COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 5, 2024

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WETLANDS RECOVERY PROJECT COMMUNITY WETLAND RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM – 2024-2025

Project No. 22-008-10, 22-008-11, 22-008-12
Project Manager: Kellan Warner

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to $418,784 to three non-profit organizations for three community-based wetland and stream restoration projects on approximately 14 acres in Los Angeles and Orange Counties.

LOCATION: Various locations in the South Coast region of California.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location Map

Exhibit 2: Project Letters

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed four hundred and eighteen thousand seven hundred and eighty-four dollars ($418,784) to three non-profit organizations for three community-based, natural resource restoration and enhancement projects (the "projects") on approximately 14 acres in coastal wetlands and along stream corridors in the Southern California region as part of the 2024 Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program. The Executive Officer of the Coastal Conservancy may authorize modifications to one or more of the three projects if the modified projects continue to promote the goals of the Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program. The three projects are as follows:

- The Los Angeles River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts project (Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR)): one hundred seventy-one thousand four hundred eighty-four dollars ($171,484) to restore or enhance 3 to 5 acres of natural habitats at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve; research, select, and initiate restoration at 1-2 sites, totaling approximately 3 acres, along the Lower LA River

corridor; and implement 2 river clean-up days at 6 to 11 sites per year along the Middle and Lower LA River.

- The Lower Los Angeles River Pollinator Habitat Restoration project (Trout Unlimited): one hundred and fifty thousand dollars ($150,000) to provide bi-lingual coastal wetland and upland pollinator habitat education and mentorship in local schools in Paramount and hands-on, community-led, restoration implementation events to plant drought-tolerant native pollinator plants on 6 acres within Ralph C. Dills Park in Paramount.
- The Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration project (Newport Bay Conservancy): ninety-seven thousand three hundred dollars ($97,300) to restore 1.7 acres of degraded coastal sage scrub and wetland habitats in the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Preserve.

Prior to commencement of each project, each grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding through the Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program as well as Proposition 68 funding when applicable as a source of that funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project.

FoLAR shall not commence implementation of the LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts project for the Lower LA River Corridor component of the project unless FoLAR has obtained the Executive Officer's written confirmation that the project at that site is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding coastal resource enhancement projects.
2. The proposed projects are consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The proposed nonprofit organizations are organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize grants totaling $418,784 to three non-profit organizations for three community-based wetland and stream restoration projects on approximately 14 acres in Los Angeles and Orange Counties (Exhibit 1). These projects were selected through the 2024 Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program (CWRGP) of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (WRP). The CWRGP is a Conservancy program that provides funding annually for community-based wetland and riparian enhancement and restoration projects in coastal wetlands and watersheds in the Southern and Central California regions. The purposes of the CWRGP are to further the wetland recovery goals for Southern California as set forth in the WRP Regional Strategy (2018); build local capacity to plan and implement wetland restoration projects; promote community involvement in wetland restoration activities; and foster education about wetland ecosystems. Projects funded through the CWRGP must include robust educational opportunities and community involvement.

Since 2001, the Conservancy and other WRP members funded over 170 CWRGP projects in Southern and Central California, distributing four million dollars for community-based project implementation. In 2021, Conservancy staff conducted an impact and progress evaluation of the CWRGP, revisioning the program and its priorities by incorporating the Conservancy's adopted Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion principles, finding ways to reach new community-based organizations rooted in underserved and/or frontline communities, and broadening the network of applicants. The CWRGP seeks to engage and benefit people and communities that include but are not limited to lower-income individuals and households, people with disabilities, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant communities, and other historically marginalized communities ("CWRGP Priority Communities").

Each year, the Conservancy solicits CWRGP proposals from nonprofit organizations, public and nonprofit universities, tribes, cities, counties, and other public agencies. Proposals are reviewed by a committee that includes staff from the Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Board, the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, and other agencies that participate in the CWRPG. Projects funded through the CWRGP are designed to be completed in two to three years.

