

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

September 22, 2022

**Wildfire Resilience Program – 2022-2023**

**Project Numbers** [22-054-01, 22-056-01, 22-047-01, 22-033-01, 22-040-01, 22-060-01, 22-062-01, 22-065-01, 22-064-01, 22-043-01, 22-066-01, 22-034-01, 22-067-01, 22-063-01, 22-058-01, 22-057-01, 22-046-01, 22-061-01, 22-053-01, 22-039-01, 22-045-01, 22-052-01, 22-055-01, 22-051-01, 22-059-01, 22-050-01, 22-048-01]

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$10,996,600 to nonprofit organizations, public agencies, a tribe, and one consultant for 27 wildfire resilience projects.

**LOCATION:** Various locations in coastal watersheds and in the San Francisco Bay area (see Exhibit 1)

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*EXHIBITS*

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

Exhibit 3: [Photo Gallery](#)

Exhibit 4: [CEQA Documentation](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS**

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

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed ten million nine hundred ninety-six thousand six hundred dollars (\$10,996,600) to 14 nonprofit organizations, one tribe, 11 public agencies, and one consultant for 27 projects that develop and implement activities to increase wildfire resilience of California’s natural lands and reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. The 26 grantees are as follows (presented in alphabetical order):

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**Alameda County Fire Department:** One million nine hundred ninety-two thousand two hundred dollars (\$1,992,200) to develop and equip a fuel reduction crew of approximately 12 individuals who will work with homeowners and implement on-the-ground vegetation fuel reduction projects across Alameda County.

**Audubon Canyon Ranch:** Fifty-three thousand nine hundred dollars (\$53,900) to organize and lead training programs for the public on how to plan, coordinate, lead, and monitor prescribed burns on private lands in Marin County.

**Bay Area Council Foundation:** One hundred ninety-five thousand five hundred dollars (\$195,500) to develop a report on current fuels reduction efforts in the East Bay Hills of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties and potential market incentives to encourage the private sector to assist with fuel reduction.

**California Native Plant Society:** Three-hundred thirty thousand two hundred dollars (\$330,200) to produce vegetation survey data and maps that will inform decision-makers about wildfire risk and land management practices in San Luis Obispo County.

**City of Albany:** Two hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$230,000) to implement fuel reduction activities and develop a plan for future removal of dead and dying trees on Albany Hill.

**City of El Cerrito:** One hundred forty-five thousand dollars (\$145,000) to develop a comprehensive fire hazard reduction and vegetation management plan for the El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area.

**City of Santa Cruz Fire Department:** Two hundred nineteen thousand five hundred dollars (\$219,500) to remove overgrown combustible vegetation from Pogonip and Arana Gulch open spaces in the City of Santa Cruz and to purchase equipment needed to maintain treated areas.

**East Bay Regional Park District:** Five hundred twelve thousand eight hundred dollars (\$512,800) to create fine-scale vegetation maps for Contra Costa and Alameda Counties and to develop an online resource to support additional wildfire fuel hazard reduction planning.

**Grassroots Ecology:** Eighty-two thousand three hundred dollars (\$82,300) to enhance the ecological health and fire resilience of five city parks in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties.

**Mattole Restoration Council:** Three hundred seventeen thousand dollars (\$317,000) to host wildland fire-fighting training sessions and manage vegetation to continue the restoration of historical prairies in the King Range National Conservation Area in Humboldt County.

**Mendocino County Fire Safe Council:** Six hundred seventy-seven thousand five hundred dollars (\$677,500) to fund chipping and fuel clearing programs and to purchase a truck for safe transport of work crews and gear in Mendocino County.

**Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District:** Five hundred ninety-one thousand seven hundred dollars (\$591,700) to reduce fuel load, implement a habitat restoration and vegetation management program, facilitate data collection for wildfire prevention, and conduct community outreach in the Carmel Valley.

