

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 24, 2018

COMMUNITY WETLAND RESTORATION GRANT PROGRAM

Project No. 12-026-02

Project Manager: Julie Gonzalez

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$206,489 to eight nonprofit organizations for community-based natural resource restoration and enhancement projects in Southern California coastal wetlands and watersheds in Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties.

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

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Coastal Education, Resource Enhancement

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Locations Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [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 six thousand four hundred eighty-nine dollars (\$206,489) for eight grants to specific nonprofit organizations for community-based natural resource restoration and enhancement projects in Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange 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
 - c. Evidence that all necessary permits and approvals for the project have been obtained.

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d. If the project site is not owned by the grantee, evidence that the grantee has entered into landowner agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement the project.”

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. Batiquitos Lagoon Foundation, Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, Audubon Starr Ranch, Tides Center/Marine Education Project, Orange County Coastkeeper, South Coast Habitat Restoration, The C.R.E.W. and Resource Conservation Partners 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.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$206,489 to certain nonprofit organizations to implement eight community-based resource restoration and enhancement projects along the Southern California coast as part of the 2018 Community Based Wetland Restoration Program (CWRGP). Of the \$206,489 grant, \$176,489 will be from a 2016 grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) to the Conservancy and the remaining \$30,000 will be Conservancy funds. The WCB granted this money to the Conservancy because of the Conservancy’s history of supporting the CWRGP through technical expertise to grantees and administrative support.

The CWRGP is a Conservancy program to provide funding annually for community-based wetland and riparian enhancement and restoration projects in coastal wetlands and watersheds in the Southern California region. The purpose of the CWRGP is to further the wetland recovery goals for Southern California as set forth in the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (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.

The Conservancy typically funds 10 to 12 CWRGP projects per year with an annual allocation for the CWRGP of approximately \$300,000. Each January, the Conservancy solicits CWRGP

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proposals from nonprofit organizations, universities, tribes, and agencies. Proposals are reviewed by a technical advisory committee that includes staff from the Conservancy, Earth Island Institute, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and other agencies that participate in the WRP. 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.

Project selection for the 2018 CWRGP was completed in February 2018. Of this year's projects, all eight were proposed by nonprofit organizations. The eight projects recommended for funding this year are described below.

Santa Barbara County

Refugio Creek Arundo Removal

In 2006, the Land Trust of Santa Barbara County (Land Trust) began riparian restoration efforts within the Refugio Creek watershed. These initial restoration efforts included the removal of over 100 patches of *Arundo donax*, stabilization of major erosion features, and the revegetation of over 17,000 square feet of the riparian corridor on the proposed project site. *A. donax* is one of four high priority invasive species targeted for control by the Santa Barbara County Weed Management Area, and is rated "A-1" on the California Exotic Pest Council list of invasive weeds statewide. It impacts riparian systems by aggressive growth that creates monocultural stands, displacing the native riparian vegetation. The invasive plant also chokes stream channels and creates debris dams that increase bank erosion and clogging of road culverts, impeding fish travel during storm flows. The high, straight stalks of *A. donax* provide little shade to the creek environment, while consuming large amounts of water compared to native plant species. *A. donax* has little or no value as food for local wildlife, or as nesting/roosting sites.

The proposed project will enable South Coast Habitat Restoration (SCHR) and partner organizations, the Land Trust and Channel Islands Restoration, to remove the remaining 35 *A. donax* patches. The Land Trust will perform pre-project site assessments to determine current extent of *A. donax*. Channel Islands Restoration staff will remove *A. donax* per industry standards, through the use of herbicide and through the manual removal of vegetation. They will also revegetate additional riparian areas with 50 native trees (sycamores, cottonwoods, willows; provided by Santa Barbara Natives). Native trees will be installed by volunteers. These plantings will stabilize the creek banks, create shade to cool and conserve water in the creek, and provide better habitat than exists today for a wide array of local wildlife. Enhancing the riparian habitat quantity and quality along 1.5 miles of the creek will make it a higher ranking candidate for future measures (i.e. public road crossing culvert redesign or bridges) needed to allow the return of Southern California steelhead to this major creek.

SCHR and the Land Trust will perform post-project site assessments to monitor *A. donax* removal and recurrence for five years, though the CWRGP grant will fund only for the first year of monitoring following project implementation. The project will also allow for community members to learn about habitat restoration and the importance of invasive species removal and

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the Refugio Creek watershed. Lead by Channel Islands Restoration and SCHR, volunteers will participate in replanting efforts. SCHR and the Land Trust will provide training for the volunteers participating in the restoration efforts, focusing on methodology of the restoration project, the benefits of non-native species removal, and the Refugio Creek watershed as a whole.

Total Project Cost: \$35,050

Grant Amount: \$24,889

Grantee: South Coast Habitat Restoration

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

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

- Goal 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events that improve public understanding and promote stewardship of coastal resources.
- Goal 6, objective 6B and 6D because the proposed project will enhance coastal wetlands/stream corridors and objective 6E because the project will enhance fish passage by removing invasive *Arundo donax* that chokes stream channels and creates debris that impedes fish travel.

Funding Source: Wildlife Conservation Board (Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.)

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is a small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria. It is also categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. (See additional discussion in the “Compliance with CEQA” section below for each project).

Ventura County

Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project

The Kalorama Wetland is located in Ventura, California at the mouth of a storm drain outlet. The site has relatively few native plant species and many non-native plant species. These non-native species are spreading and outcompeting the native plants, further depleting their struggling populations. This proposed project will enable Resource Conservation Partners (RCP) to remove non-native invasive plants and restore native vegetation through community engagement. RCP will have two staff members prepare for and lead six removal events where volunteers will provide manual labor to remove non-native invasive plant species. During events, removal work will be prefaced with a presentation to educate volunteers on various aspects of the project. RCP staff will present information on local wetland ecology and conservation, and the threats posed by non-native and invasive species. RCP staff will instruct volunteers on plant identification, methods of non-native plant removal, and methods of native plant propagation and revegetation. RCP’s biologist and GIS specialist will map the invasive plant coverage using ArcGIS prior to commencement of initial removal, and then monthly following volunteer events to provide an updated visual for tracking progress.

Following the volunteer events RCP staff will treat invasive plant regrowth in the areas that have

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had invasive plants physically removed. Application methods will include foliar spray application and cut and daub using a combination of aquatic-safe herbicides. RCP will have six revegetation events where RCP staff and volunteers will broadcast native plant seed mixes, and install cuttings and container plants over bare areas where invasive plants have been removed. The revegetation will provide erosion control, increase habitat value, and provide aesthetic value for the project area once it becomes established.