The 2024 CWRGP round received 11 proposals, and project selection was completed in June 2024. Four projects were selected to be funded this year, but one will be presented to the board at a future meeting. The three projects ready to be recommended for funding are as follows:

<u>Los Angeles County</u>

Friends of the Los Angeles River (FoLAR) $171,484

LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts

The LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts project will: (1) restore or enhance three to five acres of natural habitats of the LA River at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife

Reserve; (2) research, select, and initiate restoration at one to two sites, totaling approximately three acres of habitat along the Lower LA River corridor; and (3) implement river clean-up days along the middle and lower LA River. Restoration work at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve will focus on the removal of non-native vegetation, and restoration work along the Lower LA River will focus on the removal of non-native vegetation and native species planting.

The LA River Watershed covers over 800 square miles of the most densely populated, ethnically and socio-economically diverse region in the United States. Close to 100% of the original wetlands and 90-95% of in-stream riparian habitat within the watershed have been lost due to urbanization and channelization. Of equal concern is disparity of access and use of open space and natural areas by low-income and BIPOC communities. Students and families in FoLAR's service area often have little access to the LA River or even to nature at all.

The project will engage community members living near the Los Angeles River by providing river stewardship opportunities through community education, habitat restoration, and/or cleanup events.

The Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve: The Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve component of the project will mobilize hundreds of volunteers to restore three to five acres of natural mixed riparian habitat in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve (SBWR). The restoration work will consist of non-native plant removal. This will reduce local wildfire risk, increase river-adjacent biodiversity, and strengthens native habitat at the SBWR.

The Lower LA River Corridor: The Lower LA River Corridor component of the project will restore approximately three acres of natural riparian habitat at one to two sites along the Lower LA River. The Lower LA River project site(s) will be selected within the first year of the project with the assistance of a biologist. In addition, FoLAR will secure a minimum of one community partner and will conduct outreach to California Native American Tribes and a tribal organization to request site selection assistance. 80-85% of FoLAR's free environmental education programming and LA River field trips serve Title I Schools that disproportionately have low-income and BIPOC students. This project will continue to serve these students and their families by providing a post-program pipeline to free cleanup and restoration events, while also working to expand FoLAR's connection to the Lower LA River community.

The Middle and Lower LA River: FoLAR has run the annual Great LA River CleanUp since 1989, mobilizing tens of thousands of volunteers to remove 1.6 million pounds of trash and debris from the Los Angeles River. The CleanUp, the largest in the country, is free, open to volunteers in the general public, and occurs each fall. The CleanUp not only enhances the three natural-bottom stretches of the LA River, but it also develops new environmental stewards through on-site environmental education activities and other meaningful experiences at the LA River. The Middle and Lower LA River component of the project will facilitate approximately two river clean-up days per year at six to eleven sites along the Middle and Lower LA River, mobilizing thousands of volunteers at ongoing river cleanup projects.

Site Description: There are several project sites, one site at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Preserve (three to five acres); one or more sites (which combined will be a minimum of three acres) will be identified along the Lower LA River, a region experiencing a lack of funding for community-based restoration and riparian access; and six to eleven sites along the Middle and Lower LA River for cleanups.

The Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve: The project site is three to five acres of natural mixed riparian habitat at the SBWR. FoLAR's current community-based habitat restoration project is located at the SBWR, a natural space on land owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and managed by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. The SBWR is located in the San Fernando Valley, 0.6 miles away from the Upper Los Angeles River and directly adjacent to Haskell Creek, a direct tributary of the LA River. It contains several plant communities: riparian forest, riparian shrubland, oak and walnut woodlands, coastal sage scrub, and aquatic. Since a brush fire in 2019, invasive plants including black mustard, yellow star-thistle, white or common horehound, and common mallow have taken over parts of the SBWR. With its man-made lake, the SBWR is home to a variety of urban wildlife and over 200+ species of local and migratory birds.

The Lower Los Angeles River Corridor: The Lower LA River Corridor project site(s) will be located, pending Executive Officer confirmation, along the soft-bottom stretches of the LA River and will be selected with community engagement. Potential Lower LA River habitat restoration sites include DeForest Park, Willow Street Estuary, Goldenshore Marine Reserve, and Bell - Pritchard Field Park.

