

Ch. 5 COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

June 15, 2017

COMMUNITY WETLAND RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM

Project No. 12-026-02

Project Manager: Kerstin Kalchmayr

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$278,710 to 10 nonprofit organizations and public agencies for the 2017 Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program, a program of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, for community-based restoration projects in Southern California coastal wetlands and watersheds in Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles and San Diego counties.

LOCATION: Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, and San Diego counties coastal wetlands and watersheds.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Coastal Education, Resource Enhancement

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Locations Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [2017 CWRGP Projects Summary Table; CWRGP Grant Announcement & Application](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31119, 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of up to two hundred and seventy-eight thousand, seven hundred and ten dollars (\$278,710) for 10 grants to specific nonprofit organizations and public agencies for community-based resource enhancement projects in Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles and San Diego counties, as more specifically described in the accompanying staff recommendation. These authorizations are subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds for each project, each project grantee shall submit for the review and approval of the Conservancy’s Executive Officer:
 - a. A work program, including project tasks, schedule and budget;
 - b. Names and qualifications of all contractors to be employed on the project; and

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c. Evidence that all necessary permits and approvals for the project have been obtained.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

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

1. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapters 3 and 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding undertaking educational projects for K-12 students relating to the coastal resources (Ch.3) and enhancement of coastal resources (Ch.6).
3. Ventura Hillside Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Friends of the Santa Clara River, Friends of Colorado Lagoon, Earth Discovery Institute, Ocean Discovery Institute, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, and The Ocean Foundation all are nonprofit organizations qualified under Section 501 (c) (3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code. The purposes of these nonprofit organizations are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$278,710 to certain nonprofit organizations and/or public agencies to implement 10 community-based resource enhancement projects along the Southern California coast as part of the 2017 Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project’s Community Based Wetland Restoration Program (CWRGP).

CWRGP is a program of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (WRP) jointly managed by the Conservancy, Earth Island Institute and Wildlife Conservation Board. The program provides funding annually for community-based restoration projects in coastal wetlands and watersheds in the Southern California region. The purpose of CWRGP is to further the wetland recovery goals of the WRP Regional Strategy; 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 program must include educational and community involvement elements as strong components of the project.

CWRGP typically funds 10 to 12 projects per year with an annual budget of approximately \$300,000. Each January, CWRGP solicits proposals from nonprofit organizations, universities, tribes and agencies eligible to apply to the CWRGP. Proposals are reviewed by a technical advisory committee that includes staff from the Conservancy, Earth Island Institute, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and other WRP partner agencies. Projects are selected by late spring with the work beginning in late summer or early fall. Projects funded through the CWRGP are designed to be completed in one to two years. The total amount recommended for this authorization is expected to fund 1 year of the grant cycle, lasting through 2018.

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Project selection for the 2017 CWRGP was completed in March, 2017. Of this year's projects, eight were proposed by nonprofit organizations, one was proposed by a city agency and one was proposed by a university. The 10 projects selected to be funded this year are as follows:

Santa Barbara County

Whittier Channel Restoration Project

The Whittier Channel Restoration project will regrade the channel banks at a gentler slope and revegetate the project area with riparian and freshwater wetland vegetation. The existing narrow 415-foot storm drain channel will be altered to create a wider, gently sloping riparian corridor and freshwater wetland approximately 1.25 acres in size. Altering the banks will provide for a more natural flood plain that can effectively respond to the flashy storm water flows characteristic of this system. The project will be carried out by the University of California Santa Barbara Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration.

The Whittier Channel is located on the north side of the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) North Campus Open Space site (NCOS), a restoration project that is restoring the former Ocean Meadows Golf course to a tidal wetland. The Whittier Channel Restoration project is able to integrate the local community and disadvantaged students into the larger NCOS restoration project by providing opportunities for hands-on restoration. The proposed project site is easily accessible and visible as it is adjacent to a public access parking lot and street.

The proposed project will collaborate with a number of local schools and non-profit organizations to provide experiential opportunities for students and community members at the project site. These partners include the UCSB nonprofit student group "Your Children's Trees", Kids in Nature II, Santa Barbara Audubon Society, Department of Water Resources Urban Streams Program, The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County, and local community members.

Once the channel banks have been graded to a more natural slope, project partners will host a series of restoration events where community members and student groups will propagate locally sourced seeds, plant and irrigate riparian and wetland seedlings, and remove and control non-native plants. The species palette proposed for planting includes riparian trees such as cottonwood, sycamore, live oaks and arroyo willows. In addition, a diversity of small fruit bearing species such as elderberry, black berry, wild rose, snowberry, Santa Barbara honeysuckle (a California Native Plant Society species of concern) will help support bird life. Additional flowering species and wetland adapted species such as bulrush, penstemon, common rush, mulefat and iris-leaved rush will also be planted to enhance support for invertebrates such as pollinators and dragon flies.

Total Project Cost: \$69,000

Grant Amount: \$29,924

Grantee: University of California Santa Barbara (Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration)

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B and 5D by restoring a wetland and stream corridor and enhancing its

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floodplain.

- Goal 9, objective 9A because the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is a small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria. (See additional discussion in the “Compliance with CEQA” section below for each project).

Ventura County

Cañada Larga Creek-Hayden Preserve Restoration Project

The Ventura Hillside Conservancy (VHC) will build on its existing, highly successful volunteer program, and recruit 50-100 volunteers to participate in the Cañada Larga Creek-Hayden Preserve Restoration Project, comprising a series of restoration events along its approximately 2-acre Hayden Preserve property. Restoration activities will include *Arundo donax* and other invasive species removal using hand tools, as well as trash removal. Once *A. donax* has been removed, a licensed sub-contractor will apply herbicide to help control this highly invasive grass. The herbicide treatment is considered a best management practice for *A. donax* removal. (Ventura County Resource Conservation District *Final Report for the Arundo and Tamarisk Removal Plan in the Upper Santa Clara River Watershed*; Bell, G., *Ecology and Management of Arundo Donax, and Approaches To Riparian Habitat Restoration in Southern California* (1997)).

Additionally, VHC will bring local students on field trips to perform water quality sampling, assist in restoration activities and experience a wide geography of the Ventura River watershed. Ten field trips will bring in 20-30 students each to visit the Matilija Dam, Big Rock Reserve, Hayden Preserve and the Ventura River Estuary. Here students will learn about water quality and the larger Ventura River system. VHC will also host restoration and education workdays with two local Regional Occupational Program Environmental Field Studies classes from Buena and Ventura High School. Students will be engaged in plant identification, invasive species removal, water quality issues, and be taught the importance of river and wetland restoration. Transportation for student classes for all field trips will be provided by VHC. The Hayden Preserve contains critical habitat for endangered steelhead trout and red-legged frogs, but has been severely compromised due to previous filling and construction of revetments. VHC staff will work with its Stewardship Committee volunteers to develop a stewardship plan that will remove the concrete revetments and reshape the streambed to restore this section of a Ventura River tributary.

Total Project Cost: \$47,200

Grant Amount: \$20,700

Grantee: Ventura Hillside Conservancy

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5A, 5B and 5D by developing plans for a restoring a streambed and

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stream corridor, and enhancing a coastal watershed.

- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. It is also categorically exempt under Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is as small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria. In addition, the field-trip portion of the proposed project is categorically exempt under Section 15306, information collection, as students will be collecting basic data, for educational purposes that will not result in a major habitat disturbance.

