

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
August 22, 2019

CITY OF RIVERSIDE
SANTA ANA RIVER PARKWAY IMPROVEMENTS PROJECTS

Project No. 19-011-01
Project Manager: Greg Gauthier

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$2,025,000 to the City of Riverside for (1) the acquisition of 4 acres at 5200 Tequesquite Avenue in the City of Riverside in Riverside County, and (2) the preparation of designs, engineering, and environmental documentation for 9 projects along 4.7 miles of the Santa Ana River Parkway, from Fairmount Park to Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park, in the City of Riverside in Riverside County.

LOCATION: Various locations within the Santa Ana River Parkway, along the Santa Ana River in the City of Riverside.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Santa Ana River Conservancy Program

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Site Maps and Images](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31170 et seq. of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed two million twenty five thousand dollars (\$2,025,000) to the City of Riverside (“the grantee”) for (1) the acquisition of 4 acres at 5200 Tequesquite Avenue in the City of Riverside in Riverside County, (the “acquisition project), and (2) the preparation of designs, engineering, and environmental documentation for 9 projects (the “planning projects”) along 4.7 miles of the Santa Ana River Parkway from Fairmount Park to Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park in the City of Riverside in Riverside County.

This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to commencement of each planning project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:
 - a. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
 - b. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the project.
 - c. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
2. The following conditions apply to grant funds for the acquisition project:
 - a. Prior to the disbursement of funds for the acquisition project, the grantee shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer:
 - i. All relevant documents for the acquisition including, without limitation, the appraisal, purchase and sale agreement, deed, escrow instructions, environmental or hazardous materials assessment, and title report;
 - ii. A baseline conditions report;
 - iii. Evidence that sufficient funds are available to complete the acquisition.
 - b. The grantee shall pay no more than fair market value for the property, as established in an appraisal approved by the Executive Officer.
 - c. The property acquired under this authorization shall be managed and operated for public access and recreation as part of the Santa Ana River Parkway. The property shall be permanently dedicated to those purposes by an appropriate instrument approved by the Executive Officer.
 - d. Conservancy funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining a sign on the property or in a nearby publicly-viewable area, the design and location of which are to be approved by the Executive Officer.
3. Prior to the disbursement of funds for the planning project taking place at 5200 Tequesquite Avenue (APN 187-080-008), the grantee shall have submitted to the Executive Officer for review and approval evidence that the grantee has acquired the 5200 Tequesquite Avenue (APN 187-080-008) site.”

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 authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program and funding for recreational opportunities and trails, and wildlife habitat restoration, enhancement and protection.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The recommended authorization will provide funds to the City of Riverside to enable its Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department (PRCSD) to (1) acquire 4 acres of new park land at 5200 Tequesquite Avenue (APN 187-080-008) (the “acquisition project”), and (2) to prepare designs, engineering, and environmental documentation for 9 projects (the “planning projects”) along 4.7 miles of the Santa Ana River Parkway, from Fairmount Park to Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park in the City of Riverside in Riverside County. The 9 planning projects include planning for the 5200 Tequesquite Avenue property that will be acquired pursuant to this authorization. Together, the acquisition project and these planning projects constitute the City of Riverside Santa Ana River Parkway Improvements Projects.

The Santa Ana River Trail is completed throughout its length in the City of Riverside. After completing the 2018 update to the City-wide Parks System Master Plan, the PRCSD is ready to fully embark upon planning for improvements and enhancements to parks and properties located along the Santa Ana River within the Santa Ana River Parkway. These projects were initially identified as part of the planning process in developing the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan, completed in 2018.

The City of Riverside has stated that the overarching goal of the City of Riverside Santa Ana River Parkway Improvements Projects is to “put the river back in Riverside,” by providing diverse recreational and educational opportunities, access to open spaces, and restoration of natural habitats for people and wildlife. The City of Riverside believes that drawing the community to the Santa Ana River enables people to form personal connections to the river and to each other when recreating as a community at the river’s side. The suite of projects has the following proposed objectives:

- Acquire 4 acres of private property, with the proposed goal of developing it as a public recreational, open space, and potentially a community agricultural resource.
- Plant native vegetation and trees in barren and underutilized public lands to increase the quantity and quality of habitat, including appropriate trees to also sequester carbon.
- Develop more parks, to increase and improve free or low-cost, easily accessible recreational opportunities so that the community has convenient access to play, exercise, connect with nature, and gather as a community, increasing the community’s physical, emotional, and social health and wellness.
- Implement recreational opportunities that will draw tourism to the Santa Ana River area as a destination, boosting the local economy with tourism spending in local restaurants and stores.
- Beautify barren and underutilized public lands to increase property values for adjacent land owners.
- Create a trailhead and other support amenities for the Santa Ana River Parkway and Trail such as drinking water stations, restrooms, a self-service bike repair station, to encourage more active transportation usage, leading to reduced vehicle miles traveled and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

- Provide ADA accessible opportunities for the community to get to and connect with the Santa Ana River.

The scope of work for the planning projects includes planning and associated community outreach, design, engineering, and environmental review in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act for each of the nine sites within the project suite. At the conclusion of this phase, the City intends to have well-developed and publicly-vetted plans to submit for implementation funding.

Conceptual improvement and enhancement opportunities have been identified for each of the 9 project sites. These initial draft ideas will be vetted and refined through community outreach and focus groups. Input also will be incorporated from the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program's advisory group and technical advisory committee.

The list of draft ideas is broad and includes: habitat conservation areas, woodlands restoration, parking lots, an amphitheater, restrooms, nature trails, a challenge course, overnight camping, picnic areas, a community garden, vista points, exercise stations, public art, interpretive and wayfinding signage, landscaping, irrigation, lighting, an incubator farm, drinking water stations, shade improvements, equestrian facilities, and a bicycle repair station and bike racks. See Exhibit 2: Project Site Maps and Images for a draft list of conceptual opportunities for each site.

The nine project sites include:

- Fairmount Park – Camp Evans Master Plan
- Loring Park - Master Plan
- Carlson Park and St. Francis Falls Improvements
- Santa Ana River Trail Improvements
- Tequesquite North Extension - Master Plan and Trailhead Improvements
- 5200 Tequesquite Avenue (APN 187-080-008)
Planning for the 5200 Tequesquite Avenue site will occur after the acquisition of the property by the City of Riverside is complete.
- Tequesquite Extension South - Master Plan and Santa Ana River Trail
- Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park - Riverside Gateway Master Plan
- Jurupa Avenue Trailhead Master Plan

Site Description: The entire eleven-mile northern edge of the City of Riverside fronts on the Santa Ana River. In Riverside, the Santa Ana River is a juxtaposition of a natural and scenic riparian corridor running through an urban matrix. Supporting the riparian habitats serving as habitat to wildlife, recharging the groundwater basins that supply homes and businesses with water, providing recreation and opportunities to connect to nature, the river is a vital component of life in the City of Riverside.

The Jurupa Avenue Trailhead site is located within a Disadvantaged Community as identified on the State of California Department of Water Resources Disadvantaged Communities Mapping

Tool (Arlanza and Airport neighborhoods). The Camp Evans, Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park, Loring Park, Carlson Park, Tequesquite North Extension, and Santa Ana River Trail Improvements sites are within 0.2 miles of the Rubidoux and Grand neighborhoods, and downtown Riverside, all identified as Disadvantaged Communities on the Mapping Tool. The Tequesquite South Extension, 5200 Tequesquite Avenue acquisition, and Carlson Park sites are within 0.5 miles of a Disadvantaged Community. There is a need for no-cost and low-cost parks and recreational resources, open space access, and active transportation resources to support the Disadvantaged Communities surrounding the planning project sites.

Each of the proposed City of Riverside Santa Ana River Parkway Improvements Projects sites are described below (See Exhibit 2: Project Site Maps and Images for photographs of each site):

Fairmount Park – Camp Evans: The site is 100 acres of undeveloped city owned and managed land within a larger developed regional park. The site is partially disturbed. Existing vegetation includes both native and invasive plants. Among the native plants are stands of black willows, California walnuts, cottonwoods, and wetland plants. Invasive plants such as tamarisk, mustard, Brazilian pepper, tree of heaven, eucalyptus, and Mexican fan palm are interspersed throughout. The Camp Evans project seeks to restore and expand scout and youth group use of the site. The site has been used off and on by scouts since 1917. No scouting or youth camp amenities remain in the project area, except for a few non-functioning remnants.

