Update California’s Climate Adaptation Strategy

Supports work with local fire agencies to clear vegetation and help people protect their properties.

D. California’s Fourth Climate Change Assessment

Supports local adaptation strategy and resilience, and protection of the state’s most vulnerable populations and communities.

E. State Wildlife Acton Plan

Preventing wildfires is important in protecting the habitats of wildlife.

F. Strategic Fire Plan for California

Goal 5: Integrate fire and fuels management practices with landowner/land manager priorities across all ownerships and jurisdictions.

G. California Natural Resources Agency’s Initiatives.

This project advances the following initiatives:

- Building Climate Resilience
- Expanding Nature-Based Solutions
- Restoring Forest Health for Wildfire and Climate Resilience

H. Conservancy’s Climate Change Policy

Recognize that wildland fires may be a major contributor to atmospheric carbon dioxide and implement fire safety mitigation projects where appropriate; Leverage partnerships and resources with local communities, including government entities and non-profits; Engage local communities through outreach, education, and interpretation, particularly as it relates to long-term stewardship and climate change awareness.

I. Governor’s Executive Orders B-52-18, N-05-19

BENEFITS

These investments aim to reduce the risk and severity of wildfires for residents of San Diego County. For instance, the Cedar Fire in 2003 burned 273,246 acres, destroyed 2,820 buildings, claimed 15 lives, and devastated approximately 209,118 acres (75%) of the San Diego River Watershed, resulting in \$1.3 billion in damages.

A recent example is the Eaton Fire in January 2025, which caused significant destruction in Altadena, destroying 9,000 homes. Any community with substantial wildfire-urban interface (WUI) exposure must take proactive measures to eliminate hazardous wildfire-prone vegetation and establish defensible spaces and hardening

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

homes against flames. The watersheds of San Diego, Sweetwater, Otay, and Tijuana contain notable WUI areas classified as extreme fire danger zones.

Fires in rural or wildland-urban interface areas can easily spread into urban regions, leading to habitat destruction, wildlife fatalities, soil erosion, and adverse effects on air and water quality. By mitigating fire risks, we can protect the valuable resources in watersheds, safeguard wildlife habitats and biodiversity, and ensure that parks, open spaces, trails, and campgrounds remain accessible for the millions of visitors who enjoy them each year. These protective measures will also be extended to the Sweetwater, Otay, and Tijuana River watersheds through Fire Safe Councils.

PROJECT READINESS

There are several existing and start-up FSCs located in the Conservancy's service areas. In addition, EDCO provides at least 10 dumpsters for community hazardous fuel collection and community clean up events. Also, the County of San Diego County's Fire Protection District, Community Risk Reduction Division also provides a chipper at no cost to FSCs.

For the Wynola component, all homeowner site access permissions have been received for the outer perimeter lots, only a few remain outstanding for the interior lots. The applicant selected a contractor for the brush management work in Wynola and received a quote. If the proposed Project is approved, work is expected to commence within a few weeks.

The Chula Vista Fire Department serves a city which lies between the Sweetwater and Otay Rivers and which has many miles of WUI open space areas to the east which are either federally or state owned lands and represent a major wildfire risk with the Santa Ana winds coming from the east, as was experienced recently with the 6,000 acre Border 2 Fire which threatened Chula Vista and resulted in evacuations. The fire department has a hand crew specializing in vegetation fuel management for fire hazards, which helps reduce hazardous fuels loads and promotes healthy landscapes by managing vegetation.

PERMIT COMPLIANCE

Since the roads in Wynola Estates are privately held, any vegetation removal activity must be coordinated with the Wynola Estates HOA. Right of entry or access agreements must be in place prior to starting work. The Chula Vista Fire Department will obtain permits, if required for their fuel reduction project. Fire Safe Councils will assist private property owners by educating and providing chipping services to improve defensible space.

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 8

SUBJECT: **SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY'S ONE WATER
LIVING LEARNING LABORATORY REQUEST
FOR FUNDING (*ACTION*)**

San Diego State University requests supplemental funding associated with the escalated cost, construction of a concrete pad with canopy or roof over the outdoor areas, installation of a security system, and to purchase of several key pieces of equipment needed for basic laboratory functionality, tanks for rainwater/wastewater storage and an equipment shed. Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$600,292 from Proposition 68.