Sespe Cienega Riparian Restoration Project on the Santa Clara River

The Sespe Cienega was historically one of the most extensive perennial wetlands of the Santa Clara River flood plain. The proposed project, under the direction of Friends of the Santa Clara River, will restore 10 acres of riparian habitat within the Sespe Cienega while encouraging community involvement and education. This proposed project is part of a larger effort to eliminate invasive species, especially *Arundo donax*, from an extensive reach of the Santa Clara River and restore the riparian corridor and native vegetation for wildlife habitat and other ecosystem services. Project partners include Riparian Invasion Research Lab (RIVRLab) and the Cheadle Center for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration at UCSB; California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW); Foothill Technology High School, City of Ventura; Oxnard College; Ventura County chapters of the Sierra Club and the Audubon Society; and the Fillmore and Santa Paula Unified School Districts.

Restoration activities for this proposed project will focus on non-native species removal (castor bean, tree tobacco, annual forbs and grasses), plant propagation and planting native species once CDFW has re-contoured the river bank, (the latter activity is not part of the proposed project). Proposed project activities will focus on restoring the site into various wetland habitats such as wetland meadow, riparian scrub, and cottonwood-willow woodland by planting the relevant species.

Students from the local Fillmore and Santa Paula Unified School Districts and local community members will be involved in restoration and education activities at the site. Students will be taught plant identification, field methods and data collection skills. Additionally, as the site was historically important to the Chumash peoples, an experienced Chumash cooperative will be brought in to teach students about the cultural practices of this local tribe at the site. An approximately 2-acre restoration plot within the area will also be set aside for use as an interpretive garden. Here students will have the opportunity to observe and learn about native plant-pollinator interactions, plant-herbivore interactions and ethnobotanical practices of the Chumash peoples.

Total Project Cost: \$49,250

Grant Amount: \$28,500

Grantee: Friends of the Santa Clara River

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

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- Goal 5, objective 5B and 5D by restoring a coastal stream corridor, and enhancing a coastal watershed and floodplain.
- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (minor alterations to land) that does not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. Revegetation activities will improve habitat for wildlife, or native fish and reduce or eliminate erosion and sedimentation. In addition, the field-trip portion of the proposed project is categorically exempt under Section 15306, information collection, as students will be collecting basic data, for educational purposes that will not result in a major habitat disturbance.

Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project

The Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project will enable The Nature Conservancy to plant coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and Island scrub oak (*Q. pacifica*) trees in areas where Eucalyptus trees have been removed. These oak plantings will occur in riparian areas of three key watersheds (Cañada del Medio, Cañada del Portezuela, and Cañada del Puerto) that drain into the recently restored Prisoner's Harbor wetland on Santa Cruz Island. Planting the recently stripped riparian corridors with native species will help outcompete non-native species, and reduce erosion and excessive sediment deposition to the downstream wetland. The proposed project will additionally fund the construction of a local nursery on Santa Cruz Island and retrofit an existing nursery on Anacapa Island that suffered some wind damage. The Santa Cruz Island nursery will be relocated to a new coastal location where temperatures are more amenable to plant propagation. The new nursery will be located within existing facilities where plumbing infrastructure is already present within the footprint of an old ranch. These local nurseries are critical to the implementation of restoration projects and rare plant recovery efforts on the Channel Islands. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Channel Islands National Park (CINP) protocols do not allow for container stock to be grown on the mainland and taken to the islands due to biosecurity risks. In the past, many garden pest species were introduced to the islands through container stock for landscaping, and have become highly invasive.

The nursery on West Santa Cruz Island will support the restoration efforts outlined in this proposed project, and the nursery on East Anacapa Island will support restoration efforts there. The nursery on Anacapa Island supports the restoration of coastal scrub that is home to a suite of riparian species of plants and salamanders. A suite of volunteers operate the nursery to remove invasive plants and plant scrub vegetation. Native vegetation, once in place, will stabilize the soil and eliminate the disturbance that creates opportunities for invasive plants. TNC and CINP will recruit and coordinate approximately 100 volunteers from the California Islands resource management community and the local environmental community in the restoration of the island and reinforcement of the nursery.

Total Project Cost: \$60,000

Grant Amount: \$30,000

Grantee: The Nature Conservancy

Enabling Legislation: Chapter 6: Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B and 5D by restoring coastal habitats such as stream corridors, and enhancing a coastal watershed.
- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The restoration portion proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. It is also categorically exempt under Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is a small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria. In addition, the nursery retrofit and relocation portions project is categorically exempt under Section 15301, existing facilities, that allows for the repair of an existing facility involving negligible or no expansion of an existing use, and further allows for the construction of an accessory (appurtenant) structure within existing facilities.

Los Angeles County

Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project

The Henrietta Basin is a seven-acre storm water runoff basin that simultaneously serves as an ecologically-significant open space in the highly urban landscape of the City of Torrance. It provides valuable groundwater recharge, prevents urban runoff from entering into Santa Monica Bay and serves as a habitat corridor for small mammals, birds, rodents, and insects. Recently the northern area of the Basin was restored into a functioning wetland and already attracts a wide variety of waterfowl and shorebirds as well as sensitive species such as Pacific tree frog and two-striped garter snake. The proposed project will enable the City of Torrance to expand the total wetland area of the basin to approximately four acres by restoring the Basin's southern portion. Increasing wetland acreage will improve and expand the total habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, and expand on educational programming for local students. The Basin is in walking distance from three local schools that serve disadvantaged communities: West High School, Victor Elementary and South Bay Junior Academy; making it an ideal location for environmental educational programming that involves frequent site visits.

Restoration activities for the southern side of the Basin will include the removal of invasive species, debris and trash, and thinning out a dense growth of tule (California bulrush). The City of Torrance also plans to construct an earthen weir to facilitate ponding past the wet season, grade wetland areas and create an island to provide breeding areas for birds. Native species such as mulefat, cattails, and black willow will be planted on the island and along the public trails of the Basin.

The Friends of Madrona Marsh will also participate in the proposed project by organizing community members and students to help in debris removal, weeding, planting native species and general maintenance. Through a Habitat Conservation Fund grant, the City of Torrance will also be developing curriculum-based educational modules for K-12 school groups. These modules will incorporate age-appropriate environmental education that uses the Henrietta Basin

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as an outdoor classroom and laboratory. Here elementary students will be introduced to wetlands ecology, and high school students will conduct hands-on experiments with water quality measurements and water-level monitoring.

In addition to these invaluable educational opportunities, the Henrietta Basin Restoration Project itself will provide a significant opportunity for community and student involvement. Volunteers from Local Eagle Scouts will participate in building nursery tables and a path on the west side of the Basin. Henrietta Basin staff and visitors also participate in species counts, including the annual Audubon Society Christmas Count, providing valuable data to researchers. The Project will allow Henrietta Basin to serve as a “living laboratory” for wetlands research projects like the national chytrid fungus data collection that is currently happening at the Basin.

Total Project Cost: \$97,600

Grant Amount: \$30,000

Grantee: City of Torrance

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B and 5D by restoring and enhancing coastal wetlands and watersheds.
- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. It is also categorically exempt under Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is as small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria. In addition, the field-trip portions of the project are categorically exempt under Section 15306, information collection, as students will be collecting basic data, for educational purposes that will not result in a major habitat disturbance.

Colorado Lagoon: Salt Marsh and Transition Zone Adaptive Management Project

From 2012-2014, Friends of the Colorado Lagoon (FOCL) implemented a major community-based restoration project on the western arm of the Colorado Lagoon. With the help of more than 5,000 volunteers, critical salt marsh and transition zone habitat was revegetated after the area had undergone dredging and scouring. More than 18,000 plants were installed by community volunteers and have been maintained through FOCL’s year-round community-based habitat maintenance programs. The western arm of the lagoon is now host to expanding coastal salt marsh and transition zone plant communities that support wetland dependent species of birds, insects, invertebrates, and marine fish. This western arm refuge has improved the quality, diversity, and acreage of wetland habitat around the Colorado Lagoon.