The Middle and Lower LA River CleanUp: There are 11 potential sites located along soft-bottom stretches of the Middle and Lower LA River. The potential sites are the: (1) Bette Davis Picnic Area, (2) Glendale Narrows Riverwalk, (3) North Atwater Park, (4) Bond Park, (5) Red Car Bridge, (6) Lewis MacAdams Riverfront Park, (7) Elysian Valley Gateway Park, (8) Steelhead Park, (9) Maywood Riverfront Park, (10) Compton Creek, and (11) Willow Street Estuary (Exhibit 1). Six to eleven sites will be used for each of the two annual CleanUp events. FoLAR's current river cleanup permit with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will expire in five years and there is an option to extend the permit to another five years; further, their Right of Entry with the LA Department of Recreation and Parks is on a rolling six-month basis and has never been denied. Other county and city permits, including Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and City of Long Beach are regularly sought and received on an ad hoc basis. Biomonitoring and reporting are conducted by a third-party vendor at each worksite in the River, submitted to the CDFW prior to cleanups, and shared in advance with all other required agencies. Historically, the City of Long Beach has been supportive of river cleanup events and authorized permits.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: FoLAR, established in 1986, has many years of experience in facilitating habitat restoration and river cleanups, as well as managing multiple state and federal grants. This includes grants from the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, California State Parks, and a Coastal Conservancy grant for an Explore the Coast project.

Los Angeles County

Trout Unlimited **$150,000**

Lower LA River Pollinator Habitat Restoration

The proposed Lower LA River Pollinator Habitat Restoration project will provide: (1) bi-lingual coastal wetland and upland pollinator habitat education and mentorship in local schools in Paramount; and (2) hands-on, community-led, restoration implementation events to plant drought-tolerant native pollinator plants for monarch butterflies on six acres within Ralph C. Dills Park in Paramount.

Local communities along the lower LA River are typically disconnected from the open spaces along the river. This project will address this issue by fostering wetland awareness in the local community and schools and implementing native habitat restoration along the existing river corridor to enhance the migratory connectivity needs of monarch butterflies. This project will also build local grant implementation capacity by supporting bi-lingual watershed education led by Trout Unlimited's local partner, the Latinas Art Foundation.

Project partner Latinas Art Foundation is currently involved in robust bi-lingual education via after-school programming in the city of Paramount; and, through this grant, will expand that effort to include a specialized curriculum where students can learn how to plant milkweed, its community and ecological benefits, and pollinator-focused community-inspired art lessons. Butterflies, and specifically monarch butterflies, maintain an important place in many Latino communities, being viewed as the spirits of loved ones who have passed away. Monarchs migrate between California and Mexico, like many local residents; and monarch butterfly presence is viewed auspiciously when encountered around the Dia de los Muertos.

First, the educational curriculum on coastal wetlands and upland pollinator habitat will be presented at local schools through after-school programming. Second, the students will participate in hands-on, local restoration events called 'Milkweed Days' at Ralph C. Dills Park. The restoration will integrate narrow-leaf milkweed and other native pollinator species planting to bolster monarch butterfly habitat along the LA River migration corridor. The Conservation Corps of Long Beach, which specializes in on-the-ground vegetation projects in the lower Los Angeles River area, will facilitate the planting effort. Latinas Art Foundation will host four 'Milkweed Days' over the course of two calendar years. Milkweed planting offers a tangible, immediate benefit of restoration efforts for migrating butterflies, and provides a visible measure of success for residents through seeing the milkweed plants and monarch butterflies. Dills Park currently hosts native vegetation such as buckwheat and poppies; other drought-tolerant, pollinator-supporting native species, in addition to milkweed, will be included in planting efforts to support biodiversity.

Site Description: Ralph C. Dills Park is immediately adjacent to the east bank of the lower LA River channel in Paramount. The project will take place on six acres within the park. This park is an urban oasis of river friendly planning, including a half mile trail with interpretive signage, exercise equipment, and shady bio-swales that slow and cleanse urban run off before it enters the river. Vegetation in Dills Park is primarily native, and the park is owned, managed, and maintained by the City of Paramount. The adjacent river channel is an open space that is publicly owned by the County of Los Angeles.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The South Coast Chapter of Trout Unlimited was organized in 1988 to promote the restoration of native fishes and their habitat in southern California. The South Coast Chapter has successfully administered grants from the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, CDFW, the Coastal Conservancy, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Those projects have included habitat assessment and fish passage projects in Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego Counties.