Presentation:

Paul Jackson, Program Manager, Planning Design and Construction,
San Diego State University

Natalie Mladenov, PhD., P.E., Dept. of Civil, Construction, &
Environmental Engineering, San Diego State University

Recommendation: Approve Resolution No. 25-02

Resolution No: 25-02

**RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF
THE SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY**

**AUTHORIZES THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO GRANT \$600,292.00 FROM PROPOSITION
68 TO SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY FOR UNANTICIPATED ESCALATION IN
CONSTRUCTION COSTS, PURCHASE OF LABORATORY EQUIPMENT AND A STORAGE
SHED, INSTALL A SECURITY SYSTEM AND CONSTRUCT AN OUTDOOR-COVERED
DEMONSTRATION AREA FOR THE ONE WATER LIVING LEARNING LABORATORY**

WHEREAS, the mission of the San Diego River Conservancy is to further the goals of its enabling legislation by conserving and restoring the lands and waters of the San Diego River watershed; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of California created the San Diego River Conservancy for the purposes of acquiring, conserving, restoring and managing public lands; and

WHEREAS, Proposition 68 was approved by voters on June 5, 2018, for the purposes of creation and rehabilitation of state and local parks, natural resources protection projects, climate adaptation projects, water quality and supply projects, and flood protection projects, in accordance with statewide priorities, including public benefits, and leveraged funding; and

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy was allocated \$12,000,000 under Proposition 68, "the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018," (Public Resources Code section 80000 et seq.) with funds made available by Public Resources Code section 80110, subdivisions (b)(5); and

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of this grant program, establishing necessary procedures and guidelines in accordance with statewide priorities and plans; and

WHEREAS, on February 7, 2024, by Resolution 24-08 the San Diego River Conservancy awarded San Diego State University \$2,000,000 to construct the One Water Living Learning Laboratory (OWLLL), a water testing laboratory adjacent San Diego State University's Mission Valley Campus; and

WHEREAS, the San Diego State University applied to the San Diego River Conservancy for additional funding for OWLLL due to unanticipated escalation in construction costs, to procure essential laboratory equipment and a shed for safe storage, install a security system, and construct an outdoor covered demonstration area (Project); and

WHEREAS, San Diego River Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$600,292 to implement the Project; and

WHEREAS, this Project is consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, with Program 2 Support and Encourage Recreation and Education, Program 3 Preserve and Restore Natural Resources, Program 5 Enhance Water Quality and Natural Flood Conveyance, and Program 6 Expand the Organization's Capacity and Public Outreach.

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy staff have reviewed the grant application, met with applicant and recommend the Project for approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board, based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, finds:

The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the San Diego River Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code, Sections 32630-32659.9).

The San Diego River Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$600,292 (Six Hundred Thousand Two Hundred and Ninety-Two Dollars and Zero Cents) from Proposition 68 to San Diego State University to implement the Project.

The proposed Project is consistent with the purposes and intent of Proposition 68 and the Conservancy's Directed Grant Program.

Appoints the Executive Officer, or her designee, as an agent to execute all agreements, grants, sub-contracts, and other documents needed for the completion of the Project.

Prior to the disbursement of funds, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a scope of work, budget, and schedule.

Approved and adopted on March 21, 2025. I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution Number 25-02 was duly adopted by the San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: _____

Nays: _____

Absent: _____

Julia L. Richards
Executive Officer

San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board Members Roll Call Vote

Name	Ayes	Noes	Abstained
CNRA: Andrea Scharffer			
DOF: Stephen Benson			
CADFW: Glen Lubcke			
Dr. Jennifer Campbell, SD Mayor Designee			
Joel Anderson, County Supervisor			
Raul Campillo, Vice Chair			
Ben Clay, Chair			
Ruth Hayward			
J. Cody Petterson			
Emily Burgueno			
Elsa Saxod			
DPR Designee, Ray Lennox			
DPR Designee, Nicole Van Doren			
Dustin Trotter			
Phil Ortiz			

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
SDRC Resolution 25-02
March 21, 2025

DIRECTED GRANT PROGRAM

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to provide up to \$600,292.00 to San Diego State University (SDSU) for the One Water Living Learning Laboratory (OWLLL), specifically to cover unanticipated escalation in construction costs, construct outdoor cover demonstration area, purchase of equipment needed for essential laboratory functions, and install a security system.

LOCATION: The proposed lab facility will be located in the southwest corner of SDSU's River Park at Mission Valley in the City of San Diego within walking distance to the San Diego River.