As is the case with many newly created habitats, over the last three years of maintenance and monitoring, FOCL’s management team has observed several formerly restored portions of the western arm that aren’t performing as well as others. These areas require a concerted effort to make their restoration self-sustaining over the long-term. FOCL’s management team proposes to implement key adaptive management actions to ensure the success of these restored areas.

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The FOCL's key actions for the proposed project in the salt marsh and transition habitats include: soil amending, changing plant installation techniques based on soil conditions, promoting salt marsh and transition zone species with high success rates in trouble areas; seeding in upper marsh areas and removing non-native vegetation in transition habitats that have suffered from major disturbance events.

Under the supervision of FOCL's restoration and education team, approximately 1,500 community volunteers and local students (3rd grade – University) will implement these adaptive management actions over a series of established monthly volunteer events. Students and community members will gain experience in hands-on restoration techniques and learn about the importance of coastal and wetland habitats from local restoration ecologists.

Total Project Cost: \$61,700

Grant Amount: \$28,700

Grantee: Friends of the Colorado Lagoon

Enabling Legislation: Chapter 6: Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B by restoring coastal wetlands.
- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. It is also categorically exempt under Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is as small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria.

San Diego County

Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands Project

The San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy (SELCO) has been a community leader in habitat restoration and conservation education since its creation in 1987. Up to this point in time, SELCO has offered two very distinct programs to educate and engage the community in restoration activities. Its Citizens Restoring Coastal Habitats (CRCH) program solely focuses on engaging restoration volunteers in various methods of habitat restoration. Alternatively, its existing conservation education program hosts K-12 field trips to learn about wetlands. Students are taken on field trips that provide guided nature walks, classroom activities, engaging discussions, and writing assignments.

In order to enhance its educational programming, SELCO proposes a project that will combine the efforts of both existing programs to maximize the overall learning experience of students and restore native wetland habitat. The proposed "Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands" project will target K-12 students from at least six North County San Diego schools. SELCO will work with partner conservation education programs to provide hands-on work events that give students the opportunity to learn about wetlands and watersheds, while restoring wetland habitats. Students will be able to connect classroom lessons such as water resources, biodiversity, and habitat loss

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to an activity that directly benefits their coastal wetlands. All students will first learn about the ecology of the San Elijo Lagoon Reserve (Reserve) and its habitats, followed by a hands-on lesson on the methods and processes of habitat restoration. Several classes will be visiting twice giving them the opportunity for more engagement.

The students will be working at three different sites with the Reserve footprint gaining exposure to the different habitats present at the San Elijo Lagoon: coastal salt marsh, coastal sage scrub and alkali marsh. With this project students will be conducting every step in the habitat restoration process. These activities include: identifying and removing invasive plant species, collecting seeds and propagules from the reserve, propagating native plants, and planting native plants.

Total Project Cost: \$37,600

Grant Amount: \$29,900

Grantee: San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B by enhancing coastal wetlands.
- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under CCR Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. It is also categorically exempt under Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is as small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria.

Ocean Discovery Institute: Watershed Avengers Project

Since 2007, the Ocean Discovery Institute (ODI) has successfully educated and engaged the underserved urban community of City Heights, San Diego in various restoration activities within degraded City Heights' canyons. Most recently ODI, together with its partner San Diego Canyonlands, have been working with local communities to restore the severely impacted Manzanita Canyon. Manzanita Canyon falls within the coastal sub-watershed of Chollas Creek, that is currently considered to be one of the most impaired waterbodies in San Diego County.

Through urban native greening initiatives, invasive plant and trash removal, ODI has involved the community to help restore Manzanita Canyon's native riparian corridor and reduce the amount of pollution that flows downstream into San Diego Bay's wetlands. In order to broaden its ecological and social impact, ODI aims to increase the frequency of restoration efforts in the Manzanita Canyon. In the fall 2017, ODI will open its state-of-the-art 'Living Lab' educational facility at the head of Manzanita Canyon. The Living Lab will be a 12,000 square foot cutting-edge facility with 35,000 square feet of outdoor, natural features and will be a focal point for community engagement.

Through this grant, ODI intends to serve three times as many local students by increasing the regularity of its restoration and education events, expanding the initial efforts of the one-day Watershed Avengers event into regular, consistent restoration activities in Manzanita Canyon. Some restoration events will occur on a weekly basis and will involve trash and invasive species

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removal, and watershed science education. Other restoration events, that are more resource intensive, will occur monthly and will expand on weekly events by discussing and designing strategies to remove trash, planting and watering native species and providing an in-depth exploration of a particular topic such as hydrology, soil science, and wetland ecology.

Total Project Cost: \$419,200

Grant Amount: \$30,000

Grantee: Ocean Discovery Institute

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B and 5D by enhancing coastal wetlands and coastal watersheds.
- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under CCR Section 15304, minor alterations to land that does not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project's revegetation activities will result in an improvement of habitat for wildlife and fish.

Earth Discovery Institute Explorers: River Rangers Project

Earth Discovery Institute (EDI) has successfully been working with students from Title I (low-income) school districts for the past five years and is committed to engaging them with fun outdoor experiences. EDI's educational programming introduces students to nature and encourages them to think scientifically.

The proposed River Rangers project will target fourth graders and demonstrate to them the need for habitat restoration and environmental stewardship. Students will learn about watershed connections and how activities upland can impact river habitat and water quality further downstream. The proposed project site is an approximately 100-acre area of the Sweetwater River in the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) managed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Students will first visit an upland area adjacent to the Sweetwater River and then go down to a riparian zone along the banks of the river. A total of 210 fourth grade students (6 classes) will participate in the program. Each class will be visited at its school by the EDI Education Coordinator to discuss science and ecosystem issues, and identify how upper and lower watershed areas are related. Subsequently, students will take two science service-learning field trips to the project site where habitat improvement activities will be incorporated into their hands-on science curriculum.

At the upland site, which supports the threatened California gnatcatcher and endangered San Diego ambrosia, students will plant coastal sage scrub community plants. At the riparian site, students will explore the river bank populated by oaks, sycamores, willows, and birds, including the endangered Least Bell's vireo, and plant riparian trees, understory plants and acorns. Students will plant at least 420 coastal sage scrub plants, riparian trees and understory plants, and at least 210 oak trees. Each class will also design a sign to be installed along the river trail with messages for recreational users about riverine, riparian and wetland habitats and how people can contribute to habitat improvement.

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Additionally, EDI has two volunteer crews that work on a weekly basis to help support the student's restoration work and assist in maintenance activities of the site such as sign installation, hand weeding and irrigation. Student and volunteer restoration work will be aided through invasive species removal by EDI's contractors in the current restoration area. These areas will be treated 1–2 times to diminish competition for resources by non-native plants. The timing of treatments will be determined by the Refuge biologist.

Total Project Cost: \$53,328

Grant Amount: \$29,986

Grantee: Earth Discovery Institute

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B and 5D by restoring coastal sage scrub community and enhance coastal watersheds.
- Goal 9, objective 9A and 9B as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources and will support the installation of interpretive display.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under CCR Section 15304, minor alterations to land that does not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project's revegetation activities upland and along the river bank will result in an improvement of habitat for wildlife and fish. It is also categorically exempt under Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is as small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria.

Ocean Connectors Project at Paradise Creek

Ocean Connectors (a program of The Ocean Foundation) will engage 70 underserved students, their parents, and other residents, using education, outreach, and the restoration of approximately one acre of habitat around Paradise Creek in National City. Paradise Creek contains ecologically-sensitive habitats with vulnerabilities to urban runoff and invasive species, and requires targeted restoration efforts to create suitable habitat for native species and safe community access for bird watching, walking, and interpretation.