Loring Park: The site is 2.5 acres of undeveloped city-owned and managed park land. The Loring Park site is located on a hill that provides a good view of the Santa Ana River and the adjacent Camp Evans area from the highest point of the site. Loring Park is located within a historic residential neighborhood and can be developed to link the residential neighborhood to the Camp Evans area and the Santa Ana River Trail. The sparse vegetation is generally non-native ornamental plants and trees such as California Pepper.

Carlson Park and St. Francis Falls: The project is located between a 1.8 acre developed dog park, Carlson Park, and the adjacent 160-acre Frank A. Miller Mt. Rubidoux Memorial Park. The project is at the base of the bridge spanning the Santa Ana River at the historic gateway into Riverside. Carlson Park, St. Francis Falls, and Mount Rubidoux are historic landmarks and along with Fairmount and Loring Parks, are part of a historic open space and park corridor running along the Santa Ana River in downtown Riverside. The site is a developed city-owned and managed park site with irrigated landscaping.

Santa Ana River Trail Improvement: This segment of the trail runs from the back of Carlson Park, along the Tequesquite Extension North site, past Ryan Bonaminio Park, the 4-acre private parcel proposed for acquisition, and finally to the Tequesquite Extension South site. The project runs along city-owned undeveloped park and open space land and public right of way. The corridor to be improved has sparse vegetation, generally weedy plants and non-native habitat.

Tequesquite Extension North: This site is 41 acres of undeveloped city-owned and managed park land located between the base of Mount Rubidoux and the Santa Ana River. The site consists of degraded alluvial fan sage scrub, riparian scrub, and woodland and forest habitat

along the Santa Ana River. The site extends from Carlson Park to the existing developed Ryan Bonaminio Park at the Tequesquite Arroyo.

5200 Tequesquite Avenue: This undeveloped 4-acre site is currently privately-owned. Acquisition is proposed as part of this suite of projects. After the acquisition by the City of Riverside, the parcel will provide a direct connection between Ryan Bonaminio Park and the Tequesquite Extension South site. The site is barren and disturbed and annually mowed for weed abatement. The land will be under the ownership and management of the city's Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department.

Tequesquite Extension South: This site is 55 acres of undeveloped city-owned and managed park land and lies at the base of a bluff. Residential neighborhoods look down to this site and the Santa Ana River from atop the bluff. The site consists of degraded grassland, riparian scrub, and woodland and forest habitat. The site is immediately adjacent to the Santa Ana River Trail.

Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park: This site is 39.5 acres of developed city-owned and managed park land and is immediately adjacent to the Santa Ana River Trail. The site is comprised of turf, trees, irrigated plants, walking paths, picnic tables, a disc golf course, and restrooms. The site has direct Santa Ana River access through a large hole cut in a chain-link fence, where there is a mix of native and non-native plants and trees. The path to the river is an informal and uneven mix of stones, sand and river debris.

Jurupa Avenue Trailhead: This site is 7.7 acres of undeveloped city-owned and managed park land immediately adjacent to the Santa Ana River Trail. It is also located near a residential neighborhood and near what will soon be a retail development that will include establishments where food and beverages can be purchased to support trail users. Much of the site is disturbed land that is mowed annually for weed abatement. A vegetated drainage with a mix of native and invasive plants runs through the eastern edge of the site.

Grantee Qualifications: The City of Riverside Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department has more than 40 years of experience successfully completing similar grant-funded projects. The California Department of Parks and Recreation has been their primary source of grant funding, through their various programs and funding sources. The PRCSD's Senior Management Analyst and Accounting Technician manage the financial operations for the department, including grant management, invoicing, and reimbursement requests using the city's financial and work order management software systems. Three landscape architects serving as park planners and project managers in the department's Planning and Design Division have the required experience and knowledge to complete the project. This team will coordinate and carry out this project. The consultants selected to perform the project scope of work will be selected based on their qualifications and experience with similar work.

Project History: For more than 50 years, trail users and community leaders have sought to complete the Santa Ana River Parkway and Trail from the crest of the San Bernardino Mountains to the coast near Huntington Beach. When completed, it will be one of the longest urban recreation and river parkways in the United States spanning more than 100 miles and will connect a completed section of the California Coastal Trail to inland communities. The Parkway will connect more than 50 parks, historic sites, picnic areas, education facilities, forests,

wilderness areas, hiking trails, campgrounds, nature preserves, and equestrian centers along the Santa Ana River. It is being designed to serve user groups with a wide range of interests and abilities ranging from casual pedestrian and family audiences to racing cyclists, commuters, equestrians, and hikers.