**Moraga Orinda Fire District:** Two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to establish a year-round prescribed grazing program, including purchase of equipment, at Painted Rock Preserve in Contra Costa County.

**Pala Band of Mission Indians:** Four hundred forty-five thousand two hundred dollars (\$445,200) to implement fuels treatments that were identified in the tribe's fire prevention planning process on the Pala Indian Reservation in San Diego County.

**Pie Ranch:** Three hundred sixty-one thousand dollars (\$361,000) to reduce wildfire risk and restore native plants at Pie Ranch near Pescadero in San Mateo County.

**Redwood Coast Land Conservancy:** Two hundred sixty-eight thousand dollars (\$268,000) for vegetation management and fuels reduction on approximately 50 acres, including purchase of necessary equipment, at the Mills Bend Preserve in Mendocino County.

**Resort Improvement District No. 1:** Three hundred twenty-four thousand dollars (\$324,000) for roadside vegetation removal, including purchase of equipment, in Shelter Cove in Humboldt County.

**San Diego Audubon Society:** Seventy-three thousand seven hundred dollars (\$73,700) to reduce invasive vegetative fuels and restore native fire-resistant plants at Anstine-Audubon Nature Preserve and Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary in San Diego County.

**Sonoma County Regional Parks:** Two hundred ninety-seven thousand dollars (\$297,000) to reduce hazardous wildfire fuel loads on the access road and to re-establish a section of the historic Old Monte Rio Fire Break in Monte Rio Redwoods Regional Park in Sonoma County.

**Sonoma Ecology Center:** Eight hundred eighty-nine thousand nine hundred dollars (\$889,900) to partner with five other organizations and conduct fuels management across multiple sites in Sonoma County and southern Mendocino County.

**The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County:** Ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) to build permanent fencing around approximately 50 acres of land on the Arroyo Hondo Preserve to facilitate grazing and vegetation management.

**The Pacific Forest Trust:** One hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$130,000) to restore approximately 80 acres of degraded redwood forestland in the Fieldbrook Valley of Humboldt County.

**Trinity County Resource Conservation District:** Eighty thousand dollars (\$80,000) to implement approximately 20 acres of fuels reduction in Lewiston.

**UC Irvine Nature:** Sixty-one thousand two hundred dollars (\$61,200) for non-native vegetation thinning and native plant seeding to improve habitat and fire resiliency in the defensible space zone of the UC Irvine Ecological Preserve in Orange County.

**Urban Corps of San Diego County:** Three hundred twenty-five thousand nine hundred dollars (\$325,900) to implement approximately 27 acres of fuel reduction and treatment along evacuation corridors in Escondido, Rancho Santa Fe, and San Marcos in northern San Diego County.

**Ventura Resource Conservation District:** One million one hundred fifty-three thousand one hundred dollars (\$1,153,100) to develop community wildfire protection plans for communities in Ventura County, complete a countywide wildfire vulnerability assessment and develop a county-wide Regional Prioritization Plan.

In addition, the State Coastal Conservancy authorizes disbursement of up to nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) to hire a contractor who specializes in environmental documentation, permitting, and project development to provide technical assistance and help prepare environmental documentation for wildfire resiliency projects within the Conservancy's jurisdiction.

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

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Any other agreements determined necessary for the project by the Conservancy's Executive Officer.

Findings:

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

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Climate Ready Program.
2. The proposed projects are consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The proposed grantees that are nonprofit organizations are organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.
4. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Foothills Fire Management Plan, adopted by the City of Palo Alto on October 26, 2009 pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4. The Conservancy finds that the Management Plan, as designed and mitigated, avoids, reduces, or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects to a less-than-significant level, and that there is no substantial evidence based on the record as a whole that implementation of the Management Plan may have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 Cal. Code Regulations Section 15382.

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$10,996,600 under the Conservancy's Wildfire Resilience Program to nonprofit organizations, public agencies, tribes, and a consultant for 27 projects that develop and implement vegetation management activities to increase wildfire resilience of California's forests, grasslands, and natural lands and reduce fire risk to communities.

