

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 20, 2025

WILDFIRE RESILIENCY PROJECTS

Project Numbers: 25-029-01, 25-031-01, 22-058-01, 25-027-01

Project Managers: Lilly Allen, Dario Bobeda-Padilla, Tim Duff, Morgan Wright, and Danh Lai

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$6,353,000 to two tribes, one university, and one local fire safe council to carry out implementation projects that will improve forest health and wildfire resiliency in Mendocino County, San Diego County, and Monterey County.

LOCATION: Mendocino County, San Diego County, and Monterey County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: Project Letters

Exhibit 3: [California Environmental Quality Act \(CEQA\) Suspension Approvals](#)

Exhibit 4: [September 22, 2022 Staff Recommendation](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

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

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of a total amount not to exceed six million three hundred fifty-three thousand dollars (\$6,353,000) to two tribes, one university, and one local fire safe council, to carry out four implementation projects (collectively, the “projects”) that will improve forest health and wildfire resiliency in Mendocino County, San Diego County, and Monterey County. The four projects are as follows:

1. **Esselen Tribe of Monterey County:** One million two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$1,250,000) to plan and implement a series of cultural fire trainings that include live fire cultural burning operations on 50 to 500 acres of land.

2. **La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians:** Two million nine hundred thousand dollars (\$2,900,000) to implement critical fuel reduction treatments and cultural burning on 516 acres along the Highway 76 corridor and to provide community fire preparedness training.
3. **Mendocino County Fire Safe Council:** Eight hundred three thousand dollars (\$803,000) to continue their free community chipping program, implement volunteer workdays, and develop a sustainability plan, over three years.
4. **University of California San Diego:** One million four hundred thousand dollars (\$1,400,000) to remove Eucalyptus trees and restore the native chaparral ecosystem on a 30-acre site to improve wildfire resiliency and to serve as a biochar demonstration project.

The Esslen Tribe of Monterey County, La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians, Mendocino County Fire Safe Council, and University of California San Diego are each a “grantee.” Prior to commencement of each project, the grantee for the specific project 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 from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into any agreements necessary to enable the grantee to implement the project.

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 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code regarding the Climate Ready Program.
2. The proposed projects are consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Esselen Tribe of Monterey County and the Mendocino County Fire Safe Council are nonprofit organizations organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize up to a total of \$6,353,000 in grants to two tribes, one university, and one local fire safe council for four projects located in three counties

(collectively referred to as the “projects”). The projects are part of the Conservancy’s wildfire resilience program and will develop and implement vegetation management activities to increase wildfire resilience of California’s forests, grasslands, and natural lands and reduce fire risk to communities. The proposed authorization will be funded with California’s 2024 Climate Bond (Proposition 4) funding. Due to the urgency of addressing the wildfire crisis, the California legislature and Governor acted quickly to authorize spending of 2024 Climate Bond funds on wildfire resilience through the 2024 Budget Act rather than waiting for completion of the 2025 Budget Act.

Each of the four proposed projects is described below. The projects are arranged alphabetically by grant applicant. Each project summary includes the grant applicant; project name; recommended funding amount; a brief project description; a brief site description; consistency with the Conservancy’s 2023-2027 Strategic Plan; and information concerning project compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Project consistency with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria, enabling legislation, Strategic Plan, and the proposed funding source are provided in the pages following the project summaries.