The Creek is also located immediately adjacent to Kimball Elementary, where Ocean Connectors has provided environmental education programs for nearly ten years. The Creek's location has allowed students to regularly visit their project site and observe first-hand how their efforts are benefitting the environment. Ocean Connectors uses a bilingual (English and Spanish) classroom curriculum, educating elementary students and their parents about stewardship actions, such as pollution prevention, waste reduction, water conservation, and preparing for climate-related risks such as flooding and drought.

The proposed project, a collaboration between the Ocean Foundation (for its Ocean Connectors Program) and the Paradise Creek Educational Park, Incorporated (PCEPI), will expand the Ocean Connector's educational program at Kimball Elementary School to include 3rd grade students. Third graders will get an opportunity to be actively engaged in restoration activities to help restore a segment of Paradise Creek's wetland and riparian corridor. They will learn about

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the major impacts on coastal habitats and wildlife, such as drought, overdevelopment, water contamination, trash, climate change, and invasive species. In the field students will be taught restoration methods such as native plant revegetation, invasive plant removal and litter abatement.

Total Project Cost: \$38,500

Grant Amount: \$30,000

Grantee: The Ocean Foundation

Enabling Legislation: Chapters 3 and 6: Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement

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

- Goal 5, objective 5B and 5D by enhancing coastal wetlands and coastal watersheds.
- Goal 9, objective 9A as the proposed project improves the public understanding of coastal resources.

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under CCR Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. It is also categorically exempt under Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is as small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria.

SITE DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT SITES:

The Community Wetlands Restoration Program (CWRGP) encompasses the Southern California coastal region from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County to the United States border with Mexico (Exhibit 1). This region includes Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties. Coastal watersheds that drain to the Pacific Ocean are included in the geographic scope of the program as well as the Channel Islands. Project locations include coastal wetlands, tidal marshes, rivers, streams, as well as buffer zones including dunes, river banks and coastal sage scrub habitats.

Many of the project locations were historical flood plains and extensive wetland ecosystems that have been degraded and fragmented over the past 100 years. Others are discreet pocket wetlands that, while small and sometimes isolated from other habitat, cumulatively comprise a critical natural resource for native flora and fauna in a highly urbanized environment.

Below are the specific site descriptions for the ten projects selected for the 2017 CWRGP.

Santa Barbara County

Whittier Channel Restoration Project

The Whittier Channel is a 415 foot long, 0.26 acre storm channel partially vegetated with bulrush. It runs from Whittier Drive west of Storke Road in Goleta on UCSB North Campus through a 3.7 acre degraded fill area. The channel carries storm water from the Camino Real Marketplace and adjacent neighborhood storm drains, through the Whittier wetland and then drains into the former Ocean Meadows Golf course, which is being restored to a tidal wetland as part of the North Campus Open Space Restoration Project (NCOS). The channel currently has

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steep, vertical slopes and is bordered by weeds and two small willows. In its present condition, Whittier Channel provides very little habitat support. The proposed project lies within property owned by UCSB.

Ventura County

Cañada Larga Creek-Hayden Preserve Restoration Project

The Hayden Preserve lies at the confluence of the Cañada Larga Creek and Ventura River at the base of the Cañada Larga valley just northeast of HWY 33 in Ventura, CA. The property includes a long stretch of Cañada Larga Creek and associated steep creek-bank to the north and floodplain between the creek and Cañada Larga Road, which marks the property's southern boundary. The creek portion of the property contains relatively intact riparian vegetation, but the banks have been severely compromised due to legal and/or illegal riprap and other concrete "fill" used to bolster and heighten the southern creek bank to protect the property. The area between the creek and the road is significantly degraded, having been altered for residential use. Large flat concrete pads consume what would otherwise be riparian upland scrub and oak woodland/chaparral habitat adjacent to the core creek-riparian habitat. With proper restoration and management over time, the non-creek portion of the property will transition to mulefat and willow scrub habitat enhanced by sycamores, cottonwoods, coast live oaks and valley oaks. Hayden Preserve is owned by the Ventura Hillsides Conservancy.

Sespe Cienega Riparian Restoration Project on the Santa Clara River

The Santa Clara River (SCR) is one of the only major river systems in southern California that retains much of its natural hydrology, sustaining riparian vegetation that yields valuable ecosystem services. The proposed project location is within the SCR floodplain near the city of Fillmore (Ventura County). This reach has naturally rising groundwater and comprised a historic 'cienega' or 'marshland' that, besides harboring abundant wildlife, also served Native American communities and later European settlers. This proposed project is part of a larger effort that will acquire and restore approximately 500 acres of the historical Sespe Cienega riparian habitat along the Santa Clara River. The Riparian Restoration for the Sespe Cienega Project will focus on a 10-acre parcel north of the Fillmore Fish Hatchery grounds and will be the first step toward the larger restoration project. The proposed project can be implemented immediately as the site is already held by CDFW, which will assist by carrying out pre-planting land preparation.

Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project

Santa Cruz Island (SCI) is the most biologically diverse of the eight California Channel Islands and is home to 12 endemic species; nine endangered or threatened plants; and the recently delisted Santa Cruz Island fox. Santa Cruz Island is 96 square miles in size and has 77 miles of coastline. Two parallel mountain ranges create a major central valley and steep canyons that descend to the coastline off rugged peaks over 2,000 feet high. Twenty-four percent of the island is managed by the Channel Islands National Park (CINP); the other 76 percent is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) as its "flagship" preserve. The majority of this

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proposed project will take place on SCI in all three sub-watersheds of the Central Valley: Cañada del Medio, Cañada del Portezuela, and Cañada del Puerto, and consists of a respectively one-mile, two-mile, and three-mile stretch of riparian corridor that terminates at the recently restored Prisoners' Harbor wetland. This proposed project will be conducted solely on TNC property in collaboration with National Park Service (NPS), who are both working to enhance and restore the riparian corridor and wetland complex.

Los Angeles County

Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project

Henrietta Basin is located in an urban, highly developed South Santa Monica Bay area in the City of Torrance. Officially opened to the public in 2015, Henrietta Basin is an innovative seven-acre storm water runoff basin that also serves as an ecologically-significant urban open space. The Basin provides valuable groundwater recharge and prevents urban runoff from flowing to the Santa Monica Bay, preventing beach closures due to high bacteria levels. The northern portion of the Basin has been restored to a wetland and attracts a wide variety of species such as grebes, greater yellowlegs, bufflehead, green herons, egrets, and many shorebirds. Sensitive species such as the two-striped garter snake, Pacific chorus frog and salamanders have an expanded and enhanced habitat. The site contains more than 60 native plants and trees known for their capacity to sequester carbon, including coast live oak, Fremont cottonwood, and California sycamore. Restoration will occur on the southern side of the Basin. The southern two-thirds of the site currently consists of a small area of open water, several stands of trees, and a seasonal wetland. Water enters the Basin from the southeast corner of the site. The proposed project area is currently degraded. Invasive non-native plants and tules have nearly eliminated all open-water habitat. Trash is tangled with the roots of trees. Debris from past uses of the basin takes up valuable potential habitat. The Basin is owned by the City of Torrance.