Revegetation north of the bike path, at the source of the storm drainage, will include native *Carex* and *Juncus* species to aid in phytoremediation of the run-off pollutants. RCP will take water samples of the run-off to analyze water quality. RCP will provide three brief qualitative progress monitoring reports following volunteer events to document and evaluate the success of the removal and revegetation for the duration of the project. In addition to the volunteer events open to the public, RCP will coordinate with local schools to involve student volunteers in these restoration efforts.

Total Project Cost: \$61,900

Grant Amount: \$29,800

Grantee: Resource Conservation Partners

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

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

- Goal 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events and 4B through the installation of an interpretive education board at the project site.
- Goal 6, objective 6A and 6D by enhancing coastal watersheds and wetlands.

Funding Source: Wildlife Conservation Board (Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.)

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

San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort

Population growth, alongside increasing groundwater extraction, longer periods of drought and the introduction of non-native species in Ojai Valley have made a significant impact on the local watershed, causing many local creeks such as the San Antonio Creek to remain dry year-round, pushing the Southern California steelhead trout as well as several other riparian dependent species to near extinction.

The proposed project will enable the non-profit agency C.R.E.W. (Concerned Resource & Environmental Workers) to organize and manage a series of work days involving the removal of invasive plants followed by restoration/revegetation with native plants along San Antonio Creek. In preparation for this project, watershed experts and biologists have compiled site history

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information and conducted an up-to-date habitat assessment. Non-native trees will be selected for removal by a biologist or certified arborist, and removed using hand tools and small power tools such as chainsaws and weed whips. In the winter of 2019, and early spring of 2019 the C.R.E.W. and volunteers will plant approximately 200 native plants at the project site. Project partner, the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy (OVLC) has developed an effective outreach program and created a growing group of volunteers that are deeply dedicated to preservation of the natural environment. The C.R.E.W., OVLC, and another project partner Pax Environmental have formed alliances with elementary and high schools, the City of Ojai, several local businesses and a long list of nonprofit organizations. The planting plan incorporates a combination of container plants, cuttings, seeds and native plants to create the basic structure of desired native habitat consistent with the California Department of Fish and Game California Salmonid Stream Habitat Restoration Manual. A native riparian plant seed mix will be spread throughout the restoration project site by the Restoration Biologist and project volunteers after non-native plant removal occurs in fall 2018 and winter 2019. In the early spring of 2019, community volunteers, students and members of the C.R.E.W. will partake in two volunteer planting days, and install an additional 200 plants. In total, there are three community planting days planned, at which the C.R.E.W. will train community volunteers that are participating in the restoration on restoration practices. This project will involve extensive outreach to local watershed experts, community members and students to mobilize a grass roots process to restore habitat along San Antonio Creek.

This project is expected to enhance the riparian ecosystem, as well as improve the passage and breeding potential for endangered aquatic species, such as Southern California steelhead trout and California red-legged frog. Continued removal of noxious weeds and non-native plants will allow for a significant increase in the native plant population, improve hydrologic capacity of the stream, open up the in-stream channel for rearing habitat and provide light to tree seedlings sprouting along the canopy understory. The project will reestablish a riparian ecosystem that supports a diversity of fish and wildlife species, remove non-native species in phases by canopy descending order, and plant and irrigate (if necessary) native riparian species in areas with sparse vegetation. In addition, the restoration effort is expected to decrease erosion and sediment load that could occur due to recent impacts related to the Thomas Fire.

Total Project Cost: \$48,795

Grant Amount: \$27,600

Grantee: The C.R.E.W.

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

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

- Goal 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events that improve public understanding.
- Goal 6, objective 6B and 6D because the proposed project will enhance coastal wetlands/stream corridors and objective 6E because the project will enhance fish passage by removing invasive *Arundo donax* that chokes stream channels and creates debris that impedes fish travel.

Funding Source: Wildlife Conservation Board (Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.)

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under California Code of Regulations

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(CCR) Title 14, 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. It is also categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is as small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria.

Los Angeles County

Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve

In June 2012, Orange County Coastkeeper (OCC), in partnership with California State University Fullerton (CSUF), California State University Long Beach (CSULB), and KZO Education, restored Olympia oyster habitat at the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve (JDMR) in Alamitos Bay. Teams of researchers, students, and community volunteers laid a new oyster bed using “dead” Pacific oyster shell to facilitate future settlement of baby Olympia oysters (*Ostrea lurida*) or oyster spat. Over the next two years, they recorded significant increases in oyster settlement, survival, and growth. The proposed project will enable Orange County Coastkeeper to expand that native oyster bed via community-based restoration. First, in collaboration with Dr. Danielle Zacherl from Cal State Fullerton, a community workshop will be held to build shell strings with homeowners and school groups to suspend strings of dead oyster shell from floating docks throughout Alamitos Bay during the Olympia oyster’s reproductive season, and allow locally produced oyster larvae to recruit to the shells. After a grow-out period of about 30-45 days, the shells from the shell strings will be concentrated into a 30 meter by 2 meter “community” oyster bed at the JDMR adding to the previously constructed oyster bed.

OCC will also conduct significant K-12 outreach activities including in-class presentations and field trips to JDMR. They have contacts and willing teachers at each school who value this hands-on authentic science experience for their students. In addition to these local schools, they will offer tours to schools in the region, particularly ones that are from neighborhoods with high pollution burdens and little access to marine resources.

Restoration of this species is particularly timely for the wetland ecosystems in California due to the ecosystem services they provide to our coastal wetlands. The physical structure produced by enhanced oyster beds slows down current velocities, dampens wave energies and retains sediment. This project will restore a critically missing but historically present habitat type – oyster beds, which should benefit benthic organisms, juvenile fishes, and federally listed least terns, who use oyster shell in the construction of their nests.

Total Project Cost: \$44,800

Grant Amount: \$30,000

Grantee: Orange County Coastkeeper

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

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

- Goal 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events and 4B through the installation of an interpretive, interactive display that demonstrates filter feeding activity of oysters.
- Goal 6, objective 6A and 6D by enhancing coastal wetland habitat and intertidal areas.

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Funding Source: State Coastal Conservancy (Proposition 84, Public Resources Code section 75001, et seq.)

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, 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 14 CCR Section 15306, information collection, as students will be collecting basic data, for educational purposes that will not result in a major habitat disturbance.