ESSELEN TRIBE OF MONTEREY COUNTY

\$1,250,000

**Wildfire Resilience, Food Sovereignty and
Cultural Resource Revitalization Project (ETMC project)**

25-031-01

Esselen Tribe of Monterey County (ETMC), a nonprofit organization, proposes to build upon ongoing tribal wildfire resilience, food sovereignty, and cultural resource conservation and revitalization work in the Monterey County region at the recently acquired ancestral lands of the Esselen Tribe - the Tularcitos Creek Rancheria. The Tularcitos Creek Rancheria is home to the largest known Esselen village site of “Capanay.” The land has been severely impacted by decades of fire suppression, overgrazing, flooding, and invasive plants. While the land was burned by ETMC members intentionally for centuries, western fire suppression and the outlawing of cultural burning (which ETMC members had practiced in the region until the 1970s) has led to dangerous wildfire conditions that now pose an existential threat to the people, plants and animals that call this place home. In recent years some of the largest, most destructive, and costly wildfires have occurred in the area, including the 2008 Basin Complex Fire, 2016 Soberanes Fire, and the 2020 River Carmel and Dolan Fires. The ETMC project will address past ecological and cultural degradation by providing ETMC and sister tribes the opportunity to pass their knowledge on to future generations of tribal stewards through cultural burn projects. The ETMC project consists of planning and implementing a series of cultural fire trainings that include live fire cultural burning operations (including pile burning, biochar creation, and broadcast burning) on 50 to 500 acres of land to foster intergenerational Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and cultural fire knowledge sharing between tribal members and ETMC nonprofit staff. Some burn plots will be burned several times when needed to interrupt the seed cycle of the invasive plant species. Where appropriate, pre-emergent herbicide may also be applied to prevent regrowth of the non-native plants.

Site Description:

The ETMC project will take place on the Tularcitos Creek Rancheria, a 1,720-acre property located in upper Carmel Valley along Tularcitos Creek, a tributary to the Carmel River. The topography varies from level river valley with rolling hills and meadows, to steep forested slopes to the south. Grasslands and oak savannas have served as safety zones for fire response in the region and have not been burned for decades, creating expansive areas for non-native plants to spread and seed bank to accumulate. Exotic plants have degraded the soils and prevented the natural recruitment of native plant species that provide critical food sources and wildlife habitat - the very flora and fauna tribes have depended on for food, plant materials, shelter and medicine for centuries. The 2020 Carmel Fire burned along the southern ridge of the property up to border of the project site. ETMC acquired the property in the summer of 2025 with Conservancy and other state funding.

Strategic Plan: The ETMC project will further the following strategic objectives:

Consistent with **Goal 1.1, Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**, the proposed project will benefit Indigenous communities including the Esselen Tribe by bringing back a traditional practice of cultural burning and land stewardship to Monterey County and increase the Esselen Tribe's capacity to conduct more cultural burns in the future.

Consistent with **Goal 1.2, Return Power to Tribes**, the proposed project will return control of ancestral lands to the Esselen Tribe by investing in traditional wildfire practices like cultural burning and land stewardship.

Consistent with **Goal 1.4 Incorporate Workforce Development into Projects**, the proposed project supports pathways for local tribal members and systemically excluded communities to access skills and trainings that will help those workers get jobs and remain competitive.

Consistent with **Goal 4.2 Wildfire Resilience Projects**, the proposed project includes cultural burning trainings that will implement cultural burning across ancestral tribal lands in Monterey County.

CEQA: California Environmental Protection Agency and California Natural Resources Agency have approved the ETMC project as qualifying for the suspension from state statutes and regulations, including CEQA, that is set forth in the Governor's March 1, 2025 Proclamation of a State of Emergency. The approval to proceed under the suspension is included as Exhibit 3.

LA JOLLA BAND OF LUISEÑO INDIANS **\$2,900,000**

Popèenga Qewéewish Pokùy (The Path That Fox Carries the Fire) (LJBLI project) **25-027-01**

To address the critical need for wildfire mitigation and ecological restoration, the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians (the Tribe), a federally recognized tribe, will implement a multi-faceted approach centered on active land stewardship in northern San Diego County. The LJBLI project's core activity is the strategic fuel treatment of 516 acres. The project will use a combination of cultural burning, manual and mechanical methods to thin dense vegetation, remove dead and dying trees killed by the Goldspotted Oak Borer, and reduce hazardous trees and ladder fuels.

This on-the-ground work will create a critical shaded fuelbreak along Highway 76 and restore health to oak woodlands impacted by the Goldspotted Oak Borer. Most salvageable biomass generated will be removed and processed for beneficial reuse.

Under the guidance of the Tribe's cultural fire practitioners, the cultural burns will be planned and implemented for 219 acres of the LJBLI project site. The LJBLI project includes building lasting community resilience through direct engagement and training. The Tribe will develop and host one hands-on wildfire prevention workshop and five wildfire training classes for at least 50 tribal and community members, empowering them with the knowledge and skills for home hardening and fire preparedness.