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS: Staff recommends that the San Diego River Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to the San Diego River Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code, § 32630 et seq.):

The San Diego River Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of funding for creation and rehabilitation of state and local parks, natural resources protection projects, climate adaptation projects, water quality and supply projects, and flood protection projects specifically as follows:

To San Diego State University Research Foundation, the sum of \$600,292.00 (Six Hundred Thousand Two Hundred Ninety-Two Dollars and Zero cents) to:

- Construction of an outdoor demonstration area with concrete pad and canopy, procurement of several key pieces of laboratory equipment, an outdoor storage shed and installation of a security system at the OWLLL at the River Park at SDSU Mission Valley (Project).

Before the disbursement of funds, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a scope of work, budget and schedule, and the names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

Based on the staff report and attached exhibits, the San Diego River Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the San Diego River Conservancy Act, including Section 32649.
2. The proposed Project is consistent with the Guidelines for the Conservancy's Directed Grant Program.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

3. The proposed Project is consistent with Proposition 68.

BACKGROUND:

SDSU is committed to establishing the OWLLL to promote education, outreach, training, and research on watersheds and water technologies. The “One Water” concept is the idea that every drop of water is equally valuable, where surface water, stormwater, and wastewater are all essential to mitigating water scarcity, building climate resilience, and supporting critical ecosystems. SDSU will help build water resilience in the San Diego region through water resource education and demonstrations at this OWLLL facility.

Image 1. Schematic of One Water Living Learning Laboratory



The key features of the OWLLL are a laboratory space to conduct basic water quality analyses and to test and launch novel water technologies. OWLLL will provide access points for stormwater sampling and wastewater sampling (with return of wastewater back to the sanitary sewer after sampling or treatment) and an outdoor area for hydrology demonstrations and training activities.

With its strategic siting and access to stormwater and wastewater in the River Park at SDSU Mission Valley, OWLLL will offer unique educational experiences and research on riverine ecosystems, stormwater, wastewater, groundwater, and regional watersheds as well as hands-on training and outreach opportunities.

OWLLL will be in the southwest corner of the River Park at SDSU Mission Valley. It is a high visibility site along River Park Road within 600 feet of the San Diego River and adjacent to a ~20,000 square-foot stormwater treatment basin, which drains River Park Road, the stadium, Innovation District, and western portions of SDSU Mission Valley.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Map 1. Project Area Adjacent to the San Diego River



PROJECT NEED:

Promoting watershed science is essential to highlight the ecosystem services and benefits that watersheds provide. By training a workforce in water quality testing, SDSU can emphasize the urgent need to update and innovate the region's water infrastructure. This is crucial to protect against pollution, monitor water quality, and guard against water scarcity in the San Diego region.

The OWLLL will address the need for hands-on educational, research, and training opportunities focused on riverine and other freshwater resources. It will also highlight the importance of urban waters in San Diego Mediterranean climate. Moreover, the addition of a covered demonstration area and laboratory equipment will enhance the outreach and educational experience for visitors to the lab.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

In 2024, the San Diego River Conservancy awarded a \$2,000,000 grant for the construction, permitting, and below-ground infrastructure of the OWLLL Project. SDSU is now requesting additional funding to address unanticipated increases in construction costs and to install a concrete pad and canopy over the outdoor demonstration area. The inclusion of this covered outdoor demonstration area, along with basic laboratory equipment, will enhance outreach and educational experience for lab visitors.

To fully operationalize the lab, several essential pieces of equipment are needed, including a refrigerator, freezer, biosafety cabinet, furnace, and drying oven for conducting water quality analyses. Additionally, tanks will be required to store rainwater and wastewater, and a shed will be built to securely store equipment used in field studies. A security system will also be installed to protect these assets.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

The proposed Project aims to provide: 1) workforce development and education for undergraduate and graduate students in hydrology, watershed science, water reuse, stormwater management, and water pollution control, and 2) communication with regional and local communities through science and engineering outreach activities for students of all levels (K-12 and beyond), residents, and businesses.

DELIVERABLES:

- Procurement of laboratory equipment, shed and security system
- Outdoor covered demonstration area
- Before and after photo documentation of Project site
- Itemized invoices to the Conservancy including progress reports
- Attending Conservancy Board Meetings, as needed
- Final Project Report

Table 1. Estimated Budget and Other Funding

Task #	Description	Amount Requested	Applicant Funds	Total Costs
	Project management, administration & permits	\$0	\$50,000	\$50,000
Project Implementation & Construction	Overage on Construction costs for OWLLL	\$173,786	\$0	\$173,786
	Interior Lab Equipment	\$288,087	\$60,000	\$348,087
	Outdoor equipment, shed, and tanks	\$34,453	\$0	\$34,453
	Outdoor demonstration area and canopy	\$83,303	\$0	\$83,303
	Miscellaneous (Security System, etc.)	\$20,663	\$0	\$20,663
	TOTAL	\$600,292	\$110,000	\$710,292

PROJECT FINANCING: The total Project amount is \$710,292.00; the Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$600,292 for the implementation of the proposed Project. The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this Project is Proposition 68.