Orange County

Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation

The proposed project will enable Audubon Starr Ranch, through the work of interns and volunteers (consisting of students, scout troops, nearby community members), to remove invasive plants without chemicals and restore both herbaceous and native woody species in a pristine riparian corridor at the 4,000 acre Audubon Starr Ranch. Audubon Starr Ranch will address the challenge of dead and dying trees from drought and tree pests and diseases at Starr Ranch through innovative woodland restoration techniques.

In the fall, interns and volunteers will collect acorns (50 – 100) and seedlings (25-50) for transplanting. They will also collect and plant seeds of native herbaceous riparian species available for collection in the fall: mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*), caterpillar phacelia (*Phacelia cicutaria*), and branching phacelia (*P. ramosissima*). In early January, interns and volunteers will collect then plant 200 branch cuttings from sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), mulefat (*Baccharis salicifolia*), native blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), native grape (*Vitis girdiana*), willow (*Salix* spp.) and also rhizome cuttings from ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*) and hedgenettle (*Stachys ajugoides*). The cuttings will be planted in an area formerly dominated by periwinkle and other riparian non-natives.

A seasonal ornithologist will use volunteers to assist with riparian woodland bird banding and other wildlife and habitat monitoring as metrics for assessing restoration success. The seasonal ornithologist will train volunteers during intensive workshops to age, sex, and band songbirds of riparian woodlands. Audubon Starr Ranch has tracked trends in songbird species richness, abundance, and survival over time and have detected some declines since the inception of drought in 2011-12. Several trained volunteers will help survey for amphibians (adults and larvae), reptiles (primarily turtles and semi-aquatic snakes), and fish and will remove non-native crayfish and bullfrogs using a protocol based on the USGS Aquatic Species and Habitat Assessment Protocol for South Coast Ecoregion Rivers, Streams, and Creeks.

Total Project Cost: \$80,700

Grant Amount: \$15,000

Grantee: Audubon Starr Ranch

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

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

- Goal 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events that improve public understanding and promote stewardship of coastal resources.
- Goal 6, objective 6A and 6D by enhancing coastal wetland/stream corridors and coastal watersheds.

Funding Source: Wildlife Conservation Board (Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.)

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation. In addition, the field-trip portions of the project are categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15306, information collection, as students will be collecting basic data, for educational purposes that will not result in a major habitat disturbance.

Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities

The proposed project will enable the Tides Center/Marine Education Project to restore one acre of riparian habitat at Newport Valley in Newport Beach, California through use of community member volunteers. The restoration work will consist of installing cuttings (arroyo willow, black willow, mulefat), container plants (elderberry, arrow weed, buckwheat, among others), and a native herbaceous/native grass seed mix. Community members will also conduct invasive plant removal in the riparian corridor to rid the area of non-natives, including pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), *Myoporum* (*Myoporum laetum*), black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), shortpod mustard (*Hirschfeldia incana*), and tocalote (*Centaurea melitensis*). The Tides Center's "Community-Based Restoration and Education Program" has extensive previous experience removing these species by mechanical means with volunteers.

The Tides Center/Marine Education Project in prior years has conducted an Environmental Leader Internship Program that trains ethnically diverse cohorts of college students as Environmental Leaders to prepare and lead programs. This proposed project includes use of these Environmental Leaders to train high school students from diverse and underserved communities in Orange County to participate in this restoration project while learning about coastal wetland ecology.

This restoration project will also increase habitat for the endangered least Bell's vireo. Individuals of this species have been observed nearby to the proposed restoration site within the last three years but no active nests have been indicated by professional monitors. Restoration of this habitat will create nesting opportunities for this species. Also, this project will increase the amount and extent of riparian habitat, which is being depleted regionally by a boring beetle, the Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer. As the site is restored, the Environmental Leaders and professional monitors will be reviewing plants for signs of infestation. Affected plants will be removed and replaced under the guidelines set forth by the University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The success of the project will not only provide additional riparian habitat around the Upper Newport Bay but also help mitigate the loss of this ecosystem within the region.

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Total Project Cost: \$67,300

Grant Amount: \$22,500

Grantee: Tides Center/Marine Education Project

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

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

- Goal 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events that improve public understanding and promote stewardship of coastal resources.
- Goal 6, objective 6A and 6D by enhancing coastal wetland areas, stream corridors and coastal watersheds.

Funding Source: Wildlife Conservation Board (Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.)

CEQA: The proposed project is categorically exempt under California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, Section 15306, information collection, as students will be collecting basic data, for educational purposes that will not result in a major habitat disturbance. It is also categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15333 (small habitat restoration projects) because it is a small-scale habitat restoration project that meets all exemption criteria.

Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting

Salt marsh bird's-beak (SMBB), *Chloropyron maritimum* subsp. *Maritimum*, is a hemi parasitic annual plant found in coastal salt marsh habitat of southern and central California and adjacent northern Baja California, Mexico. Self-sustaining populations of this state and federally endangered plant species are currently found in only seven estuarine systems in the United States. Expansion of the number of occurrences is one of the recovery criteria in the Salt Marsh Bird's-Beak Recovery Plan (USFWS, 1985). For several years USFWS staff pursued funding for outplanting two new populations of SMBB in Southern California and eventually acquired enough funding to pursue the outplanting of just one new population at Magnolia Marsh in the Huntington Beach Wetlands. An initial experimental outplanting was performed in winter of 2015-16 and germination of 199 plants successfully occurred in the winter of 2016-17.

The proposed project will enable the Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy (HBWC) to expand this project by continuing monitoring activities and enhancing Magnolia Marsh's upper marsh plant community. Some portions of the marsh are less vegetated than is preferred. The project will enhance the plant community in these areas by introducing upper marsh plant species that can either act as a host for SMBB, attract SMBB pollinators, or help to buffer and protect SMBB populations from edge effects. This work will be designed so that it can be performed by volunteer groups who can help grow, install, and care for the upper marsh plants. HBWC will utilize their partnership with the Huntington Beach Tree Society who will provide volunteers to grow and care for most of the container plants that will be installed. They will also partner closely with Edison and Huntington Beach High Schools to have students help install and care for the plants as well as perform various maintenance activities. Also, they will be performing outplanting in new locations throughout the Huntington Beach Wetlands.

The HBWC will hire a permitted botanist to collect 5,000-10,000 seeds from the donor site in

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Upper Newport Bay. Once seeds are obtained and sites selected, the seeds will be spread between November and March in areas that are identified to be suitable by biologists who have experience with SMBB. In addition to growing and sustaining this population of SMBB, this project will assist with the establishment of other special status plant species, including *Lycium californicum*, *Suaeda taxifolia* and *Juncus acutus leopoldi*. These plants will be installed in the upper marsh of Magnolia Marsh, heightening the biodiversity of the site and strengthening the transition zone buffer habitat along the existing Magnolia Marsh trail. A healthy transition zone and upper marsh plant community will help this site better accommodate species migration that will be necessary as predicted sea level rise occurs.