Site Description:

Located in northern San Diego County, the LJBLI project encompasses 516 acres of culturally and ecologically significant land on the La Jolla Indian Reservation. The site consists of mixed conifer-oak woodlands and chaparral, including a unique stand of pure Engelmann oaks. These habitats are currently in a state of crisis due to prolonged drought and a severe Goldspotted Oak Borer infestation. This has resulted in widespread tree mortality, creating a hazardous accumulation of dead fuels and posing an extreme wildfire risk to the surrounding community and critical infrastructure.

LJBLI project activities are strategically located adjacent to key community assets. A highly visible 104-acre demonstration site near the La Jolla Trading Post will showcase the LJBLI project's methods. Another key unit is located near the Tribal Hall and the La Jolla Indian Campground, a significant public recreational amenity. This site will demonstrate how cultural burning, planned for 219 acres of the LJBLI project area, can be safely implemented in the wildland-urban interface. The entire LJBLI project area is rich with vital cultural resources for the Tribe, and all treatments are designed to protect and enhance these ancestral lands.

Strategic Plan: The LJBLI project will further the following strategic objectives:

Consistent with **Goal 1.1, Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**, the proposed project will benefit the Tribe by bringing back a traditional practice of cultural burning and land stewardship to San Diego County and increase the Tribe's capacity to conduct more cultural burns in the future.

Consistent with **Goal 1.2, Return Power to Tribes**, the proposed project will return power to the Tribe by investing in traditional wildfire practices like cultural burning and land stewardship on their reservation.

Consistent with **Goal 4.2, Wildfire Resilience Projects**, the proposed project includes building lasting community resilience through direct engagement and training. The Tribe will develop and host one hands-on wildfire prevention workshop and five wildfire training classes for at least 50 tribal and community members, empowering them with the knowledge and skills for home hardening and fire preparedness.

CEQA: California Environmental Protection Agency and California Natural Resources Agency have approved the LJBLI project as qualifying for the suspension from state statutes and

regulations, including CEQA, that is set forth in the Governor's March 1, 2025 Proclamation of a State of Emergency. The approval to proceed under the suspension is included as Exhibit 3.

MENDOCINO COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL

\$803,000

**Mendocino Fire Safe Council Community Chipper Days and Work Parties (MCFSC project)
22-058-02**

The Conservancy previously granted funds to Mendocino County Fire Safe Council (MCFSC) for two years of a free community chipper program as described in the attached September 22, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 4). The MCFSC project includes an additional three years of free community chipping service; and implementation of volunteer workdays around vulnerable community structures, the development of a chipper day sustainability plan, and continuing broad community engagement over a three-year period.

The MCFSC project will support and motivate residents in creating defensible space in their neighborhoods by providing free chipping service through Community Chipper Days. As part of the MCFSC project, MCFSC will organize and host Community Work Party Days, volunteer work events where the MCFSC crew provides the volunteers with instruction and equipment for creating defensible space. Work Party Days address wildfire resilience and defensible space at priority local risk buildings and infrastructure, such as community centers. The project will support 75 Chipper Days per year, for three years, and 10 Community Work Party Days per year, for three years, totaling 225 Chipper Days and 30 Community Work Parties. Chipper Days allow residents to create and maintain defensible space around homes and roadways. Community Work Party Days allows MCFSC to bring trained vegetation managers to communities to assist in defensible space and right of way management. Additionally, MCFSC will assess options and develop a plan for sustaining Community Chipper Days after grant funding ends.

Defensible space is one of the most crucial factors in protecting homes in a wildfire event, however the work required is demanding and often expensive. Similarly, neighborhood-level hazards such as overgrown access roads and fuels encroachment around key infrastructure are also often left unaddressed. Both Community Chipper Days and Community Work Parties catalyze community-based action and motivate people to work with their neighbors to develop the habits they need to become wildfire-prepared. Both provide an organizing focus and incentives such as 1) saving the cost of renting or buying a chipper or hiring a tree service, and 2) saving the time and cost of labor to haul brush to a disposal site. Both programs train workers on safe operation of the chipper. Work parties include workers who also have chainsaw experience. These qualifications increase workforce capacity in fuels reduction and provide workers needed skills and training. Both programs focus on risk-reduction where it is needed most – directly around homes, community egress routes, or vital community facilities – and leverage local volunteer labor to maximize the impact of grant support.