Colorado Lagoon: Salt Marsh and Transition Zone Adaptive Management Project

The L-shaped Colorado Lagoon is a 33-acre facility centrally located in the City of Long Beach. This urban wetland is surrounded by residences, parks, municipal golf courses, and three public schools, but retains the connection to the Pacific Ocean through a box culvert connected to Alamitos Bay. The Lagoon is one of the few remaining wetlands in the Long Beach area that supports critical salt marsh habitat and a diverse community of wetland plants and animals. While places like this exist nearby (i.e. Bolsa Chica Wetlands), most of them are ecological reserves and are not readily accessible to the public like Colorado Lagoon. This location allows for the unique opportunity for the community to interact directly with this rare coastal ecosystem and play an integral role in the restoration and long-term maintenance of sensitive coastal habitat areas at the Lagoon. Restoration activities for the proposed project will take place along the western arm of the Lagoon. The grantee, Friends of the Colorado Lagoon, has been granted access to the site by the landowner, City of Long Beach.

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San Diego County

Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands Project

San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve is one of the largest of the few remaining coastal wetlands of San Diego County. Located between the coastal cities of Encinitas and Solana Beach, the San Elijo Lagoon forms the coastal terminus of the 54,000 acre Escondido Creek watershed and is home to over 700 species of plants, birds and other animals, many of which are threatened or endangered. It is known throughout the U.S. as a destination for dedicated birders and as an “Important Bird Area” by the National Audubon Society. The lagoon is part of the San Elijo Lagoon State Ecological Reserve (Reserve), that consists of nearly 1,000 acres of diverse habitat including: coastal strand, brackish/freshwater, salt marsh, riparian scrub, coastal sage scrub and mixed chaparral.

There are three specific locations within the Reserve identified for this proposed project: 1) the coastal salt marsh and coastal sage scrub transition zones along the Rios Trail in the central basin; 2) Alkali marsh and southern riparian scrub habitats along Escondido and Lux Creeks; and 3) San Elijo Native Plant Nursery located at Santa Inez Trailhead in the east basin. Combined, these three sites make 1.41 acres.

Ocean Discovery Institute: Watershed Avengers Project

The proposed project site at Manzanita Canyon is approximately 7.56 acres in size and is located in the heart of City Heights, a highly-urbanized, high poverty community in the middle of San Diego. The Canyon is an Open Space coastal stream corridor and part of the Chollas Creek sub-watershed within the Pueblo watershed, tributary to San Diego Bay and its various wetland habitats, including the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The Chollas Creek sub-watershed is labeled one of the most impaired waterbodies in San Diego County, due in large part to significant runoff from the surrounding urban environment and storm drain outfalls. Surveys of the three major watersheds that discharge into San Diego Bay’s wetlands found the Chollas Creek tributaries to be a major contributor of plastic debris into the Bay’s mudflat and intertidal ecosystems, indicating that urban plastics debris is not only a pollutant in these coastal watersheds, but also poses a threat to the health of the Bay. Manzanita Canyon is under the jurisdiction of the City of San Diego.

Manzanita Canyon includes 6 major native vegetation communities, 6 major non-native vegetation communities, and a variety of bird, mammal, reptile, and insect species. The Canyon is blighted with many of the challenges common in urban areas, including introduced invasive plants; degraded, un-vegetated, and eroded slopes; trash accumulations and illegal dumping; homeless encampments; and high volume storm water flows.

Earth Discovery Institute Explorers: Rivers Rangers Project

The San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (SDNWR) encompasses more than 12,000 acres in inland southern San Diego County, and is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The proposed project will take place at the Sweetwater River unit of the SDNWR, along the Sweetwater River in Rancho San Diego/Spring Valley. The proposed project area of

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approximately 100 acres sits along the east side of the Sweetwater River just south of State Hwy 94. Habitat types include the oak-willow-sycamore riparian forest, remnant oak woodland, coastal sage scrub (CSS), and native and non-native grasslands. Native habitat has been diminished since the time of European settlement by removal of native oaks from the uplands and riparian areas, by agriculture immediately adjacent to the river, and—previous to achieving refuge status—uncontrolled recreational use. With EDI and others, the USFWS has partnered to restore the area habitat through invasive plant removal, native planting, and trail and signage improvements. The proposed project area is used by hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, dog-walkers, wildlife-watchers, and photographers; and is the most highly used and publicly visible area of the SDNWR.

The Ocean Foundation: Ocean Connectors Project at Paradise Creek

The proposed project site is at an one-acre parcel around Paradise Creek, an urban stream and wetland area in National City that is heavily impacted by litter, invasive species, urban development, and inadequate public access. The site contains ecologically-sensitive habitats with vulnerabilities to urban runoff, and invasive species, and requires targeted restoration efforts to create suitable habitat for native species and safe community access, for activities such as bird watching, walking, and interpretation. The proposed restoration site is located immediately adjacent to one of the partner schools in National City, Kimball Elementary.

CWRGP PROJECT HISTORY:

The Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project is a partnership of 18 state and federal agencies, working in concert with local governments, environmental organizations and the business community to acquire, restore and enhance coastal wetlands and watersheds.

At the WRP's October 2000 symposium, there was clear consensus that in order to be successful, the WRP needed a strong education and community outreach component to its programs. The Small Grants Program, now named the Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program (CWRGP), was conceived as a way to further this objective while also building institutional capacity in the five counties for planning and implementing restoration projects.

In January 2001, at the same time that proposals were solicited to update the WRP Work Plan, applications for the formerly-entitled Small Grant Program (now CWRGP) were posted on the WRP's website and a program announcement was emailed to over 800 people. The WRP's nonprofit partner, Environment Now, housed the program for the first eight years.

Earth Island Institute (EII), another WRP nonprofit partner, administers and helps fund the CWRGP in cooperation with Conservancy staff. Each year EII releases a request for proposals and convenes a proposal review team, comprised of WRP partner agency representatives and EII staff, to evaluate and select projects that fulfill the goals of the CWRGP. EII staff also provides technical support to grantees as they implement their restoration projects.

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Since its inception, CWRGP has completed 146 projects with over \$ 3.1 million spent on project implementation. Several of the organizations initially funded through the CWRGP have gone on to develop and implement larger scale acquisition and restoration projects for inclusion on the WRP Work Plan. The list of such organizations includes University of California Santa Barbara, The Nature Conservancy and Friends of Colorado Lagoon. These and other organizations underscore CWRGP’s ability to help develop the skills and capacity in groups, through small project design and implementation, to take on larger projects for the purpose of Southern California wetlands recovery.

PROJECT FINANCING

Conservancy	\$60,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (through the Conservancy)	\$218,710
Subtotal	\$278,710
Earth Island Institute	\$220,000
Other funding sources (see below)	\$543,730
TOTAL	\$1,042,440

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of \$278,710 for the CWRGP for its 2017 program. Earth Island Institute, a nonprofit organization, will provide matching funds anticipated to be used for WRP staff costs. (See “Project History” section, above).

The anticipated sources of funds is a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to the Conservancy and Conservancy funds from the fiscal year 2009/2010 appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). Of the \$278,710, a total of \$60,000 will be appropriated from Proposition 84 funding and the remaining \$278,710 will be from the Wildlife Conservation Board.

Proposition 84 funding may be used for the protection of bays and coastal waters, including projects to prevent contamination and degradation of coastal waters and watersheds, projects to protect and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters and lands, and projects and expenditures to promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state pursuant to the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. (See Public Resources Code section 75060). The Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project and Ocean Discovery Institute’s Watershed Avengers Project protect coastal waters, restore natural habitat values and promote access to and enjoyment of coastal resources through community-based restoration of coastal wetlands, rivers and associated habitats. Another requirement of Proposition 84 is that for projects that restore natural resources, the Conservancy is directed to give priority to projects that meet one or more of the criteria specified in Section 75071. The Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project and Ocean Discovery Institute’s Watershed Avengers Project additionally satisfy the following specified criteria: (b) Watershed Protection – these two projects will contribute to long-term protection of and improvement to the

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water and biological quality of coastal watersheds and the near shore area of the Pacific Ocean; and (e) Non-State Matching Funds. (See “Project Summary” section above for project description).