Orange County

Newport Bay Conservancy **$97,300**

Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration Project

The proposed Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration project will restore 1.7 acres of degraded coastal sage scrub and wetland habitats in the Upper Newport Bay Ecological Preserve. This project site is dominated by non-native species and has a history of fragmentation created by unauthorized trails, which has adversely affected the native biodiversity and populations of terrestrial and intertidal wildlife. This project will provide benefits to the entire Upper Newport Bay by restoring wetland and transitional habitat that will promote biodiversity, resilience to sea level rise, provide and support critical habitat for endangered species and offer educational and interpretive benefits to the public.

The project will remove invasive vegetation and install and maintain native plants within the one acre high-marsh area to increase native plant diversity and increase available acreage for sea-level rise migration. The project will install plants in areas previously occupied by non-native species as well as within unauthorized trails leading out to the marsh. Additionally, the project will restore 0.7 acres of adjacent coastal sage scrub habitat by removing non-native plant species, closing unauthorized trails via strategically planting within the trails, and adding an interpretive element. This will provide interrelated benefits that include ecological services such as expansion of the wetland-upland transition zone, increased suitable habitat for rare and endangered wildlife, and coastal habitat adaptation to sea level rise.

The project area naturally lends itself to interpretation and educational opportunities due to its closeness to the water's edge as well as the convergence of high marsh and coastal sage scrub transition habitats. This project includes the installation of interpretive signage to educate the public about the endangered species that are known to occur in the area, the importance of restoration work, and native plant species. Interpretive signage will also help reduce the use of unauthorized trails that fragment the habitat within the project boundary. The project also focuses on educational and engagement opportunities with the community. With this funding,

the Newport Bay Conservancy (NBC) will host twelve community restoration events per year for each year of the anticipated 3-year project and will host three school groups (approximately 30 students per group) to educate a total of 270 students on the importance of wetlands, biodiversity, native plants, watershed stewardship, and restoration per year of the project. This project will allow NBC to deepen its existing relationships with local Title I school groups, and students and volunteers will assist in collecting native seeds from the Bay, growing native plants from seed in NBC's nursery, removing invasive species, and installing and maintaining native plants within the restoration area.

This project will train two interns to lead events and educate volunteers on the importance of the project. NBC will recruit these interns by advertising the positions to students at local colleges. This will increase NBC's capacity to coordinate more restoration events with local school groups and members of the community while providing conservation-focused work experience.

Site Description: The 1.7-acre project area is on land owned by CDFW and consists of two main habitat types: coastal sage scrub and high marsh transitional habitat. This project site is dominated by non-native species and has a history of fragmentation created by unauthorized trails. These impacts have adversely affected the native biodiversity and populations of terrestrial and intertidal wildlife, and invasive plants in this region of the site have filled in the bare areas and are already outcompeting native species for space and resources. CDFW has recently installed a wooden fence on the boundary of the project area and removed several larger invasive Brazilian pepper trees and Coastal wattle shrubs. However, the site still needs consistent restoration work to improve the habitat for native wildlife and protect the area from several invasive species, including Algerian sea lavender, Yellow sweetclover, and Pampas grass. The project site is not in Big Canyon Nature Park.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The Newport Bay Conservancy has a breadth of experience in managing state grants and completing restoration projects at the Bay. NBC staff have expertise in restoration ecology, conservation, environmental science, and have appropriate administrative skills to accomplish this project. NBC is a current grantee of the Conservancy for their work in Big Canyon Nature Park, a multi-phase restoration program whose current phase was approved for funding at the Conservancy's November 30, 2023 meeting.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed projects are consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

Selection Criteria

1. **Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.**

See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Strategic Plan" section below.