Volunteer involvement is an essential element of both programs, which encourage local leadership development in the organizing of these events, nurtured by support from MCFSC staff. Carbon sequestration is also improved by removing small competing vegetation to

support the health of mature trees. Both programs are entirely free to participants, removing any barriers to accessibility regardless of residents' income or disadvantaged status. Local tribes will also be included as a focus of outreach for these services. MCFSC has dedicated 30% of Community Work Parties to be in collaboration with tribes, and an estimated 80% of the MCFSC project will be conducted in disadvantaged communities. MCFSC's crew consists entirely of Mendocino County tribal members who had initial job training in tribal programs and that MCFSC was able to work with to provide a bridge to full-time employment with living wages.

Site Description: Mendocino County spans 3,878 square miles and features both coastal and inland forested habitats. Many subdivisions within Mendocino County were built prior to modern fire-safety standards and a high percentage of residents live in or near the Wildland Urban Interface. Narrow roads and driveways with densely forested areas make the region vulnerable to fast-moving wildfires. Managing fuel loads is a challenge for property owners, particularly seniors, low-income households, those without access to large equipment and without the time or experience to safely pile-burn.

CEQA: The MCFSC project is categorically exempt under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because the project involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under CCR Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth.

Strategic Plan: The MCFSC project will further the following strategic objectives:

Consistent with **Goal 1.1, Benefitting Systemically Excluded Communities**, the proposed project's crew consists of Mendocino County tribal members, the Community Chipper Days serve disadvantaged communities, and 30% of the work party days will be conducted in partnership with tribes.

Consistent with **Goal 1.4, Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects**, the proposed project includes Community Work Party days where volunteers informally learn about defensible space methods and how to implement wildfire resilience around structures.

Consistent with **Goal 4.2, Wildfire Resilience Projects**, the proposed project increases wildfire resiliency by removing vegetation in the Wildland Urban Interface and near people's homes.

UC SAN DIEGO NATURAL RESERVE SYSTEM

\$1,400,000

Demonstrating Wildfire Resilience at Elliott Chaparral Reserve (UCSD project)

25-029-01

University of California San Diego, in collaboration with the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians and other Indigenous organizations, is leading a large-scale eucalyptus removal and habitat restoration project. Trees will be cut down using chainsaws, with stumps ground below grade. Any regrowth will be treated with herbicide to prevent return. Large trees suitable for lumber will be preserved for uses like furniture, fencing, signage, and natural playgrounds. The UCSD project includes members of the San Diego Indigenous community in an active role restoring the land after tree removal including selecting revegetation plants and using plant materials for cultural purposes.

Remaining wood will be separated into branches and trunks (boles). After air-drying onsite for six to twelve months, boles will be processed in a Carbonator to produce biochar—a carbon-rich material that stores carbon and improves soil health. This will be the first major biochar project in San Diego and it aims to demonstrate how low-value eucalyptus can be repurposed into useful products. The biochar will be tested in ten experimental plots at the site.

The restoration will also focus on planting culturally significant native species, identified through Indigenous consultation. Seeds will be collected from the reserve, grown at UC San Diego's Biological Field Station, then acclimated and planted back at the site. Community participation is central to the UCSD project, involving Scripps Ranch residents and UC San Diego students in planting events and seedball-making workshops. A student will also monitor restoration progress as part of a senior Environmental Systems project.

In addition to restoring the landscape, the UCSD project will serve as a demonstration model for other land managers. The overall goal is to inspire broader adoption of this integrated approach to invasive species management and ecological restoration.

Site Description:

UC San Diego's Elliott Chaparral Reserve is located within the Scripps Ranch community of San Diego, with residential neighborhoods to the north and the open space of Marine Air Corps Station Miramar to the south. The 183-acre reserve mostly consists of intact chaparral used for university-level teaching, research, and public service. The northwestern 35 acres of the reserve are covered in non-native eucalyptus trees that were planted in the late 1800s and early 1900s. That area of the reserve abuts a retirement community which has more extensive evacuation needs. Nearly the entire reserve burned in the 2003 Cedar fire.