The City of Riverside has been central to the planning efforts for the Santa Ana River Parkway. Riverside’s Santa Ana River Task Force from 2004 and 2010, presented community-generated recommendations to improve, enhance, and provide opportunities for the community to access and connect to the Santa Ana River. The recommendations from the Task Force focused on improvements at Fairmount Park, including the Camp Evans area, Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park, and the area around Tequesquite Avenue, where the North and South Tequesquite, and the 4-acre parcel sites are located.

The Santa Ana River Trail is also a community priority, as indicated during the 2018 City-wide Parks System Master Plan Update. The City held 5 focus group meetings and 7 workshops throughout the city, as well as conducted telephone and online surveys, to gather city-wide data for the update to its City-wide Parks System Master Plan. Among the top community needs for the city-wide park system are trails (including the Santa Ana River Trail specifically), trailheads, open space, natural and greenbelt areas with public access, pocket parks, linear parks, and dog parks. More generally, the city falls short of the goal of providing 3 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents and needs to create more parks to serve its population.

The proposed suite of 9 planning and design projects and their eventual implementation will address the needs identified above and may serve as a model for other cities and jurisdictions along the river. These projects will highlight the vast potential of the Santa Ana River Parkway as a recreational, wildlife habitat and economic resource and the multiple benefits made possible by incorporating the river into the urban landscape.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$2,025,000
City of Riverside	\$390,000
Project Total	\$2,415,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funding for this project is a \$5 million FY 2018/2019 appropriation from the General Fund specifically for the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program. The Budget Act of 2018, Senate Bill No. 840, Chapter 29, Section 3760-101-0001 (e) states that \$5 million shall be available for the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program.

The City of Riverside is contributing \$390,000 to the planning process for the suite of proposed projects.

The planning project costs reflect a cost savings that can be achieved by having the consultant work on the entire project suite as a cohesive unit. The costs for the work per site would be

higher if each site is planned and developed independently of the other sites over an extended period of time.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed suite of projects will help develop the Santa Ana River Parkway and Trail, which will become a major inland trail connecting to the California Coastal Trail. The projects are consistent with the provisions of Chapter 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31170 et seq. regarding the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program and funding for recreational opportunities and trails.

Section 31173 states that the Conservancy may undertake projects and award grants to public agencies to help achieve the goals of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program, including recreational opportunities and trails, and wildlife habitat and species restoration, enhancement, and protection (Section 31173(a)). It further states that the Conservancy may undertake projects for "public access to, enjoyment of, and enhancement of recreational and educational experience on, program lands in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources and economic resources in the area." (Section 31173(b)). The acquisition project and the planning projects will prepare planning, design and environmental documentation for 9 sites along a portion of the Santa Ana River Parkway for the purpose of public access and recreation.

Section 31174(c) states that the Conservancy shall "Give priority to river-related projects that create expanded opportunities for recreation, greening, aesthetic improvement, and wildlife habitat along the corridor of the river and in parts of the river channel that can be improved without infringing on water quality, water supply, and necessary flood control". The acquisition project and the planning projects will help develop the Santa Ana River Parkway in a manner that will expand opportunities for recreation, greening, aesthetic improvement, and wildlife habitat.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#)
GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

The projects proposed for funding under this authorization assist the Conservancy in meeting several of its Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives. Relevant Goals and Objectives are listed below. Please see the "Project Summary" section, above, for how each proposed project meets the relevant goal(s) and objective(s).

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective 2E** of Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan which seeks to design new regional trails and river parkways that connect inland populations to the coast, all of the proposed projects will contribute to this goal as they all contribute to the design and development of the Santa Ana River Parkway.

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective 3A**, which seeks to develop inland waterfront plans that increase accessibility, encourage economic revitalization, promote excellence in urban design,

enhance cultural resources, and are resilient to climate change, all of the proposed projects contribute to the design of the revitalization of the Santa Ana River waterfront within the City of Riverside.