LEVERAGED FUNDING: “In-kind” and matching contributions total \$110,000. Approximately ~\$50,000 will come from SDSU’s Division of Research and Innovation providing \$5,000 each for six faculty members (Mladenov, Kinoshita, Verbyla, Dykstra, Davani, and Biggs) to advise on Project construction. SDSU has also provided course buyouts at ~\$10,000 per semester for two semesters for Dr. Mladenov to represent the water faculty. A new Aqualog fluorometer for training and research on San Diego’s waterways, including Alvarado Creek and the Tijuana River, is expected to be purchased in Spring 2025 costing ~\$60,000. Yearly lease fees due to the city of San Diego will be covered by SDSU.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION: This Project would be undertaken consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Public Resources Code, §§ 32630-32659.9). The One Water facility will "enhance the educational experience... in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources," as described in the San Diego River Conservancy Act.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S): The Project is consistent with Program 3 Preserve and Restore Natural Resources, Program 5 Enhance Water Quality and Natural Flood Conveyance, and Program 6 Expand the Organization's Capacity and Public Outreach of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan Update.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE FUNDING SOURCE: Proposition 68 is for climate resilience, watershed protection, natural resource protection, cultural resource preservation, and community access projects. The funding is immediately available for shovel-ready projects.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE CONSERVANCY'S DIRECTED GRANT PROGRAM:

This Project achieves one or more of the purposes:

- Located in the San Diego River watershed
- Resource protection
- Outreach, Education and Interpretation
- Climate, Wildfire and Forest Resilience
- Improving Water Quality

ALIGNMENT WITH PLANS AND PRIORITIES

A. California Water Plan 2023 Update

Objective 1: Support Watershed Resilience Planning and Implementation.

Recommendation 4.2. Build Community Capacity and Resilience.

Action 4.2.1. Invest in the Next Generation of Community Water Leaders and Operators.

Objective 7: Provide Guidance and Support Continued Resources for Implementation of Actions toward Water Resilience.

Recommendation 7.1. Provide Funding for Watershed Resilience Programs.

B. California Climate Adaptation Strategy

Action 6 Protect public health by increasing reliable access to safe, affordable drinking water and sanitation.

Action 7 Support local and regional agencies to recycle or reuse water

C. California's Water Supply Strategy Adapting to a Hotter Drier Future

Develop New Water Supplies. Investments in waste water recycling and desalination technology can help drought-proof communities.

D. Water Resilience Portfolio (2020)

Goal 2. Protect and enhance natural ecosystems

Goal 3. Build connections

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E. Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update California’s Climate Adaptation Strategy

Require closer collaboration and coordination of land use and water planning activities to ensure that each reinforces sustainable development that is resilient to climate changes.

F. California’s Fourth Climate Change Assessment

Supports health and wellbeing and water infrastructure.

G. San Diego River Conservancy’s Climate Change Policy

Promotes innovative designs that incorporate features that are resilient to climate change impacts and can serve as demonstration projects; Implement water saving technologies and techniques to yield quantifiable water and energy savings.

H. California Natural Resources Agency’s Initiatives

This Project advances one or more initiatives:

- Access for All
- Building Climate Resilience
- Building Water Resilience

I. San Diego State University’s Strategic Plan

Goal 2: Expand SDSU’s academic infrastructure and partnerships to meet the needs of broadly diverse learners in our region, across the nation, and the world. Improve SDSU’s research infrastructure to achieve R1 status.

J. Pathways to 30x30 Strategy

Support research to improve scientific understanding of environmental benefits from conservation practices that currently fall outside of 30x30 Conservation Areas. Determine if and how these conservation measures can be counted toward 30x30 targets in the future.

K. State Water Resources Control Board Resolution No. 2018-0057

Encourages the development of new and underutilized water resources to mitigate the effects of long-term drought, climate change, and water supply uncertainty, including the use of recycled water.

L. State Water Resources Control Board Water Quality Control Policy for Recycled Water

Supports water supply diversity and sustainability and to encourage the increased use of recycled water in California.