The remainder of the Conservancy 2017 CWRGP funding (\$218,710) is anticipated to come from a Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) grant of \$450,000. In November, 2016, the WCB approved a grant to the Conservancy from Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002 (Proposition 50), Water Code Section 79572(a) that allows for the acquisition, protection, and restoration of coastal wetlands, upland areas adjacent to coastal wetlands, and coastal watershed lands. The project fits this funding criteria as follows:

1. Section 79572(a)(1) allows for the acquisition, protection and restoration of coastal wetlands identified in the Southern California Coastal Wetlands Inventory, located within the coastal zone, other wetlands connected and proximate to such coastal wetlands and upland areas adjacent and proximate to such coastal wetlands. These 3 projects satisfy this criteria and are located in San Diego County: Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands, EDI Explorers: River Rangers and Ocean Connectors at Paradise Creek.

2. Section 79572(a)(2) allows for the acquisition, protection and restoration of coastal watersheds and adjacent lands. These 5 projects satisfy this criteria and are located in Santa Barbara, Ventura and Los Angeles counties: Whittier Channel Restoration Project, Cañada Larga Creek-Hayden Preserve, Sespe Cienega Riparian Project on the Santa Clara River, Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project, and the Colorado Lagoon: Salt Marsh and Transition Zone Adaptive Management Project. (See “Project Summary” section, above for project descriptions)

The cost for the ten 2017-2018 CWRGP projects selected for funding totals \$1,042,440. All of these projects have significant matching funds other than the matching funds identified in this “Project Financing” section. Earth Island Institute will provide \$220,000 for SCWRP staff time. Of the total project costs, \$278,710 will come from this authorization and the remaining \$543,730 will come from other funding sources (specifically: \$10,400 federal sources, \$426,150 from other state sources, \$34,200 from private or corporate sources, \$14,500 from city agencies and \$58,480 from organization matching funds). Furthermore, approximately \$68,862 will be donated as kind-in services (not included in the total project costs).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed authorization is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 3 and Chapter 6 of Division 21, (Sections 31119, 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code, respectively), regarding Educational Programs and Resource Enhancement Projects.

Chapter 3: Establishment and Functions

Consistent with Section 31119 “the conservancy may undertake educational projects and programs for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12, inclusive, relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement and maintenance of coastal resources, and may award grants to nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and public agencies”. Eight of the ten 2017 projects will provide educational instruction for classes K-12 on watershed science and

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restoration: Whittier Channel Restoration Project; Cañada Larga Creek – Hayden Preserve Restoration Project; Sespe Cienga Riparian Restoration Project; Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project; Earth Discovery Institute’s River Rangers Project; Ocean Discovery Institute’s Watershed Avengers Project; Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands Project; and the Ocean Connectors Project at Paradise Creek.

Chapter 6: Coastal Resource Enhancement Projects

Consistent with Section 31251, “(t)he conservancy may award grants to 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.” All of the project areas in the 2017 suite of projects have suffered natural resource degradation due to human activities.

Consistent with Section 31251.2, the Conservancy may award grants to enhance a watershed resource partly outside of the coastal zone. Some of the proposed projects lie outside the coastal zone but, consistent with Section 31251.2, these proposed projects will enhance the natural or scenic character of coastal resources within the coastal zone and therefore the conservancy may award a grant for those projects. Earth Discovery Institute’s River Rangers Project will be hosted along the banks of the Sweetwater River, that lies partly outside the coastal zone but the proposed project is located within the coastal draining portion of the Sweetwater River. Ocean Discovery Institute’s Watershed Avengers Project is located in Manzanita Canyon, partly outside the coastal zone but this Canyon is considered a coastal stream corridor part of the Chollas Creek sub-watershed within the Pueblo watershed that drains into San Diego Bay. Both these projects have support from local agencies that have jurisdiction over the project areas. EDI River Rangers Project has support from the local federal agency, USFWS, and ODI: Watershed Avengers Project has support from the City of San Diego.

Consistent with Section 31252, 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).

The Whittier Channel Restoration Project, Cañada Larga Creek-Hayden Preserve Project, Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project, Sespe Cienega Riparian Restoration Project, Colorado Lagoon: Salt Marsh and Transition Zone Adaptive Management Project, Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project, EDI Explorers: River Rangers Project, ODI: Watershed Avengers Project, Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands Project and Ocean Connectors Project at Paradise Creek all are identified in local coastal plans as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems. See Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies section, below.

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 the project relative to other similar projects, and the application of other factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of

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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. The use of community volunteers in all of these proposed projects provides added cost savings, and each proposed project includes an important public education component.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013 - 2018 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), AS REVISED JUNE 25, 2015:

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective A**, of the Conservancy's 2013 - 2018 Strategic Plan, the Cañada Larga Creek-Hayden Preserve Project will develop plans to restore and enhance the streambed and stream corridor at the confluence of Cañada Larga Creek and Ventura River.

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective B**, the proposed suite of 2017 CWRGP projects collectively will enhance approximately 136 acres of coastal habitats such as coastal wetlands, and approximately 8 miles of stream corridors.

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective D**, eight of the ten proposed projects will be implemented to preserve and enhance coastal watersheds and floodplains: Whittier Channel Restoration Project, Cañada Larga Creek – Hayden Preserve Restoration Project, Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project, Sespe Cienga Riparian Restoration Project, Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project, Earth Discovery Institute's River Rangers Project, Ocean Discovery Institute's Watershed Avengers Project, and the Ocean Connectors Project at Paradise Creek.

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective A**, each of the proposed 2017 CWRGP projects will support programs or events that improve public understanding of coastal resources by involving communities and volunteers in coastal resource restoration.

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective 9B** the Earth Discovery Institute's River Rangers Project will support the design and installation of interpretive or educational displays related to coastal and watershed resource education.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed suite of 2017 CWRGP projects are consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014 in the following respects:

Required Criteria

Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes: See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.

Consistency with purposes of the funding source: See the "Project Financing" section above.

Support of the public: The proposed projects are supported by elected officials, numerous community and nonprofit organizations, and local agencies. This includes, but is not limited to, Ben Hueso from the California State Senate, Leslie Dee City Manager of National City, Assemblymember Monique Limon, Suzie A. Price Councilwoman of the City of Long Beach,

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Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell, Alan Lowenthal Member of Congress, Paradise Creek Educational Park Incorporated, Surfrider Foundation, and Ventura County Watershed Protection District (Exhibit 3).

Proposed projects for the CWRGP are vetted at local meetings to allow input from the local community and to ensure that the proposed projects represent local priorities.

Location: The proposed 2017 suite of CWRGP projects are located within the coastal zone or coastal draining watersheds. The projects' locations span the four of the five southernmost California coastal counties constituting the California Bight, from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County to the international border with Mexico, with one project located on Santa Cruz Island, Channel Islands. More specific information on each project location is provided in the "Site Description" section of the "Project Summary", above.

Need: The CWRGP is not sustainable without Conservancy funding. Further, each of the proposed projects in the 2017 suite of projects would not happen without Conservancy funding.

Greater-than-local interest: The CWRGP is regional by design and serves greater-than- local interest through the cumulative benefits of its multiple small acreage projects. The proposed suite of 2017 projects helps restore native wetland habitat critical for migratory birds and commercially and recreationally important fish species. The proposed projects also provide educational opportunities for people throughout the region to participate in on-the-ground habitat restoration activities.