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective 4B**, which seeks to support the design of interpretive or educational displays and exhibits related to watershed education, the Fairmount Park – Camp Evans, Santa Ana River Trail Improvements, Tequesquite North Extension, 5200 Tequesquite Avenue Acquisition, Tequesquite South Extension, and Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park projects all include the design of educational and interpretive displays.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective 6C**, which seeks to develop plans to preserve and enhance coastal watersheds and floodplains, the Fairmount Park – Camp Evans, Tequesquite North Extension, and Tequesquite South Extension projects will develop plans to restore and protect 196 acres of significant Santa Ana River riparian and alluvial fan, riparian scrub, woodland and forest habitats.

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective 9C**, which seeks to plan public access facilities within the Santa Ana River Parkway, the Fairmount Park – Camp Evans, 5200 Tequesquite Avenue Acquisition, Tequesquite North Extension, Tequesquite South Extension, Martha McLean Anza Narrows, and Jurupa Valley Trailhead projects will contribute to this goal through planning for public access facilities including equestrian facilities, restrooms, parking areas, picnic areas, interpretive displays and other recreational amenities.

Consistent with **Goal 10, Objective 10B**, which seeks to plan for the enhancement of natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources, the following projects will contribute to this goal: Fairmount Park – Camp Evans, Tequesquite North Extension, Tequesquite South Extension, and the Martha McLean Anza Narrows projects. All of these projects include planning for enhancement of natural habitats.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on October 2, 2014, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:**
"Santa Ana River Parkway & Open Space Plan" (Coastal Conservancy, May 2018): The proposed suite of projects supports Goals 1 and 2 of the Habitat and Wildlife Goals of the

plan regarding protection, restoration and enhancement of high-quality habitat areas for multiple benefits. The suite of projects further supports Goals 2 through 7, and Goal 10, of the Education, Recreation and Access Goals of the plan regarding connections between the river corridor and surrounding communities, river-related outdoor activities, opportunities to experience and learn about the natural environment and the river's resources, open space access, safe access to the river, and protection of open space for future education, recreation and access opportunities.

"California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report" (Governor's Office of Planning and Research, 2015): Goal 2, "Build Sustainable Regions that Support Healthy, Livable Communities," specific strategy to "support and invest in active transportation projects, such as walking and biking infrastructure." The proposed projects will support completion of the Santa Ana River Parkway, which will provide increased opportunities for active transportation and commuting by bicycle, as well as pedestrian and equestrian trail use. The trail will contribute substantially to providing sustainable and healthy lifestyle opportunities and alternative modes of transportation and recreation.

"California Recreational Trails Plan" (California State Parks, Phase I, June 2002): The Santa Ana River Trail is identified in the California Recreational Trails Plan as a state trail corridor and meets the Plan's three main criteria of providing: 1) a trail corridor that will be a long-distance route greater than 50 miles identified for non-motorized travel; 2) a trail corridor that links people to public and private lands that have outstanding scenic, historic, natural, educational or recreational values; and 3) a trail corridor that connects with other trail corridors or shorter local trails, and stimulates the development of connecting trails by its location.

"California Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk Plan": The projects at Fairmount Park and Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park are in support of the Upper Santa Ana River Watershed Habitat Conservation Plan, which supports the work of multiple area water agencies in their work to ensure long-term water security. This supports a goal of the plan to reduce reliance on distant, unpredictable water sources. The proposed project suite supports use of the Santa Ana River Trail and active transportation corridor, which supports the reduction of carbon output by drawing people to active transportation options rather than using cars. The project suite also enhances and expands habitat along the Santa Ana River corridor, promoting habitat connectivity and resilience to climate change.

"California Water Action Plan": The City of Riverside Public Utilities Department is a partner in the Upper Santa Ana River Habitat Conservation Plan. Covered activities under the USARHCP are infrastructure improvements aimed at utilizing local stormwater as a new water supply. This action is in support of the California Water Action Plan, which calls for expanding water storage capacity and improving groundwater management and the goal of increasing regional water self-reliance. The projects at Fairmount Park and Martha McLean Anza Narrows Park support and benefit from this effort through irrigation improvements and water reuse.

“Completing the California Coastal Trail”: The project suite promotes and supports the Santa Ana River Trail, which will connect the Inland Empire area of Southern California to the California Coastal Trail. The project suite will support the Coastal Trail goal of creating linkages to other trail systems to increase accessibility to coastal resources from urban population centers.