Further, the restoration of Magnolia Marsh was designed to include an interpretive trail that connects to a viewing platform. This trail already has numerous educational signs along its perimeter, and this project will install an additional sign that will provide the public with information about SMBB and the goals of this project. Lastly, as of 2015, a total of 93 breeding pairs of the state-endangered Belding's Savannah Sparrow (BSS) were surveyed throughout the Huntington Beach Wetlands. The proposed project will install hundreds of Parish's glassworts (*Arthrocnemum subterminale*) and shore grasses (*Distichlis littoralis*), both popular BSS nesting plants, creating additional breeding habitat for this rare salt marsh obligate bird species.

Total Project Cost: \$95,900

Grant Amount: \$28,900

Grantee: Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy

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

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

- Goal 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events that improve public understanding and 4B through the installation of an interpretive kiosk.
- Goal 6, objective 6A and 6D by enhancing coastal wetland habitat and coastal watersheds.

Funding Source: Wildlife Conservation Board (Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.)

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

San Diego County

Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve North Shore Restoration - Phase 3

The proposed project will enable the Batiquitos Lagoon Foundation (BLF) to restore habitat along a section of the North Shore of the Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve (BLER), with a focus on native tree replacement of existing eucalyptus and palms to improve bird nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat, and wetland restoration adjacent to the lagoon itself. BLF has

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established partnerships with Tree of Life Nursery, California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), Park Hyatt – Aviara Golf Course Superintendent (a golf course and landscape-educated specialist) and other subject area specialists. These partnerships have been established to ensure project success and help educate and train a volunteer corps and participants from the community. The project will provide wetland education, skill-set development, on-the-job work experience to volunteers participating in the restoration.

In addition to local community members, there will also be volunteers from local elementary and junior high schools, high schools, and universities and colleges. BLF restoration volunteers work primarily the first and third Saturdays of every month, 12 months per year. Some focused restoration work with larger groups also work on arranged days, usually on a weekend. The average work party is 10 volunteers plus at least one leader. For this project, a subject specialist will be included to guide and instruct the volunteer work parties. Training by CDFW Environmental Specialists will also be involved due to the fact that some work will be on their property.

BLF will first prepare the site by partnering with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) who will remove invasive species and install appropriate irrigation systems. A combination of CCC and community volunteers guided by BLF will implement the planting and maintenance of native plants. The signature restoration tree will be the Torrey Pine (*Pinus torreyana*). Ten other native trees are included to add variation to the habitat mix and will include California Sycamore (*Platanus Racemosa*) and Coastal Live Oak (*Quercus Agrifolia*). The heavy infestation of non-native trees (e.g., eucalyptus, palms, Tamarisk) and plants (e.g., Pampas Grass, Fennel, Caster bean) will be replaced with appropriate native species (e.g., Torrey Pine, Artemisia, Golden bush, Lemonade berry). The project will ultimately improve nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat for indigenous native birds, many of which are stressed or endangered including California least tern, western snowy plover, Belding's savannah sparrow, California gnatcatcher, northern harrier, and Ridgeway Rail.

Total Project Cost: \$159,800

Grant Amount: \$27,800

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 4, objective 4A by supporting educational programs and interpretive events (“Weed Warriors”) that improve public understanding and promote stewardship of coastal resources.
- Goal 6, objective 6A and 6D by enhancing coastal wetland, riparian stream corridors, coastal sage habitat and coastal watersheds.

Funding Source: Wildlife Conservation Board (Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.)

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

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DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT SITES:

The Community Wetland Restoration Grant 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 eight projects selected for the 2018 CWRGP.

Santa Barbara County

Refugio Creek Arundo Removal

The Refugio Creek Watershed is located in coastal Santa Barbara County, 20 miles west of the City of Santa Barbara. The creek drains a watershed of approximately 8.2 square miles. The watershed begins in the Santa Ynez Mountains at an elevation of approximately 4,300 feet and drains steep hillsides and canyons before flowing through orchards and agricultural fields, and into the Pacific Ocean at Refugio State Beach. The project site is located approximately half a mile upstream of the creek mouth, and encompasses the bank of Gaviota Creek through private property. As of January 2017, the invasive *Arundo donax* (giant reed) was present at 35 locations within the four acre project site.

Ventura County

Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project

The Kalorama Wetland is at the mouth of a storm drain outlet in Ventura, California. Prior to urban development, the Ventura coastline had extensive sea cliffs interspersed with deep and narrow winding river gorges that let out at the beaches. The Kalorama wetland was fed by its associated barranca and consisted of meandering streams along the beach linked to the outlet of the Sanjon Barranca. The wetland is in the back shore zone on the stretch of beach south of the Ventura pier and north of the Sanjon Barranca in the San Buenaventura State Beach day use area. The site contains two freshwater wetland components. The drainage itself, a storm run-off outlet, supports approximately 1 acre of riparian willow woodland. Southeast of the drainage the wetland extends into approximately 0.75 acres of seasonal wet meadow where vegetation has been colonizing the beach. Adjacent to the wetland are two transitional zones: the approximately 0.25-acres of coastal strand at the southern edge of the wetland where patches of vegetation and

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incipient dunes receive moisture from seeps off the drainage and water table; and approximately 1.5-acres of coastal sage scrub northeast of the drainage. The site is divided from its drainage source by a bike path and unnamed road leading to the San Buenaventura State Beach parking lot. The drainage follows a cement channelization approximately 45 feet long under the road and bike path before its outlet on the beach. This divides the woodland into two areas, the area closest to the run-off source north of the bike path (the source woodland) and the area south of the path, connected to the beach (the outlet woodland).

This site has high pedestrian foot traffic from beach-goers, bicyclists, runners and others seeking coastal recreation due to its proximity to the Ventura pier, Ventura Freeway, and the state beach parking lots. All areas are being invaded by a variety of non-native plants including two species with a rating of highly invasive from the California Invasive Plant Council. Much of the beach sand between the edge of the wetland and the ocean has been eroded leaving the shore face composed of cobbles on a steep slope leading up from the swash zone. The beach berm and foreshore is also primarily composed of cobble. The foredune is incipient and heavily depleted due to the lack of sand, but there are sparse patches of dune vegetation struggling to become established. Several patches of vegetation are emerging south of the woodland, in areas where smaller cobbles and fine sediment have congregated.