Sea level rise vulnerability: None of the proposed 2017 suite of projects are located directly at the coast, and will therefore not be affected by sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

Urgency: All of the proposed 2017 suite of CWRGP projects target invasive species for removal. Timely implementation of small invasive removal projects before these invasive species can further spread helps prevent widespread dispersal and habitat destruction.

Leverage: See "Project Summary" section, above for specific details of leverage of funding for each of the proposed 2017 CWRGP projects.

Innovation: All of the proposed 2017 suite of CWRGP projects demonstrate innovation through the inclusion of a wide range and diversity of volunteers often targeting low-income and underserved communities and multi-generational community members.

Readiness: All of the proposed 2017 suite of CWRGP projects described in the "Project Summary" section, above are ready to implement and completed within one to two years.

Realization of prior Conservancy goals: See "Project History" section, above.

Cooperation: The proposed 2017 suite of CWRGP projects by design foster cooperation between the lead organization and the community in helping to enhance coastal resources. Multiple community organizations, nonprofits and local agencies are involved in implementation of the projects in the proposed 2017 suite of CWRGP projects.

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CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES/OR OTHER RELEVANT LOCAL, STATE AND/OR FEDERAL POLICIES:

Whittier Channel Restoration Project: The County of Santa Barbara's Coastal Land Use Plan adopted in 1982 and republished in June, 2009 states that "the biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored...". The County of Santa Barbara Local Coastal Program (LCP) identifies streams as environmentally sensitive habitat areas that should be protected. The Whittier Channel Project is consistent with the Santa Barbara County LCP because it will enhance the habitat resources of the Devereux Slough system by improving storm water capacity and habitat quality through regrading the banks to more gradual slopes, planting native riparian and wetland species, and educating Santa Barbara youth about the value and function of healthy streams, creeks, wetlands.

Cañada Larga Creek – Hayden Preserve Restoration: The Ventura County Coastal Area Plan, last amended in September 2008, states in section §30231 "The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, minimizing adverse effects of waste water discharges and entrainment, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of ground water supplies and substantial interference of ground water flow, encouraging waste water reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams." The Cañada Larga Creek – Hayden Preserve Restoration Project will further the goals outlined in the Coastal Area Plan by restoring and maintaining riparian wetland areas along Cañada Larga Creek, a tributary of the Ventura River. This proposed project will benefit "natural vegetation buffer areas" by removing noxious invasive weeds and bulky debris from the riparian zone and surrounding lands.

Sespe Cienega Riparian Restoration Project on the Santa Clara River: The Ventura County Coastal Area Plan, last amended in September 2008, states that "The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored". Under the 'Sespe Cienega Riparian Restoration Project', riparian habitat and healthy ecosystems along the Santa Clara River will both benefit by the restoration of a historically important wetland and developing an interpretive garden focused on ethnobotany of the Chumash people historically connected with this wetland complex. This proposed project, which would be located within the grounds of the Fillmore Fish Hatchery, will restore riparian habitat while encouraging community involvement and education and is also part of a larger effort to eliminate invasive species, especially *Arundo donax*. Thus, the proposed project's two intertwined goals of enhancing native riparian plant communities for wildlife habitat and engagement of the community in all aspects of ecosystem restoration processes are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Ventura County Coastal Area Plan.

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Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project: This proposed project location offshore does not fall under any Local Coastal Plan but does fall under the scope of the State Wildlife Action Plan-Offshore Islands Appendix. The restoration activities of the proposed project will propagate and plant native Oak trees in riparian corridors where invasive Eucalyptus trees have been removed, indirectly benefitting the restoration of Species of Greatest Conservation Need by: decreasing erosion, increasing soil retention, and improving/providing wildlife habitat. Species of Greatest Conservation Need include: Island scrub jay, Island loggerhead shrike, Santa Cruz Island rufous-crowned sparrow, Channel Islands song sparrow, Channel Islands spotted skunk, and Santa Cruz Island fox. The construction and retrofitting of two nurseries on the Santa Cruz and Anacapa Islands will directly support the aforementioned restoration activities.

Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project: The Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project directly aligns with the goals of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission's 2013 Bay Restoration Plan, specifically: Goal # 6: Manage invasive species; Goal # 7: Restore wetlands, streams and riparian zones; Goal #11: Protect public health (by preventing bacterial exceedances at local beaches); Goal # 12: Maintain/increase natural flood protection through ecologically functioning floodplains and wetlands; and Goal # 13: Increase public access to beaches and open space. Restoration activities will focus on expanding the wetland footprint of the basin, planting native species and removing invasive species, and engaging local community member and students in restoration events.

Colorado Lagoon: Salt Marsh and Transition Zone Adaptive Management Project: The City of Long Beach's Local Coastal Program, adopted in 1980, and last amended January 9, 2015, contains a Resource Management Plan that applies to five waterlands (Alamitos Bay, Marine Stadium, Colorado Lagoon, Los Cerritos Wetlands and Sims' Pond). Page III-R14 of this Plan states that "the design and operational maintenance of each waterland is aimed toward making the ecosystem within each waterland self-maintaining and self-regulating as much as possible. Furthermore, each such ecosystem is envisioned as an important eco-niche or a support subsystem to larger ecosystems, the preservation of which is of permanent value to 'the people of the state'". The Friends of Colorado Lagoon's Community-Based Salt Marsh and Transition Zone Adaptive Management Project is consistent with the City of Long Beach's LCP because it will implement adaptive management techniques that will enhance a portion of the Colorado Lagoon's wetland habitat so that it is a self-sustaining and highly functional coastal ecosystem.

San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy - Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands Project: The City of Encinitas Local Coastal Plan, last amended March 9, 2011, states in Policy 10.10 that "The City will encourage and cooperate with other responsible agencies to plan and implement an integrated management plan for the long-term conservation and restoration of wetlands resources at San Elijo Lagoon". San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy's "Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands" Project is consistent with the Encinitas LCP because it will restore wetland resources at San Elijo Lagoon by planting native species and removing invasive species.

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Ocean Discovery Institute - Watershed Avengers Project: This proposed project does not fall under the jurisdiction of the City of San Diego's LCP but supports two state action plans. First, the California Water Action Plan, created in 2014 and updated in 2016, includes actions to both "protect and restore important ecosystems" and "increase flood protection." The proposed Watershed Avengers Project protects and restores an important coastal stream corridor within the Chollas Creek sub-watershed that drains to San Diego Bay. It also increases flood protection by removing trash and debris from key waterways, such as storm drain inputs and outflows, to improve water flow and reduce blockages that accelerate flooding. Second, the California Wildlife Action Plan, created in 2005 and updated in 2015, has region specific conservation actions for the South Coast, including that "Federal and state agencies and nongovernmental partners should collaborate to institute appropriate fire management policies and practices to restore the ecological integrity of the region's ecosystems while minimizing loss of property and life [. . .] and should provide greater resources and coordinate efforts to eradicate or control existing occurrences of invasive species and to prevent new introductions." The proposed project will consistently remove invasive plant material from the coastal stream corridor, which reduces available fuel for fires and overall fire risk.

Earth Discovery Institute Explorers: Rivers Rangers Project: The proposed project site is located on federal land and falls under the jurisdiction of Federal and State regulations. Under Section 307(c) (1) of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), as amended, federal agency activities that may affect any land or water use or natural resource of the coastal zone are required to be consistent with the affected state's coastal management program to the "maximum extent practicable." Section 930.32 of NOAA's regulations implementing the CZMA (15 CFR Part 930) defines "consistent to the maximum extent practicable" as "fully consistent with the enforceable policies of management programs unless full consistency is prohibited by existing law applicable to the Federal agency."