“2015 California Department of Parks and Recreation Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan”: Several of this plan’s goals will be supported and promoted through the project suite, including: improving the use, safety, and condition of existing parks; increasing park access for Californians including residents in underserved communities; and providing community space for healthy lifestyles, children’s play areas, cultural activities, and historic preservation.

4. **Support of the public:** The suite of projects is supported by members of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program’s advisory group which includes representatives of Orange County, Riverside County, San Bernardino County, City of Riverside, City of Anaheim, City of Santa Ana, City of Corona, City of Redlands, Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority, The Wildlands Conservancy, Rivers and Lands Conservancy, and Friends of Harbors, Beaches and Parks. The projects are further supported by the Riverside – Corona Resource Conservation District.
5. **Location:** The proposed projects are located along 4.7 miles of the Santa Ana River in the City of Riverside in Riverside County.
6. **Need:** There has been a vision of completing the Santa Ana River Parkway for more than 50 years. During the last decade, significant political support and regional coordination was established with the goal of completing parkway and trail design and construction. These projects will not happen without Conservancy support.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** Portions of the Santa Ana River Trail were designated a National Recreation Trail in November 1976. The National Park Service has indicated its interest in designating the entire trail, once completed, as a National Recreation Trail. When complete, it will be one of the longest urban recreation river trails and parkways in the United States. Just under one-fifth of all the people in the state (approximately 7.7 million people) live in the three counties served by this parkway and trail.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project areas are not vulnerable to sea level rise due to the distance from the coast.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** The City of Riverside completed the City-wide Parks Master Plan update in 2018 with broad input from community workshops, focus groups, and surveys. It is critical to move forward now with planning and implementation of these numerous parkway and open space projects to build on community support for planning and completion of the Santa Ana River Parkway within the City of Riverside.

10. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The proposed project suite will address recreational opportunities, species and habitat conservation and enhancement, resolution of trail user conflicts, community-based agriculture, parkway facilities and amenities, public health benefits, and improved and expanded parks and open space for the City of Riverside including disadvantaged communities as well as visitors from throughout the state.
11. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
12. **Conflict resolution:** Planning and subsequent implementation of this suite of projects will help accommodate the wide variety of Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway users including bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians. It is likely that with increased recreational trail use homeless encampments along and in the Santa Ana River will become less numerous decreasing the risk from cooking fires and associated waste.
13. **Innovation:** Expanding the Santa Ana River’s reach into the community of Riverside is an innovative approach to embracing the river as a recreational and natural resource within the highly urbanized landscape of the Inland Empire. Riverside will be the first city to develop a comprehensive plan for development of the Santa Ana River Parkway and Trail within its jurisdiction and can serve as a model for other cities located along the river spanning three counties and 23 cities.
14. **Readiness:** Upon Conservancy authorization, the City of Riverside is ready to proceed immediately with the planning and design process for this suite of 9 projects.
15. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.
16. **Cooperation:** See “Support of the Public” above.
17. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The proposed projects are adjacent to and support users of the Santa Ana River Trail, an active transportation and recreational corridor. Enhancing the trail user experience will encourage more trail use that could replace vehicle miles traveled, leading to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Implementation of the project suite will include planting many trees, expanding the urban forest tree canopy to provide additional carbon sequestration.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The planning projects are statutorily exempt pursuant to Title 14 California Code of Regulations Chapter 3 (CEQA Guidelines), Article 18 Statutory Exemptions, Section 15262 which states that a project involving only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions that have not yet been approved does not require the preparation of an environmental document under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) but does require the consideration of environmental factors. The proposed planning projects consist of planning and design and any restoration and parkway improvement plans and studies generated will consider environmental factors and will be subject to CEQA review and analysis prior to implementation.

The acquisition of the 4-acre parcel at 5200 Tequesquite Avenue in the City of Riverside is categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15316 which states that the

acquisition, sale or transfer of land in order to establish a park where the land is in natural condition and a management plan for the park has not been prepared is exempt. The 5200 Tequesquite Avenue is being acquired for park purposes, and no management plan has been prepared. Planning activities contemplated under the planning project for 5200 Tequesquite Avenue will not commence until after the property is acquired, and the planning activities anticipated will include environmental review in compliance with CEQA. CEQA will apply when a management plan is proposed that will change the area from its natural condition. No potential improvements will be approved without undergoing environmental review under CEQA.

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