San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort

Camp Comfort is a well-used Ventura County park approximately one mile from downtown Ojai, established in 1904. San Antonio Creek, which drains to the Ventura River, flows through the park which includes a campground and a clubhouse. The park is popular for interpretive and outdoor school events, as the natural ecology and creek is easily accessible. The predominant natural plant community within this reach is best described as riparian woodland, which consists of California sycamore (*Plantanus racemosa*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and black walnut (*Juglans californica*). Several other shrub and herbaceous native species are present such as toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), blue elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*), hollyleaf cherry (*Prunus ilicifolia*), California blackberry, mugwort (*Artemisia douglasiana*) and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversiloba*). *Arundo donax* was removed in 2016 and 2017 by Ojai Valley Land Conservancy in partnership with California Conservation Corps. Some re-sprouting is occurring after those removal efforts. Additionally, Mexican fan palm (*Washingtonia robusta*), tamarisk (*Tamarix* sp.), and castor bean (*Ricinus communis*) are found throughout the riparian corridor.

Los Angeles County

Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve

Alamitos Bay is a highly urbanized estuary, located within the City of Long Beach and surrounded by suburban neighborhoods, city parks, a city fire station, and schools. It was historically part of the greater Los Cerritos Wetlands. The Los Cerritos Wetlands once encompassed 2,400 acres of habitat, but have been significantly altered since the land was developed in the late 19th century. The wetland habitats remaining in Alamitos Bay include the 13-acre Colorado Lagoon and the 44-acre Los Cerritos Wetlands, as well as the mitigated

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wetland of Jack Dunster Marine Reserve (JDMR) on 2.4 acres of land. These pockets of open space provide necessary refuge for wildlife and native species, and also represent a critical opportunity to engage an otherwise urban populace with the natural world.

Historical documents indicate the presence of native Olympia oyster (*Ostrea lurida*) beds in Southern California estuaries including Alamitos Lagoon, now called Alamitos Bay (Bonnot 1935). This bay also is reported to historically contain extensive eelgrass beds. Oyster beds all over the region have been depleted by a combination of development of the wetlands, dredging, pollution, and overharvesting. Preliminary field surveys in 2010 (Zacherl et al., unpublished) in Alamitos Bay and the connected neighboring Colorado Lagoon revealed that native oysters were present in low densities on hard substrates; however, there were no natural intertidal oyster beds found anywhere in Alamitos Bay for oyster larvae to settle and grow. Thus, a site within Alamitos Bay (JDMR) was selected as a restoration site for paired oyster and eelgrass restoration in 2012.

Orange County

Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation

Located in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains, Starr Ranch Sanctuary is a 4,000 acre wildlife preserve owned by the National Audubon Society. Starr Ranch is bordered by Caspers Wilderness Park to the south and southeast, Cleveland National Forest to the north and east, and the communities of Coto de Caza and Dove Canyon to the west. Starr Ranch protects a mosaic of healthy native habitats: coastal sage scrub, grassland, oak woodland, chaparral, and riparian woodland. The majority of riparian woodland at Starr Ranch Sanctuary is found along Bell Creek, which runs north to south through Starr Ranch, entering Starr Ranch from Cleveland National Forest and leaving through Casper's Wilderness Park. Bell Creek eventually joins San Juan Creek, which then flows out to the Pacific Ocean. Minor tributaries that flow into Bell Creek on Starr Ranch include Fox and Crow Creeks and also Tick and Dove Creeks which bring urban runoff from Dove Canyon into a pumping system that provides water to the Trabuco Canyon Water District for recycling.

Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities

Newport Valley ("John Wayne Gulch" on some maps) represents one of the largest natural spaces adjacent to the Upper Newport Bay. In this urbanized environment, Newport Valley acts as a wildlife corridor with raptors flying overhead and bobcats and coyotes roaming within. The freshwater wetland area to be restored is a transition zone between the adjacent wetland and the upland coastal sage scrub. The riparian zone is a relatively recent phenomenon. While historic maps show the valley containing a seasonal stream, water now flows year-round as a result of runoff from residential and golf course irrigation upstream. The extra water supports a large area of cattails and bulrushes in a freshwater marsh habitat.

Past disturbances to Newport Valley have left a high volume of invasive species. Advantages of working at this site include a shallow groundwater table at less than three feet for three of five groundwater wells, as well a nearby nursery at the Back Bay Science Center to grow seedlings

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and cuttings before planting.

Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting

The Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy (HBWC) is both the land owner and the primary caretaker of the 3 marshes (Talbert Marsh, Brookhurst Marsh and Magnolia Marsh) of the Huntington Beach Wetlands complex. There are facilities on site that house the Interpretive Center and the Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center. The Interpretive Center is open to the public for educational purposes and to bring awareness to the wetlands and how the community can support efforts to maintain the wetlands for future generations. The Care Center cares for, on average, 4,500 orphaned and injured wildlife animals per year. There is also a native plant nursery on site from which many of the plants installed during the restoration of Brookhurst Marsh and Magnolia Marshes were grown. HBWC facilitates all project implementations, hosts on-site community programs and collaborates with a variety of partners to conserve populations of several threatened and endangered species including the Belding's savannah sparrow, California least tern, western snowy plover and Ridgeway's rail. Just recently salt marsh bird's beak (*Chloropyron maritimum* subsp. *maritimum*) was successfully introduced to Magnolia Marsh, which was restored and completed in 2010.

San Diego County

Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve (BLER) North Shore Restoration – Phase 3

The project area is approximately 3.84 acres of wetland, riparian, and coastal sage scrub habitat on both California Department of Fish and Wildlife property and Park Hyatt – Aviara property, a local resort hotel and golf course complex in Carlsbad, California. The property has many invasive trees (e.g., eucalyptus, tamarisk, palms, Brazilian pepper), plants (e.g., pampas grass, fennel, castor bean, tree tobacco, wild radish) and dead tree and plant material that poses a significant fire hazard and requires removal. The coastal sage habitat restoration area is disturbed, but has some covering of native grasses. The project area is 3.84 acres of disturbed habitat and includes a 258-foot small stream corridor resulting from storm water runoff from the drainage area above. The site contains cattails and tamarisk. The project's wetland area has swaths of salt marsh and mudflats, with a significant accumulation of trash.