2. **Project is a good investment of state resources.**

Each project contributes to protecting wetland or stream and adjacent habitats in Southern California. These areas are under intense stress from urbanization and face impacts from

historical and ongoing stressors, and must be bolstered for predicted future stressors, like climate change. Wetlands are bountiful in ecosystem services that benefit all Californians, including carbon sequestration, reduced flooding, improved water quality, and more. Each project will have long-lasting restoration impacts and sites will continue to be maintained after the projects are completed.

The LA River Habitat Restoration**:** Scaling Community-Based Efforts project: This component of the LA River Habitat Restoration project by FoLAR is located in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve (SBWR), managed by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. The SBWR is located 0.6 miles away from the Upper Los Angeles River and is directly adjacent to Haskell Creek, a direct tributary of the River.

The Lower LA River Pollinator Habitat Restoration project: The project site for this project by Trout Unlimited is managed by the City of Paramount, which will maintain the restored areas as a part of regular park maintenance.

The Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration project: This project by NBC is located on CDFW property. NBC will work with CDFW to develop a long-term maintenance plan to ensure the habitat remains protected from non-native plant encroachment and unauthorized trails, and that the interpretive element remains well kept. CDFW, in partnership with NBC, will take on long-term maintenance after the three-year project. The project area is currently a part of regular patrol routes by CDFW staff members and will continue to be monitored and maintained in perpetuity.

3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.

The LA River Habitat Restoration**:** Scaling Community-Based Efforts project: FoLAR regularly works with local Indigenous individuals and tribal representatives to ensure that programs and restoration efforts are appropriate, and will pursue meaningful partnerships with California Native American Tribes for the LA River Habitat Restoration project. FoLAR regularly works with Sacred Placed Institute, an indigenous-led community-based organization, that provides guidance on traditional knowledge and Indigenous language to inform their curricula and content.

The Lower LA River Pollinator Habitat Restoration project: Trout Unlimited has engaged in tribal outreach via direct communication with local tribes in the lower LA River since 2021, and for this project, Trout Unlimited will continue their efforts to demonstrate meaningful tribal collaboration. Trout Unlimited is currently contracted with Mr. Nathan Nunez of Nunez and Nunez Consulting to augment their tribal outreach. Mr. Nunez is an enrolled member of the Gabrielino/Tongva Nation and has worked diligently to bridge the cultural differences and address the historic and ongoing traumas that can complicate tribal engagement in grant funded projects.

The Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration project: On previous restoration projects, NBC partnered with the Kizh Nation to provide cultural monitoring and surveys. For the Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration project, NBC plans to hire members of the Kizh Nation to train project interns as well as oversee volunteer and student-led restoration activities.

4. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.

The proposed wetland restoration projects increase natural defenses against predicted sea-level rise and ecological decline by improving the capacity of the habitats to respond to climate change and maintain healthy functions. Wetlands and riparian habitats provide a bevy of ecosystem surfaces, including carbon sequestration, buffering against sea level rise and storm surge, and the filtration of sediments and pollutants. All proposed projects include components of removing non-native species and reinstating native species, which will bolster the long-term wildfire resistance of project sites.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

Each proposed project was selected for both the restoration component of the project as well as significant community engagement. Through work to restore the wetland habitats, community members will actively participate in each project and will learn more about the importance of wetland ecosystems.

Additionally, the proposed projects were selected for their work to engage and benefit CWRGP Priority Communities.

6. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

The three proposed CWRGP projects engage meaningfully within their respective communities. One of the main purposes of the CWRGP is to build local capacity to plan and implement wetland restoration projects and to promote community involvement in wetland restoration. Projects funded through the program must include educational and community involvement elements as strong components of the project.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	**$21,484**
San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy (via a grant to the Conservancy)	$300,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (via a grant to the Conservancy)	$97,300
Project Total	**$418,784**

The CWRGP 2022-2027 is partially funded by a grant to the Conservancy from the Wildlife Conservation Board for $500,000 to fund the CWRGP for five years. The San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy also granted $300,000 to the Conservancy to fund the 2022-2027 CWRGP. The Conservancy is providing $300,000 of match funding over 5 years for a program total of $1.1 million.