M. San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board – San Diego Region Basin Plan Chapter 5 Plan and Policies:

Efficient wastewater management is dependent upon a balanced program of source control of environmentally hazardous substances, treatment of wastewater, reuse of reclaimed water, and proper disposal of effluents and residuals.

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N. California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, Outdoor Protection for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68)

Authorizes funding for water recycling research and development pursuant to Water Code sections 79135 et seq. and 79765 et seq.

O. Safe Drinking Water, Clean Water, Watershed Protection, and Flood Protection Act (2000 Water Bond, Proposition 13)

BENEFITS

This facility will provide practical educational and research opportunities for the San Diego region and programs and activities to enhance community engagement, workshops, community events, or partnerships with local schools. Additional societal or environmental outcomes include improved water quality or increased community awareness about river conservation, highlighting the importance of urban waters in a water-scarce environment.

SDSU's Math, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) Program has agreed to assist with organizing outreach events, tours, and other educational and training programs. Additionally, SDSU's water faculty are coordinating with Bands of the Kumeyaay Nation to represent traditional ecological knowledge on watershed management in curricular and outreach materials.

PROJECT READINESS

Swinerton, the design-build firm chosen for the Project, has completed the feasibility study and conceptual design, with the final design expected by August 2025. The sewer realignment is complete, and a vault has been constructed to divert wastewater to the OWLLL. SDSU Facilities Management will be responsible for the long-term maintenance of the laboratory facilities. Construction of the container-based laboratory is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2025, with a grand opening planned for the summer of 2026.

PERMIT COMPLIANCE

SDSU will complete all required permitting prior to construction and installation of OWLLL. Although SDSU has an agreement with the City of San Diego to construct and operate this land, the OWLLL will require an amendment to the existing. The Amendment to the existing City of San Diego easement agreement has been finalized and is being prepared for San Diego City Council's approval and signature.

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 9

SUBJECT: **MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK
FOUNDATION'S PROPOSAL TO REMOVE
INVASIVE PLANTS FROM KUMEYAAY LAKES
(ACTION)**

Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation's proposed Project, in partnership with the City of San Diego's Open Space Division, will remove floating water primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*) from Kumeyaay Lake at Mission Trails Regional Park and improve the native riparian habitat, enhance water quality, support wildlife and bird foraging areas and enhance access to nature. Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$175,503 from Proposition 68.

Presentation:

Jennifer Morrisey, Executive Director, Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation

Recommendation: Approve Resolution No. 25-03

Resolution No: 25-03

**RESOLUTION OF THE GOVERNING BOARD OF
THE SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY**

**AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO GRANT \$175,503 FROM PROPOSITION 68
TO MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK FOUNDATION TO REMOVE INVASIVE NON-
NATIVE PLANTS IN KUMEYAAY LAKE AND SURROUNDING WATER BODIES
INCLUDING THE SAN DIEGO RIVER AT MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK**

WHEREAS, the mission of the San Diego River Conservancy is to further the goals of its enabling legislation by conserving and restoring the lands and waters of the San Diego River watershed; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of California created the San Diego River Conservancy for the purposes of acquiring, conserving, restoring and managing public lands; and

WHEREAS, Proposition 68 was approved by voters on June 5, 2018, for the purposes of creation and rehabilitation of state and local parks, natural resources protection projects, climate adaptation projects, water quality and supply projects, and flood protection projects, in accordance with statewide priorities, including public benefits, and leveraged funding; and

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy was allocated \$12,000,000 under Proposition 68, "the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018," (Public Resources Code section 80000 et seq.) with funds made available by Public Resources Code section 80110, subdivisions (b)(5); and

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy has been delegated the responsibility for the administration of this grant program, establishing necessary procedures and guidelines in accordance with statewide priorities and plans; and

WHEREAS, Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation applied to the San Diego River Conservancy for a grant to remove and treat floating water primrose in Kumeyaay Lake at Mission Trails Regional Park (Project); and

WHEREAS, San Diego River Conservancy staff have reviewed the grant application, conducted a site visit, and staff recommends funding in the amount of \$175,503 to implement the Project; and

WHEREAS, this Project is consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, with Program 2 Support and Encourage Recreation and Education Program 3 Preserve and Restore Natural Resources, and Program 5 Enhance Water Quality and Natural Flood Conveyance.