CWRGP PROJECT HISTORY:

The Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (WRP) is a task force of 18 state and federal agencies coordinating with each other regarding expansion, restoration and enhancement of coastal wetlands and watersheds in Southern California. Since 2001, the participating agencies have prepared, and regularly updated, a list of priority projects known as the WRP Work Plan. The WRP agencies agreed that the Work Plan should include wetland restoration projects that are developed and implemented with extensive community involvement, which led to the Community Wetland Restoration Grant Program (CWRGP, originally called the Small Grants Program) to help fund these types of projects. The CWRGP supports education and community outreach to help achieve the expansion, restoration and enhancement of coastal wetlands and

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watersheds, while also building institutional capacity for planning and implementing restoration projects.

The CWRGP has been funded and supported by many agencies and organizations over the years. Since the CWRGP began, Conservancy staff has convened an annual proposal review team composed of Conservancy and other WRP member agency staff to provide input on which projects could help fulfill the goals of the CWRGP. From 2001 to 2009, the Conservancy granted funds to a nonprofit organization, Environment Now, to make subgrants to other entities for community wetland projects.

In 2002, Earth Island Institute (EII), another nonprofit organization, also began to grant funds for CWRGP projects with funds it had obtained in settlement of litigation. EII also began providing technical assistance to CWRGP grantees to help them build their programs and technical knowledge. Since then, EII has continued to provide funds and technical assistance to Conservancy grantees and to other entities carrying out CWRGP projects. In 2016, WCB gave a grant to the Conservancy to provide subgrants for the CWRGP, and the Conservancy agreed to provide an annual match of funds. This current funding request is to distribute the second year of the WCB funds.

Since 2001, 146 CWRGP projects have been completed 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 Huntington Beach Wetlands Conservancy, San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, the City of Santa Barbara, South Coast Habitat Restoration, the City of Costa Mesa, Orange County Coastkeeper, 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	\$30,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (through the Conservancy)	\$176,489
Subtotal	\$206,489
Earth Island Institute	\$220,000
Other funding sources (see below)	\$360,445
TOTAL	\$786,934

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of \$206,489 for the 2018 CWRGP. EII will provide each CWRGP grantee with technical assistance as needed. (See “Project History” section, above).

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The anticipated sources of funds are a grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB) 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, Public Resources Code section 75001, et seq.). Of the \$206,489, a total of \$30,000 will be appropriated from Proposition 84 funding and the remaining \$176,489 will be from WCB.

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 Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve will 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 Public Resources Code Section 75071. The Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve additionally satisfies the following specified criteria: (b) Watershed Protection – the project will contribute to long-term protection of and improvement to the 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 2018 CWRGP funding (\$176,489) 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 the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Fund of 2002 (established by Proposition 50, Water Code Section 79500, et seq.). Under Water Code Section 79572(a), these funds may be used 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 five projects satisfy this criteria and are located in the coastal zone within Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties: Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve North Shore Restoration - Phase 3, Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting, Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities, Refugio Creek Arundo Removal and Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project.

2. Section 79572(a)(2) allows for the acquisition, protection and restoration of coastal watersheds and adjacent lands. These two projects satisfy this criteria and are located in Ventura and Orange counties: San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort and Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation.

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The cost for the eight 2018-2019 CWRGP projects selected for funding totals \$786,934. All of these projects have significant matching funds.. Earth Island Institute will expend \$220,000 to provide technical assistance to the grantees. The remaining \$360,445 will come from other funding sources (specifically: \$57,000 from federal sources, \$18,300 from state sources, \$72,000 from private or corporate sources, \$7,800 from other non-profit agencies and \$142,550 from organization matching funds). Furthermore, approximately \$62,795 will be donated as in-kind 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

Section 31119 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants for educational projects for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12, inclusive, relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement and maintenance of coastal resources. Seven of the eight projects include an educational component on watershed science and restoration for students in K-12: Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve North Shore Restoration - Phase 3, Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting, Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation, Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities, Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project, Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve, and San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort.

Chapter 6: Coastal Resource Enhancement Projects

Section 31251 authorizes the Conservancy to 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 proposed projects will enhance or restore natural resources that have been degraded by human activities.

Under 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. Audubon Starr Ranch's Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation project is located in the foothills of the Santa Ana Mountains at Bell Creek, an important riparian corridor within the San Juan Creek watershed. Bell Creek, which lies partly outside of the coastal zone, joins San Juan Creek which eventually flows to the Pacific Ocean. The C.R.E.W.'s San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort is located on the San Antonio Creek approximately one mile from downtown Ojai and is also located partially outside the coastal zone, and drains into the Ventura River which empties into the Pacific Ocean.

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Section 31252 requires that all areas proposed for resource enhancement by a state agency, local public agency, or nonprofit organization shall be identified in a certified local coastal plan or program as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems or shall be so identified in other local plans which the commission determines to be consistent with the policies and objectives of Division 20 (commencing with Section 30000).

Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve North Shore Restoration - Phase 3, Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting, Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation, Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities, Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve, Refugio Creek Arundo Removal and San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort all are identified in local coastal plans as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems. The Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project is located on State Parks land and is not identified in any local coastal plan. 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 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 2018 - 2022 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), AS REVISED NOVEMBER 30, 2017:

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective B**, of the Conservancy's 2018 - 2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed 2018 CWRGP projects collectively will enhance approximately 19 acres of coastal habitats such as coastal wetlands, and approximately 4,500 feet of stream corridors.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective D**, all eight proposed projects will be implemented to preserve and enhance coastal watersheds and floodplains: Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve North Shore Restoration - Phase 3, Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting, Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation, Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities, Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve, Refugio Creek Arundo Removal, San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort and the Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project.

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective A**, each of the proposed 2018 CWRGP projects will support programs or events that improve public understanding of coastal resources by involving communities and volunteers in coastal resource restoration.

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Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective B** the Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project, Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beach Outplanting and the Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve 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 2018 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. See Exhibit x for support letters.

Location: The proposed 2018 suite of CWRGP projects are located within the coastal zone or coastal draining watersheds. The projects' locations span all five southernmost California coastal counties constituting the California Bight, from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County to the international border with Mexico. 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 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 multiple small acreage projects. The proposed projects will help 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: Four of the eight proposed 2018 CWRGP projects are not located directly at the coast, and will therefore not be affected by sea level rise. The Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education, Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting and Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve North Shore Restoration – Phase 3 are the only projects out of the 2018 project sites detailed in the Project Summary section, above, located at or near sea level in an area vulnerable to sea level rise. These project sites have adequate surrounding buffer zone to allow for habitat migration and/or conversion considering a range of sea level rise scenarios for the years 2050 and 2100. The Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve is focused on oyster restoration in a subtidal area, which will not be impacted by sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

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Urgency: Six of the eight proposed 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. The other two projects, The Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve and Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beach Outplanting, address an urgent need to establish additional populations of threatened species, increasing their resistance to localized catastrophes.