The Wildlife Conservation Board funding will provide $97,300 and San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy funding will provide $300,000 for the selected 2024 CWRGP projects. The Coastal Conservancy will contribute the remaining $21,484. The expected source of the Conservancy funding is the FY 2023/2024 appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of "urgent sea level rise and coastal resilience needs using nature-based solutions or other strategies." (The Budget Act of 2023, Chapter 38, Statutes of 2023 (AB 102)). The coastal resilience funds are available for the purposes described in Section 52 of Chapter 258 of the Statutes of 2021, which sets forth a detailed description of the purposes of the coastal resilience funds, including coastal resilience projects along the coast and watersheds. The proposed project is consistent with this funding source because it will increase natural defenses against predicted sea-level rise and ecological decline by improving the capacity of coastal and coastal watershed habitats to respond to climate change and maintain healthy functions. All three projects recommended for funding will enhance and protect wetland and coastal watershed resources.

Unless specifically identified as "Required Match," the other sources of funding and in-kind contributions described above are estimates. The Conservancy does not typically require matching funds or in-kind services, nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders or of in-kind services. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete a project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The authorization for the projects by Trout Unlimited, FoLAR, and NBC projects is consistent with Chapter 6 of Division 21, Sections 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code, regarding resource enhancement projects.

Section 31251 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations "for the purpose of enhancement of coastal resources that, because of indiscriminate dredging or filling, improper location of improvements, natural or human-induced events, or incompatible land uses, have suffered loss of natural and scenic values." Grants shall be used for, among other things, corrective measures that will enhance the natural and scenic character of the areas. All proposed projects will enhance or restore natural resources that have been degraded by human activities.

Section 31252 requires that all areas proposed for resource enhancement by a state agency, local public agency, or nonprofit organization shall be identified in a certified local coastal plan or program as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems or shall be so identified in other local plans which the commission determines to be consistent with the policies and objectives of Division 20 (commencing with Section 30000). In addition, to enhance natural coastal resources within the coastal zone, Section 31251.2 authorizes funding of projects outside the coastal zone to enhance a watershed resource that is partly outside the coastal zone.

The Lower LA River Pollinator Habitat Restoration Project by Trout Unlimited, while not located within the coastal zone, will enhance a watershed resource that is partly in the coastal zone (within the LA River) and is consistent with multiple policies of the California Coastal

Act/California Coastal Management Program, including Chapter 3 policies of providing recreational opportunities for all people (Public Resources Code section 30210) and restoring the biological productivity and quality of coastal waters (Public Resources Code section 30231). The project will provide public access and recreation by engaging children from families whose incomes have limited their awareness of access to riparian habitats and stewardship actions and building their knowledge of and comfort level with wetland open spaces; and the project will protect the biological productivity of coastal waters by enhancing and restoring riparian habitat along a river that affects the water quality of coastal waters.

The LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts by FoLAR has several project sites, but all are consistent with Sections 31251.2 and 31252. The work in the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve (SBWR) as well as River Clean Ups events along the Middle LA River are outside of the coastal zone, yet are consistent with section 31251.2 and the California Coastal Act because the work will restore the biological productivity and quality of coastal waters by improving the condition of the LA River and its surrounding riparian habitat. The clean up events will be directly at the LA River while the SBWR is located 0.6 miles away from the Upper Los Angeles River and is directly adjacent to Haskell Creek, a direct tributary of the LA River (Public Resources Code section 30231). The LA River is a watershed resource that is partly in the coastal zone. Restoration sites along the Lower LA River will be selected within the first year of the project with the assistance of a biologist/field biologist, and river clean up event sites will also be confirmed within the first year of the project. Any restoration or cleanup sites that occur in the City of Long Beach will adhere to the 2019 Long Beach Land Use Element LU-M-97 under Natural Resources Restoration and Reconnection, to "leverage public and private dollars to implement habitat and wetland restoration projects in the community. Develop new and enhance existing marine life habitats." Any restoration or cleanup sites selected upstream of the City of Long Beach are outside of the coastal zone, yet they are consistent with section 31251.2 and the California Coastal Act because the work done there will restore the biological productivity and quality of coastal waters as any site would be within the River and Mountain Conservancy's designated Lower LA River corridor, considered to be within 1.5 miles of the main stem or tributary of the Lower LA River (Public Resources Code section 30231).

The Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration Project by NBC is located within the coastal zone and is consistent with Section 31252 because the City of Newport Beach's current Local Coastal Program Chapter 4.2.1-2. highlights the importance of wetlands and states the importance of restoring biological productivity and quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes.

Consistent with Section 31253, the recommended amount of funding is determined by evaluating the total amount of funding available to the Conservancy for coastal resource enhancement projects, the fiscal resources of each applicant, the urgency of these CWRGP projects relative to other similar projects, and the application of other factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of determining project eligibility and priority. For each of the proposed projects, the Conservancy's funding was deemed appropriate through a competitive grant process that included selection because each of the projects' benefits to coastal habitat is significant. Each proposed project includes an important public education component.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN:

Consistent with **Goal 1.1 Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**, all three of the proposed projects aim to engage and include participation with people from systemically excluded communities.

Consistent with **Goal 3.2 Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the three proposed projects will restore or enhance coastal habitats, including coastal wetlands and riparian areas. Across all three projects, approximately 14 acres of habitat will be restored or enhanced.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) COMPLIANCE:

The LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts project: The component of this project at the Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve is categorically exempt from CEQA under Title 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15333, which applies to small habitat restoration projects. This project will restore three to five acres of habitat primarily through invasives removal. There will be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare, or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to section 15065; there are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that may be disturbed or removed; and the project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects. Therefore, this project is exempt under 15333 as it is a habitat restoration and enhancement project where no site will exceed five acres in size. Upon approval of the project, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.

The LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts Middle and Lower LA CleanUp component of the project will occur at six to eleven sites along the Middle and Lower LA River and is categorically exempt from CEQA under Title 14 CCR Section 15301, which addresses operation, maintenance, repair, or minor alteration of existing facilities or topographical features. This includes the maintenance of wildlife habitat areas, streamflows, and stream channels (clearing of debris) to protect fish and wildlife resources. The project will remove trash and debris by hand from sections of the Los Angeles River, focusing on soft bottom sections. Any temporary impacts will be restored to pre-project conditions. No permanent impacts will occur as a result. The sites are the Bette Davis Picnic Area, Glendale Narrows Riverwalk, North Atwater Park, Bond Park, Red Car Bridge, Lewis MacAdams Riverfront Park, Elysian Valley Gateway Park, Steelhead Park, Maywood Riverfront Park, Compton Creek, and Willow Street Estuary (Exhibit 1).

The LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts Lower LA River Corridor component of the project at the one to two restoration sites along the Lower LA River is expected to be categorically exempt from CEQA under Title 14 Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) and/or Section 15304 (minor alterations in the condition of land, water and/or vegetation). The project's restoration activities will be primarily removal of invasives and planting of native plants. However, FoLAR has not yet decided upon the project location(s), which will be determined after community engagement activities. Whether the project is exempt will be confirmed once FoLAR identifies the project sites. Accordingly, FoLAR will not

implement the LA River Habitat Restoration: Scaling Community-Based Efforts project for the Lower LA River Corridor component of the project unless FoLAR has obtained the Executive Officer's written confirmation that the project at that site is exempt from CEQA.

The Lower LA River Pollinator Habitat Restoration project: This project is categorically exempt from CEQA under Title 14 CCR Section 15304, which exempts minor alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation, which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. The project is categorically exempt under 15304 because it involves minor alterations to land and/or vegetation through hands-on restoration work by planting drought-tolerant native pollinator plants for monarch butterflies and no removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Upon approval of the project, Staff will file a Notice of Exemption.

The Lower Constellation Coastal Sage Scrub and High Marsh Restoration project: This project is categorically exempt from CEQA under Title 14 CCR Section 15333, which exempts habitat restoration projects that do not to exceed five acres to maintain, restore, enhance, or protect the habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife provided that there will be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to section 15065; there are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that may be disturbed or removed; and the project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects. This project is categorically exempt under Section 15333 because it is a 1.7-acre habitat restoration project that will not result in the impacts mentioned above. Upon approval of the project, Staff will file a Notice of Exemption.