This proposed project will address multiple goals of the California Coastal Act/California Coastal Management Program including; *public access and recreation* by engaging children from low income families; and *land resources* by engaging a broad spectrum of community members in protection and improvement of local watersheds and many sensitive species and habitats. The proposed project will also address multiple goals, objectives, and strategies of the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (SDNWR) Comprehensive Conservation Plan. It will protect, manage and restore the Refuge's native habitat to support the recovery of the federally and State-listed endangered and threatened species and other species of concern currently or historically present on the Refuge, and provide safe and high-quality opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses that foster public appreciation of the unique natural heritage. Threatened and endangered species that are supported by the proposed project's restoration activities include: least Bell's vireo and California gnatcatchers.

The Ocean Foundation: Ocean Connectors Project at Paradise Creek: This proposed project is consistent with the goals of the National City Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (LUP) created by the City of National City in 1988 and most recently updated and certified by the California Coastal Commission in 1997. The Ocean Connectors Project is consistent with the overall vision of the Local Coastal Program, and specifically supports the sections related to

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public access and marsh preservation. The LUP states, “The wetlands of the Paradise Creek Marsh as well as the secondary area of Paradise Marsh, east of I-5, including salt marsh, freshwater marsh, salt-pan, channel, and mudflat habitats are valuable and sensitive biological resources, and shall be preserved.” The proposed Ocean Connectors Project will engage 70 underserved students and their parents using education, outreach, and the restoration of approximately one acre of wetland habitat around Paradise Creek in National City. The proposed project, a collaboration between Ocean Connectors and the Paradise Creek Educational Park, Incorporated (PCEPI), will directly improve a segment of wetland, river, and stream corridor at Paradise Creek through litter removal, invasive plant abatement, and native plant revegetation.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The CWRGP 2017 suite of projects under this authorization all are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15304 (Section 15304), minor alterations to the land, water and/or vegetation, 14 CCR Section 15306 (Section 15306), information collection and under 14 CCR Section 15333 (Section 15333), habitat restoration or enhancement projects not exceeding five acres in size. A discussion of the applicability of the categorical exemptions for each proposed project is provided below.

The Whittier Channel Restoration Project: The proposed project will restore 1.25 acres of riparian corridor and freshwater wetland by removing invasive species and planting locally sourced native species on the newly-graded banks of the Whittier storm drain channel. Restoration or enhancement of habitat will be carried out principally with hand labor and non-mechanized equipment. The proposed project is categorically exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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.

Cañada Larga Creek-Hayden Preserve Restoration: The proposed project will remove invasive species, particularly *Arundo donax* (*A. donax*) within a 2-acre area, and will also provide science service-learning targeted for high school students. Removal of the *A. donax* will be done predominantly with hand tools and herbicide applied to the cut *A. donax* stands to prevent regrowth. Use of herbicide is a standard practice for habitat restoration projects throughout the state of California because small amounts of herbicide is the Best Management Practice for control of *Arundo donax* and other invasive species targeted in this proposed project. *A. donax*, an extremely resilient and noxious weed, frequently requires chemical treatment to achieve complete eradication. The proposed project is designed to require that the herbicide applications do not impact surrounding vegetation and wildlife. Staff do not consider the limited application of herbicides to the *Arundo* to present an unusual circumstance requiring further environmental review. (See section 15300.2). Therefore, the proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15304, minor alterations to land, because it removes invasive species and does not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically

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exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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. Finally, the proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15306, information collection, because the students, as part of the science service-learning curriculum, will be monitoring water quality and collecting basic data that does not result in a major disturbance to an environmental resource.

Sespe Cienega Riparian Restoration Project on the Santa Clara River: The proposed project will remove invasive species and plant native species along 10 acres of riparian areas surrounding the confluence of the Santa Clara River and Sespe Creek. Additionally, the proposed project will focus on science service-learning for students from local school districts. Therefore, the proposed project is categorically exempt under Section 15304, minor alterations to land, because it will remove invasive species and plant native species and it will not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15306, information collection, because the students, as part of the science service-learning curriculum, will be monitoring water quality and collecting basic data that does not result in a major disturbance to an environmental resource.

Santa Cruz Island Oak Riparian Enhancement Project: This proposed project will plant native oak saplings within 1.5 acres of three primary watersheds of Santa Cruz Island. Restoration or enhancement of habitat will be carried out principally with hand labor and non-mechanized equipment. The proposed project will additionally construct a nursery for local restoration activities on Santa Cruz Island, and retrofit an existing nursery on Anacapa Island. The proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation by planting native oak saplings and will not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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. The proposed project elements of construction and retrofitting of the two nurseries are categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15301, existing facilities, that allows for the repair, minor alterations and construction within existing facilities with negligible or no expansion of existing use because the damaged nursery on Anacapa Island will be repaired and the new nursery on Santa Cruz Island will be a constructed within the footprint of an existing structure.

Torrance Henrietta Basin Wetland Recovery Project: The proposed project will restore approximately 2 acres of freshwater wetland by removing invasive species and planting native species. Restoration involves revegetation of disturbed areas with native plant species, and the restoration or enhancement of habitat will be carried out principally with hand labor and non-

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mechanized equipment. Therefore, the proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation by removing invasive species and planting native species and does not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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. Furthermore, the proposed project is also categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15306, information collection, because the students, as part of the science service-learning curriculum, will be monitoring water quality and collecting basic data that does not result in a major disturbance to an environmental resource.

Colorado Lagoon: Salt Marsh and Transition Zone Adaptive Management Project. This proposed project aims to implement key adaptive management strategies across 4.6 acres of restored wetland habitat to improve the success of prior revegetation activities. The proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation as it involves revegetation and does not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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.

Students Restoring Coastal Wetlands Project: The proposed project will restore coastal salt marsh, coastal sage scrub and alkali marsh habitat covering a 1.41 acre area. Students from North County San Diego schools will be engaged in removing invasive species and planting native species. The restoration and enhancement of habitat will be carried out principally with hand labor and not mechanized equipment. Therefore, the proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation for restoration activities of invasive species removal and planting native species that does not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves removal of invasive species and revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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.

Ocean Discovery Institute - Watershed Avengers Project: This proposed project will remove invasive species and trash, and plant native species along 7.56 acres of the Manzanita Canyon. The proposed project is categorically exempt under Section 15304, minor alterations to land,

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because it will remove invasive species and plant native species and will not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees.

Earth Discovery Institute Explorers: Rivers Rangers Project: The proposed project will restore upland coastal sage scrub communities and riparian habitat along the Sweetwater River with the help of fourth grade students. Students will help in the removal efforts of invasive species but predominantly plant native coastal sage scrub, riparian trees and understory plants within a 100 acre area. The proposed project is designed for contractors (not students) to treat a small area (less than 5 acres) with glyphosate herbicide to remove invasive species 1-2 times during the project timeline according to the federal property owner, the USFWS's Integrated Pest Management Plan. The USFWS determined that the herbicide application on its property administered according to the Plan does not have the potential for a significant adverse impact and staff to not consider this limited application to present an unusual circumstance. Therefore, the proposed project is categorically exempt under Section 15304, minor alterations to land, for restoration activities that do not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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.

The Ocean Foundation: Ocean Connectors Project at Paradise Creek: This proposed project will remove invasive species and trash, and plant native species along a 1-acre area of Paradise Creek. Revegetation of disturbed areas with native plant species will be done using hand labor and non-mechanized equipment. The proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation because it will remove invasive species and plant native species but will not remove healthy, mature and scenic trees. The proposed project is also categorically exempt under Section 15333, small habitat restoration projects, because it involves revegetation of disturbed areas that do not exceed 5 acres in size; will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065; does not disturb or remove any hazardous materials at or around the proposed project site; and 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.

Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for each proposed project.