Leverage: See "Project Summary" section, above for specific details of leverage of funding for each of the proposed 2018 CWRGP projects.

Innovation: All of the proposed 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 projects are ready to be completed within one to two years.

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

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

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

Refugio Creek Arundo Removal: The project falls under the jurisdiction of the Santa Barbara County Local Coastal Plan. In particular, the project addresses Policy 9-37. This policy states that "Riparian vegetation shall be protected ... Where riparian vegetation has previously been removed, except for channelization, the buffer shall allow for the reestablishment of riparian vegetation to its prior extent to the greatest degree possible". The project is consistent with this policy because it enhances the riparian buffer zone by removing invasive species (*Arundo donax*) and planting native trees within the designated 100 foot buffer zone. Additionally, the removal of non-native invasive plants is listed in the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's, Wildlife Action Plan. In Province-Specific Conservation Strategies – South Coast, Conservation Strategy 5 (Direct Management): "Manage invasive species, with focus on reducing the extent of invasive species (particularly *A. donax* and tamarisk) and improving structural diversity of native vegetation". The objectives are to "Improve vertical and horizontal structural diversity of riparian habitat. Reduce the aerial extent of invasive infestations (to 35-50 percent of area that has invasive plant infestations (specifically *Arundo* and tamarisk) and/or invasive animal species). Pursue funding for invasive species eradication and control." This project aligns with this plan through the treatment and removal of invasive *A. Donax*.

Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project: The Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project does not fall under the jurisdiction of a Local Coastal Plan or other planning document. The project area is within the San Buenaventura State

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Beach and under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR). Nathaniel Cox with the CDPR supports the project. The CDPR does not currently have a management plan that includes the project area and the CDPR's General Plan for the San Buenaventura State Beach does not mention the project area. The project area is in the Coastal Zone but is not in the Ventura County Resource Management Agency Coastal Plan Area and is not under the plan's jurisdiction. The project area is not part of the City of Ventura's Downtown Specific Plan, like the adjacent Seaside Park, and not under City jurisdiction.

San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort: The C.R.E.W.'s grant application for the San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort directly addresses and incorporates several goals/objectives that are outlined in the Ventura County General Plan 2017 Coastal Area Plan as well as the Ventura River Watershed Management Plan (2015). Specifically, under the Coastal Area Plan section 2.2, 30231 "Biological productivity; water quality," the project is helping control runoff, preventing depletion of groundwater supplies, and maintaining a natural vegetation buffer area that protects a riparian habitat. This correlates with "Healthy Ecosystems" in the VRWMP (page 63), as we are restoring *Arundo donax* invaded habitat and improving habitat for native species such as the Southern Steelhead Trout and the California Red Legged Frog (page 66). The VRWMP states on page 67 that controlling *A. donax* is a priority for habitat restoration and fire protection, as well as flood protection and water supply enhancement. The 2016/2017 *A. donax* removal project completed by OVLC/CCC, and teaming partners, along San Antonio Creek was successful in slowing the spread of fire during the Thomas Fire incident. Riparian corridors generally provide fire buffers as green vegetation is less flammable, while invasive plant species like *A. donax* become dry in the summer/fall months and increase the potential for spreading fire within the riparian area. OVLC and teaming partners conducted site visits after the Thomas Fire, and found that San Antonio Creek was resilient to fire damage and generally stopped/slowed the spread of the fire across the creek, where *A. donax* had been previously removed. It has been noted that the greatest damage to the native riparian vegetation occurred in places where *A. donax* was not removed. In addition, under the Coastal Area Plan section 2.5 Recreation, section 30223 "Upland areas," our project is an upland area "necessary to support coastal recreational uses" and is being "reserved for such uses." This project will reduce flooding, sediment, and transmission of invasive species that directly impacts the quality of coastal recreation at the mouth of the Ventura River. It is also increasing "Access to Nature" (VRWMP page 698, objectives A, C, D and E) by improving the public's ability to enjoy and appreciate San Antonio Creek in a well-visited Ventura County park. Under the Coastal Area Plan section 4.1.5 "Tree Protection," this project is protecting native oaks and sycamores by restoring native understory. Under the Coastal Area Plan section 4.1.8 "Water Efficient Landscaping," this project is demonstrating the beauty of using a native plant pallet and using very little water (with planting timed with rain events, and hand watering for plant establishment). This also corresponds with "Sufficient Water Supplies" on page 50 of the VRWMP.

Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve: The proposed restoration project is consistent with the goals and strategies of the following regional watershed and wetland conservation plans. The City of Long Beach Local Coastal Program (City of Long Beach, Adopted February 1980 and subsequently incorporated into the General Plan) states, "The purpose of the LCP and amendments is to preserve shoreline resources and

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provide for public access.” The proposed work is directly in line with this goal. The Southeast Area Specific Plan and the certification of the EIR was approved by the Long Beach City Council on September 19, 2017. This project is aligned with Priority #2 of this plan, “Wetlands Enhancement: Improve accessibility and pursue opportunities to restore wetland viability.” The Integrated Regional and Coastal Watershed Management Plan (Greater Los Angeles County, Adopted December 13, 2006) states, “The purpose of this management plan is to improve water supplies, enhance water supply reliability, improve surface water quality, preserve flood protection, conserve habitat, and expand recreational access.” This project will contribute to conserving habitat, expanding public access and education about conserved habitat, improving on coastal erosion which preserves and enhances flood protection, and it may improve the quality of water. Additionally this project aligns with Restoration Planning by the Los Cerritos Wetlands Authority (established in February 2006 by a joint powers agreement among the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, State Coastal Conservancy, City of Long Beach, and City of Seal Beach). The Authority is charged with, among other responsibilities, protecting, conserving and restoring the Los Cerritos Wetlands area to afford flood protection, habitat conservation, and improved water supply. The proposed work is directly in line with this goal, and the Los Cerritos Wetlands area is directly adjacent to the proposed project location.

Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation:

Starr Ranch is not located within the coastal zone. The Resources Element of the County of Orange General Plan, March, 2011 identifies Starr Ranch as a significant open space inland area and notes that “wildlife habitat is protected through the continued existence and operation of wildlife sanctuaries such as the Audubon Society's Starr Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary.” It also points out the important buffer role the Ranch has in relation to the Cleveland National Forest. The plan states that “this area is valuable because of its scenic qualities, recreation opportunities, and for the preservation of important ecological habitats. The Caspers Wilderness Park area merits high-priority status through the combined efforts of County of Orange (Caspers Wilderness Park), U.S. Department of Agriculture (Cleveland National Forest), the National Audubon Society (Starr Ranch Audubon Sanctuary), and adjacent private landowners to create and operate a major conservation and recreation open space area for the benefit of County residents.” This project is consistent with that priority status in that it helps restore portions of Starr Ranch through the removal of non-native plant species and re-vegetation with native plants. The project also will enhance steelhead habitat in Bell Creek, a tributary to San Juan Creek with direct connection to the Pacific Ocean.

Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities: The City of Newport Beach Local Coastal Program includes a Land Use Plan (LUP) and an Implementation Plan. The project addresses aspects of both Plans. Section 4.1.1-12 of the LUP states “Require the use of native vegetation and prohibit invasive plant species within ESHAs and ESHA buffer areas.” This project is consistent with this policy because the targeted restoration areas are considered ESHA. Native plants will be planted and invasive plants species are targeted for removal with this restoration plan. In the Implementation Plan, Section 21.30B.040 Wetland, Deepwater Areas, and Other Water Areas includes the following policy:

A. Protection Required.

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1. The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes shall be protected, maintained and, where feasible, restored.

This project is consistent with this policy because the planting of additional native vegetation will slow the flow of water during rain events, which will decrease the chance for erosion to take place. A slowed hydrology in Newport Valley will also allow more water to infiltrate the ground providing for additional natural water purification before entering the Upper Newport Bay.

Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting: The City of Huntington Beach Local Coastal Program (LCP) contains objectives and policies consistent with the Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting project. These include: Objective C2.5 -- "Maintain and enhance, where feasible, existing shoreline and coastal resource access sites." Objective C2.6 "Promote and provide, where feasible, additional public access, including handicap access, to the shoreline and other coastal resources." Policy C2.6.6 -- "Promote public access to coastal wetlands for limited nature study, passive recreation and other low intensity uses that are compatible with the sensitive nature of these areas." Policy C3.2.1 "Encourage, where feasible, facilities, programs and services that increase and enhance public recreational opportunities in the Coastal Zone." The proposed project will enhance coastal resources, provide access to coastal resources through the involvement of project volunteers, promote low intensity recreation, and enhance recreational opportunities in the coastal zone and is therefore consistent with all these listed objectives and policies.

Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve (BLER) North Shore Restoration – Phase 3: The City of Carlsbad has one of the few approved Habitat Management Plans (HMP) as well as a city's LCP. The proposed project is fully consistent with both of them. The City of Carlsbad serves on the San Diego Association of Governments' (SANDAG) Board of Directors with all of the key San Diego County cities. SANDAG has established a Management Specific Plan (MSP) which is to serve as a living document that indicates the high priority focus for environmental and restoration projects within county boundaries. Many grant applications now require documentation showing how a proposed project meets one or more of the current high priority projects (e.g., post-wildfire restoration, re-establishing and improving native bird, wildlife, and marine life populations and habitats, climate change and climate action). The proposed project includes satisfying some of the current MSP goals. These include: Coast wallflower (SL), Nuttall's acmispon (SO), Orcutt's brodiaea (SO), Otay tarplant (SS), and San Diego thorn-mint (SO); and existing populations of California least tern (SO), Light-footed Ridgway's rail (SO), Beldings Savannah Sparrow (CE(2)), and Western Snowy Plover (FT, SSC).

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The CWRGP 2018 proposed projects are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15304, minor alterations to the land, water and/or vegetation, 14 CCR Section 15306, information collection, and 14 CCR Section 15333, habitat restoration or enhancement projects not exceeding five acres in size. The applicability of the categorical exemptions for each proposed project is described below.

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Refugio Creek Arundo Removal: The proposed project will re-treat 35 *Arundo donax* patches and revegetate additional riparian areas with native trees. Removal of *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 *A. 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. The limited application of herbicides to the *A. donax* does not 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 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.

Kalorama Wetland Restoration and Community Education Project: The proposed project will remove invasive plants using predominantly hand tools and herbicide. 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 the invasive species targeted in this proposed project. The proposed project is designed to require that the herbicide applications do not impact surrounding vegetation and wildlife. The limited application of herbicides does not 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 will remove invasive species 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; will 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. In addition, the proposed project will host interns from Ventura High School's environmental club that will assist with monitoring of the project. Therefore, the 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.

San Antonio Creek Restoration Project at Camp Comfort: 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-mechanized equipment. Therefore, the proposed project is categorically exempt pursuant to

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Section 15304, minor alterations of the land, water and/or vegetation because it will remove invasive species, plant native species 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; will 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.

Community Olympia Oyster Restoration in the Jack Dunster Marine Reserve: The proposed project aims to expand an existing native oyster bed by deploying shell strings to gather oyster recruits, and incorporating those oyster recruits into the existing oyster bed. This project is categorically exempt under Section 15333 because it involves habitat restoration (oyster beds) 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; will 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. In addition, the outreach components of the project (in-class presentations, field trips including biological monitoring) 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.

Restoring Audubon Starr Ranch Riparian Woodlands with Community Participation: The proposed project will enhance existing freshwater wetland by removing invasive species without the use of herbicide 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-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. In addition, the project will utilize volunteers from local schools in the restoration and monitoring and provide training on environmental conservation issues and restoration methodology, making the project 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.

Newport Valley Riparian Restoration with Diverse Communities: The proposed project aims to restore one acre of riparian habitat at Newport Valley. This project is categorically exempt under Section 15333 because it involves habitat restoration by revegetating 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. In addition, the proposed project includes expanding the Environmental Leader Internship Program, which trains ethnically

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diverse college students to prepare and lead restoration efforts involving high school students from underserved communities. The outreach components 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.

Huntington Beach Wetlands Salt Marsh Bird's Beak Outplanting: The proposed project will restore approximately one acre of wetland habitat through the planting of additional upper marsh plant species, and monitor previously restored patches of salt marsh bird's-beak (*Chloropyron maritimum* subsp. *Maritimum*), in Magnolia Marsh in the Huntington Beach wetlands complex. This project is categorically exempt under Section 15333 because it involves habitat restoration by revegetating 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 project includes 15 community-based restoration events, including students from local high schools, for assistance with installing plants, weeding, watering, and monitoring soil conditions. Therefore, the 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.

Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve (BLER) North Shore Restoration – Phase 3: The proposed project will remove existing invasive trees (Eucalyptus and Palm) and restore native vegetation and trees (mainly Torrey Pine) to a 3.84 acre area of wetland in the Batiquitos Lagoon Ecological Reserve. 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.

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