WHEREAS, the San Diego River Conservancy staff have reviewed the grant application, met with conducted site visit with applicant and recommends the Project for approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board, based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, finds:

The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the San Diego River Conservancy Act

(Public Resources Code, Sections 32630-32659.9).

The San Diego River Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$175,503 (One Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Five Hundred Three Dollars and Zero Cents) to Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation to implement the Project.

The proposed Project is consistent with the purposes and intent of Proposition 68 and the Conservancy's Directed Grant Program.

Appoints the Executive Officer, or her designee, as an agent to execute all agreements, grants, sub-contracts, and other documents needed for the completion of the Project.

Prior to the disbursement of funds, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a scope of work, budget, and schedule.

Approved and adopted on March 21, 2025. I, the undersigned, hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution Number 25-03 was duly adopted by the San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board.

Roll Call Vote:

Yeas: _____

Nays: _____

Absent: _____

Julia L. Richards
Executive Officer

San Diego River Conservancy's Governing Board Members Roll Call Vote

Name	Ayes	Noes	Abstained
CNRA: Andrea Scharffer			
DOF: Stephen Benson			
CADFW: Glen Lubcke			
Dr. Jennifer Campbell, SD Mayor Designee			
Joel Anderson, County Supervisor			
Raul Campillo, Vice Chair			
Ben Clay, Chair			
Ruth Hayward			
J. Cody Petterson			
Emily Burgueno			
Elsa Saxod			
DPR Designee, Ray Lennox			
DPR Designee, Nicole Van Doren			
Dustin Trotter			
Phil Ortiz			

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
SDRC Resolution 25-03
March 21, 2025

DIRECTED GRANT PROGRAM

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to provide up to \$175,503.00 to Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation to remove and treat floating water primrose in Kumeyaay Lake and surrounding water bodies including the San Diego River at Mission Trails Regional Park.

LOCATION: Kumeyaay Lake is located in the floodplain of the San Diego River at Mission Trails Regional Park in the City of San Diego. It is located southwest of State Route 52 and the Mast Boulevard intersection.

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS: Staff recommends that the San Diego River Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to the San Diego River Conservancy Act (Public Resources Code, § 32630 et seq.):

The San Diego River Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of funding for projects focused on enhancing river parkways, protecting resources, restoring native habitat and fire protection and suppression, specifically as follows:

To Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation, the sum of \$175,503.00 (One Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Five Hundred Three Dollars and Zero Cents) as follows:

- To restore native habitat through removal and treatment of aquatic invasive non-native vegetation in Kumeyaay Lake and surrounding water bodies including the San Diego River at Mission Trails Regional Park (Project).

Before the disbursement of funds, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a scope of work, budget and schedule, and the names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

Based on the staff report and attached exhibits, the San Diego River Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the San Diego River Conservancy Act, including Section 32649.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Guidelines for the Conservancy's Directed Grant program.
3. The proposed Project is consistent with Proposition 68.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

BACKGROUND

Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP) was established in 1974 and covers over 8,000 acres of both natural and developed recreational areas. Owned by the City of San Diego's Open Space Division, MTRP is part of the Multiple Species Conservation Program and offers a variety of free outdoor recreational activities. The park features 60 miles of trails, camping sites, and a visitor center, attracting more than two million visitors each year.

In 1988, the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation (Foundation) was formed as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with the objective of preserving, protecting, improving, and maintaining MTRP while promoting public appreciation and understanding of the park. Since its inception, the Foundation has collaborated with the City of San Diego on various park projects.

The San Diego River runs through the park for more than three miles, making it a significant area for the original Kumeyaay inhabitants. The park is home to over 30 Kumeyaay cultural sites, including the historic Old Mission Dam, and showcases rugged hills, valleys, and open spaces.

PROJECT NEED

This project is part of a larger initiative to restore the land and protect native species throughout the park. Invasive plants pose a significant threat to the health of the ecosystem by disrupting ecological dynamics and interrupting watershed processes.

The presence of floating water primrose (*Ludwigia peploides*) in the San Diego River and at Kumeyaay Lake in MTRP is hindering community access and threatening native flora and fauna. The California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC) rates floating water primrose as highly invasive, indicating that it has severe ecological impacts on physical processes, plant and animal communities, and vegetation structure.

As a perennial aquatic plant, floating water primrose forms dense, impenetrable mats on the water's surface. This restricts fishing and boating access, outcompetes native aquatic plants, and degrades habitats for native wildlife. Additionally, this plant spreads readily and continues to move downstream along the San Diego River.