Strategic Plan: The UCSD project will further the following strategic objectives:

Consistent with **Goal 1.1, Benefitting Systemically Excluded Communities**, the proposed project will be conducted in partnership with tribes and tribal organizations.

Consistent with **Goal 3.2, Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the proposed project will restore biodiversity and re-establish fire-adapted native plants.

Consistent with **Goal 4.2, Wildfire Resilience Projects**, the proposed project will increase wildfire resiliency by removing highly hazardous treats, piloting biochar as a treatment method in San Diego, and planting culturally significant plants.

CEQA: California Environmental Protection Agency and California Natural Resources Agency have approved the proposed project as qualifying for the suspension from state statutes and regulations, including CEQA, that is set forth in the Governor's March 1, 2025 Proclamation of a State of Emergency. The approval to proceed under the suspension is included as Exhibit 3.

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 projects help the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.

See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Strategic Plan” section below.

2. Projects are a good investment of state resources.

The proposed projects are good investments of state funding. All the projects are feasible, have reasonable budgets, and address a demonstrated need for wildfire resilience. The projects implement many statewide wildfire and forest resiliency goals. The proposed projects are also consistent with several state plans, and specifically with the following:

- **California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan** (Governor’s Forest Management Task Force, January 2021), which calls for activities such as fuels reduction, forest thinning, vegetation management, prescribed fire, shaded fuel breaks, defensible space, and enhancement of fire-prone habitats to reduce fire risk.
- The **California Forest Carbon Plan** (California Natural Resources Agency, 2018), which calls for restoration of the natural fire regime and forest composition through a multitude of approaches including thinning, prescribed burns, invasive vegetation management, and shaded fuel breaks.
- The **Community Wildfire Prevention & Mitigation Report** (CAL FIRE, 2019), which urges state and local agencies to implement the goals of the Forest Carbon Plan and provides recommendations to agencies to increase the scale and pace of management and mitigation actions to improve forest health and resiliency.

3. Projects include 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.

Tribes lead two of the proposed wildfire resilience projects. Both of these projects are the direct result of a deep, ongoing community engagement process, planned by the tribes for their members. Both tribal projects directly benefit tribal members.

The UCSD project is partnering with the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians to perform tree removal work. The UCSD project has members of the San Diego Indigenous community in an active role restoring the land after tree removal. UC San Diego Indigenous Futures Institute will engage Indigenous partners in site visits to discuss Indigenous land stewardship practices going forward. The Local Indigenous partners will provide input on culturally significant plants will be incorporated into the planting palette. This restored area (and the rest of the reserve) will be available in the future for sustainable collection of plant material by members of the Kumeyaay Nation, whose ancestral lands Elliott resides on.

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

All of the proposed projects will help increase fire resiliency in the context of anticipated climate change. Fire resilience is a critical issue due to increased average temperatures, reduced marine fog and longer and more severe droughts. California is facing unprecedented

fire risk due to climate change, a growing populace and an increasing number of people living in high fire risk areas, including areas adjacent to wildlands. The 2025 Los Angeles wildfires were two of the most destructive wildfires in recent California history. These wildfires follow years of destructive and deadly catastrophic wildfires in California.

Several projects include long-term investments that will enable wildfire resilience work to continue into the future. For example, UC San Diego’s removal of eucalyptus permanently addresses the invasive and flammable plant.

5. Projects deliver multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The proposed projects were selected because they are multi-benefit projects that will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire impacts to communities. Added benefits of these projects include: tribal engagement, native habitat restoration, workforce training, and public education.

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

Many of the proposed projects will engage with local communities to promote planning and implementation of these wildfire resilience projects. For example, Mendocino County Fire Safe Council Community Chipper and Work Parties educate people, reduce risk, and are requested by the community.

There is enormous public support for wildfire risk reduction. A 2025 poll by the Public Policy Institute found that 81% of Californians are concerned about wildfire risk.

PROJECT FINANCING

State Coastal Conservancy	\$6,353,000
Project Total	\$6,353,000

The anticipated source of funding is an appropriation to the Conservancy from Chapter 3 of the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 codified at Public Resources Code section 90000, et seq. and referred to as the 2024 Climate Bond or Proposition 4. Chapter 3 of the 2024 Climate Bond authorizes the Conservancy to use the funds for “watershed improvement, wildfire resilience, chaparral and forest restoration, and workforce development that addresses needs related to this subdivision and is designed to create career pathways for individuals from disadvantaged communities, severely disadvantaged communities, or vulnerable populations.” (Public Resources Code section 91520(k).) Projects proposed for funding in this staff recommendation are consistent with the funding source because they will increase wildfire resilience of lands and communities. Three of the projects will restore forests or chaparral.

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:

All of the recommended projects will be undertaken pursuant to Section 31113 of Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which authorizes the Conservancy to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy's jurisdiction (Section 31113(a)).

Pursuant to Section 31113(b), the Conservancy is authorized to award grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to undertake projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address extreme weather events, sea level rise, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources.

Pursuant to Section 31113(c), the Conservancy must prioritize grants for projects that maximize public benefits and have one of several purposes, including reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and preserving natural lands.

Consistent with these sections, the proposed projects will restore the health and resilience of California forests, grasslands, and/or natural lands and reduce fire risk to communities. The projects will help California's natural lands to be more resilient to catastrophic wildfires which may ultimately reduce greenhouse gas emissions released from increased wildfires due to climate change.

The proposed projects will improve forests, grasslands, and other natural lands and reduce the risk of wildfire that would adversely impact water quality and habitat in coastal watersheds (Chapter 5.5).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN](#):

The four projects proposed for funding assist the Conservancy in meeting a number of its Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives. Relevant Goals and Objectives are listed below, along with the names of the proposed projects that meet each goal. Please see the "Project Summary" section, above, for how each proposed project meets the relevant goal(s) and objective(s).

Projects proposed for funding are consistent with Strategic Plan goals listed below. Please see the "Project Summary" section, above, for more information on how each proposed project meets these goals.

- **Goal 1.1, Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities:** All four proposed projects directly benefit one or more systemically excluded tribal communities.
- **Goal 1.2, Return Power to Tribes:** The following two proposed projects directly benefit tribal communities.
 - La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians
 - Esselen Tribe of Monterey County

- **Goal 1.4, Workforce Development:** Two of the proposed projects include workforce development.
 - Mendocino County Fire Safe Council
 - Esselen Tribe of Monterey County
- **Goal 4.2, Wildfire Resilience:** All four proposed projects will implement wildfire resilience projects.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

One of the proposed projects is exempt under CEQA, while the other three have received approval from the California Environmental Protection Agency and California Natural Resources Agency to proceed without CEQA compliance under the Governor’s Proclamation of a State of Emergency (Proclamation). Please see the “Project Summary” section above, for more information on each proposed project and why it is exempt from CEQA. Applicable CEQA exemptions are listed below.

Governor Newsom issued the Proclamation on March 1, 2025. The Proclamation declares that California is in a state of emergency due to forest conditions, and it identifies several actions to address wildfire risk across California. To expedite critical fuels reduction projects, the Proclamation suspends, subject to approval of the Secretaries of the California Environmental Protection Agency and California Natural Resources Agency, certain California statutory and regulatory requirements, including CEQA. Three of the projects have been granted an emergency suspension from all state statutes and regulations. Suspension documents are included as Exhibit 3.

The MCFSC project is exempt under CEQA using the following exemptions:

- 14 CCR Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) exempts projects that consist of operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alterations of existing structures, facilities, or topographical features, involving negligible expansion of existing or former use of a site. Such projects include, but are not limited to, management of existing landscaping, native growth, and roads. The projects that qualify for this exemption involve management of existing native vegetation through the removal of dead and dying trees, thinning, reduction of ladder fuels, grazing, and other similar activities; and maintenance of fire roads and emergency access roads.
- 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) exempts projects that involve minor alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The projects that qualify for this exemption involve management of existing native vegetation through the removal of dead, dying, and immature trees, thinning, reduction of ladder fuels, grazing, and other similar activities. These fuel management activities will not change the nature of the land or alter the basic character of the vegetation and habitat at the project sites.

Upon approval of the projects, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption for the MCFSC project.