Removing invasive plants from the San Diego River watershed offers numerous direct and indirect benefits, such as reducing flooding and fire risk, improving water quality, enhancing water conservation, and restoring habitats to increase biodiversity for native and endangered plant and animal species.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The San Diego River and Kumeyaay Lake Invasive Primrose Removal Project aims to eliminate a highly invasive species to restore habitat and improve community access at Kumeyaay Lake within MTRP. Invasive water primrose are floating plants that form fast growing, dense mats that greatly alter aquatic environments. Removing invasive plants will improve water quality in the river, support the thriving of birds and wildlife in Mission Trails and enhance user experience.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

To carry out this project, the Foundation will engage an expert contractor in invasive plant removal. Following the project's completion, the City of San Diego and Foundation staff will continuously monitor the area for the presence of primrose and remove it to prevent its spread.

Image 1. Floating Water Primrose at Kumeyaay Lake, Mission Trails Regional Park



The project involves manual control of floating water primrose using boats for removal. To achieve the best results, two herbicide treatments will be administered within a single growing season. The Foundation, along with the hired contractor, will collaborate with City biologists to determine the most suitable herbicide for this effort. All herbicides will be used under the guidance of a licensed and qualified applicator, with application performed by personnel trained in herbicide use.

Due to the current infestation, floating water primrose primarily grows as a monoculture, making it easier to target during herbicide application and minimizing the risk of accidental overspray onto native or non-target species. Manual removal will occur after herbicide treatment to eliminate dead or decaying biomass, preventing decomposing vegetation from reducing the lake's dissolved oxygen levels. Manual removal alone is not advisable because the large quantity of vegetation involved can lead to successful vegetative reproduction from plant fragments left behind during the removal process. The removed biomass will be transported off-site for proper disposal, and follow-up treatments will ensure there is no regrowth.

To ensure the project's objectives are met, the contractor, MTRPF staff, and city biologists will collaboratively manage the project, adapting methods as necessary to balance the budget and overall effectiveness.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

MEASURABLE RESULTS:

The Foundation will conduct a thorough biological survey before the Project begins to understand how much existing *Ludwigia peploides* is present and what native flora and fauna exists within the region. Throughout the Project, photos and biological surveys will be taken to determine the success of removal methods. At the end of the Project, the amount of *Ludwigia peploides* removed will be determined, what (if any) still exists, and report what native plants and animals have returned. The changes observed will be monitored and photographed at each site after treatment is completed to measure the effectiveness and success of the Project.

DELIVERABLES:

- Quarterly request for disbursements, progress reports with photo documentation of before and after treatment
- Estimated amount of biomass removal
- Maps or shape files for areas treated
- Final Report

Table 1. Estimated Budget and Anticipated Schedule

Task #	Description	Amount	Schedule
1. Project Management	MTRPF project management, oversight, administration, submit invoices, progress reports and permits	\$40,030.02	Quarterly throughout 2-year grant period
2. Project Implementation	Invasive removal and treatment	\$135,472.98	Quarterly throughout 2-year grant period
	TOTAL	\$175,503.00	

PROJECT FINANCING: The total Project amount is \$175,503.00; Conservancy staff recommends funding in the amount of \$175,503.00 for the implementation of the proposed Project. The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this Project is Proposition 68.

LEVERAGED FUNDING: The Foundation has a dedicated core of habitat restoration and trail maintenance volunteers who can donate time and labor after completing specialized training and with oversight of grant-funded specialists. The City of San Diego will also provide administrative service hours to manage the Project as in-kind services.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION: This Project would be undertaken consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Public Resources Code, §§ 32630-32659.9).

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) &

OBJECTIVE(S): The Project is consistent with Program 2 Support and Encourage Recreation and Education, Program 3 Preserve and Restore Natural Resources, and Program 5 Enhance Water Quality and Natural Flood Conveyance.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE FUNDING SOURCE: Proposition 68 is for wildfire and climate resilience, watershed protection, natural and cultural resource protection, and community access projects. The funding is immediately available for shovel-ready projects.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE CONSERVANCY'S DIRECTED GRANT PROGRAM:

This Project achieves one or more of the purposes:

- Located in the San Diego River watershed.
- Resource protection.
- Removing invasive plant species from the watershed.
- Protecting the natural and scenic beauty of the San Diego River watershed.

ALIGNMENT WITH PLANS AND PRIORITIES

A. Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update California's Climate Adaptation Strategy

- Increase the scale of invasive species removal and management to maintain healthy ecosystems that are more resilient to changes in climate, disease, and pest outbreaks, and better able to support native wildlife communities.
- Strengthen the climate adaptation component of conservation planning efforts at multiple scales.

B. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment

Addresses regional threat and stressor management, including invasive species.

C. State Wildlife Action Plan

Goal 3 - Enhance Ecosystem Functions and Processes: Maintain and improve ecosystem functions and processes vital for sustaining ecosystems in California.

D. San Diego River Conservancy's Climate Change Policy

- Conservation, restoration, and enhancement of habitats that sequester carbon, including forests, tidal wetlands, and estuarine scrub/shrub habitats.
- Management of invasive species, especially projects which prevent the introduction or spread of invasive species, to reduce the impacts of this major stressor on biodiversity.
- Riparian protection, enhancement, and restoration projects that allow for wider riparian corridors to accommodate increased flooding or provide other benefits such as increased shading to moderate water temperature increases.

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

E. California Water Action Plan

Protect and restore important ecosystems.

F. California Natural Resources Agency's Initiatives

This Project advances protecting biodiversity, outdoors for all, expanding nature-based solutions, building water resilience, and supporting healthy rivers and landscapes.

G. Multiple Species Conservation Program – San Diego County

H. Mission Trails Regional Park Master Plan Update – Good Neighbor Policy

Maintenance to minimize invasive non-native species.

BENEFITS

This Project aims to provide numerous benefits to the public and the natural resources of the area. The focus of the restoration is the Kumeyaay Lake Campground, located within the San Diego River Watershed. This campground serves as a vital space for the community to connect with nature, with the lake being its centerpiece.

In recent years, the invasive floating water primrose has taken over Kumeyaay Lake, spreading downstream and negatively affecting the native habitat while hindering recreational activities in the park. It is crucial to mitigate flood risks, protect existing habitats, and restore habitats for the native flora and fauna in the San Diego River watershed.

By removing the invasive floating water primrose, the Foundation will restore native habitats, enhance community access, and improve the health of both the lake and the San Diego River. Once the proposed sites have been cleared and a long-term maintenance plan is established, the City of San Diego and Foundation staff will continue to manage the evening primrose in Kumeyaay Lake. This effort will help preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the San Diego River Watershed for future generations.

PROJECT READINESS

This Project is shovel-ready. The Foundation has already consulted with a trusted local environmental consulting firm experienced in working at MTRP and received a quote for the work. The City of San Diego Open Space Division staff have granted permission to conduct aquatic invasive species removal and habitat restoration.

The project will adapt as needed during the bird nesting season to ensure its effectiveness. After the contractors complete the treatments, both the City of San Diego and the Foundation staff will continue to monitor the sites for the presence of floating water primrose and effectively manage ongoing maintenance of this invasive plant through the involvement of staff and volunteers.

The anticipated work schedule is set to begin in the summer of 2025. The Foundation plans to partially fund an existing position to oversee this project from start to finish. This

SAN DIEGO RIVER CONSERVANCY

will include interviewing and hiring potential contractors, conducting site visits and surveys, and ensuring the project stays on track to meet all deliverables.

PERMIT COMPLIANCE

The City of San Diego will provide a right of entry permit for work carried out by contractors and obtain a CEQA exemption, if needed. Alternatively, the Foundation may use the Conservancy's watershed wide permits for this Project.

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 10

SUBJECT: **EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT
(INFORMATIONAL/ACTION)**

The following topics may be included in the Executive Officer's Report.
The Board may take action regarding any of them:

- 2024 Climate Bond updates

Conservancy staff attended the following events & meetings:

2024 Climate Bond (Prop 4) workshops and meetings
Climate Bond Program Coordination Team meeting – CNRA
Department of General Services quarterly meeting
City of Chula Vista - Proclamation
Cleveland National Forest
SoCal Ignition Reduction People & Partnerships
Trans County Trail meeting (County of San Diego)
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board
Crest Fire Safe Council & San Miguel FPD open house
Wynola Estates Fire Safe Council meeting
California Wildfire & Forest Resilience Task Force
Tijuana River Valley Recovery Team Steering Committee
Fire Safe Council of San Diego County
Southern California Wildfire Resilience Partnership

State of California
San Diego River Conservancy

Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 11

SUBJECT: **NEXT MEETING**

The next regularly scheduled Board meeting is anticipated to be held in person on Thursday, May 22, 2025, from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.

State of California
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Meeting of March 21, 2025

ITEM: 12

SUBJECT: ADJOURNMENT