The Conservancy's Wildfire Resilience Program supports local partners to develop and implement projects to increase wildfire resilience through improved management of natural lands and open space. Conservancy grants support a wide range of activities to accelerate future project implementation, including planning and capacity building. An overarching goal of the Wildfire Resilience Program is to build organizational capacity at the local and regional level to implement vegetation management and fire risk reduction projects. Healthy natural lands are less likely to burn and projects that increase fire breaks or clear ladder fuels help prevent isolated fires from becoming catastrophic wildfires. The proposed projects plan for or implement vegetation management activities to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire in areas where people are living near wildlands. To date, the Conservancy has provided over \$17 million to support projects that reduce fire risk in the areas where wildfire poses the most risk to people.

The Conservancy received nearly 80 wildfire resilience pre-proposals in January 2022. After staff reviewed the pre-proposals, a subset of applicants was invited to submit full proposals. By May 16, 2022, the Conservancy received 50 project proposals requesting over \$25 million in Conservancy funding. This recommendation describes 27 projects proposed for funding under the Wildfire Resilience grants program. An additional 4 projects will be recommended for grants in separate staff reports.

The projects are arranged alphabetically by grant applicant. Each project summary includes the grant applicant; project name; recommended funding amount; geographic region of the project; a brief project description; and information concerning project compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Project consistency with the Conservancy's project selection criteria, enabling legislation, Strategic Plan, and the proposed funding source are provided in the pages following the project summaries. Project activities center on creating defensible space, shaded fuel breaks, forest thinning, and interrupting vertical and horizontal continuity. The goal of all of these actions is to decrease wildfire fuel in an area. Defensible space is the clearing of woody material around a structure; a shaded fuel break is clearing understory and tree thinning and pruning of a forested area thereby decreasing the fuel load; forest thinning focuses on strategic removal of trees and understory; and interrupting vertical and horizontal continuity of fuels is the removal of vegetation to decrease ground to forest canopy and tree to tree transmission.

**ALAMEDA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**\$1,992,200**

**Alameda County Chipper Program**

**Bay Area  
Alameda County**

The Alameda County Fire Department’s Alameda County Chipper Program will hire and train a fuels reduction crew of approximately 12 individuals who will provide two years of year-round free community chipping services to assist residents in reducing vegetation and who will carry out county-wide hazardous fuel load reduction to reduce wildfire risk. The project will: 1) equip the fuels reduction crew with tools, supplies, training, and equipment to work within Alameda County on fuels reduction projects; 2) provide a chipping program that directly supports homeowners by removing woody biomass and reinforcing awareness about clearing vegetation around their property; and 3) partner the fuel reduction crew with on-the-ground fuel reduction projects across Alameda County to remove dead/diseased trees and eliminate fuels along evacuation routes, shaded fuel breaks, and other strategic lands.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under Title 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15304 (Minor Alternations to Land) because it involves minor alterations to the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, or scenic trees.

**AUDUBON CANYON RANCH**

**\$53,900**

**Marin County Wildfire Community Training**

**Bay Area  
Marin County**

Audubon Canyon Ranch’s Marin County Wildfire Community Training will extend its Fire Forward program into Marin County and provide education and technical assistance on fire management for members of the public and landowners. The project consists of partnering with Point Blue Conservation Science to 1) offer basic fireline and wildland chainsaw trainings which will result in 45 fireline-qualified community members and 24 chainsaw-trained community members; 2) offer workshops on ecologically sound shaded fuel breaks, pile burning, and burn planning; and 3) purchase a 6-seat utility terrain vehicle to provide those with mobility issues with access to educational and site demonstration opportunities.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed authorization for funding is exempt from CEQA pursuant to the “common sense” exemption, 14 CCR Section 15061(b)(3), because there is no possibility that offering workshops and trainings and purchasing a utility terrain vehicle to provide transportation to the trainings will have a significant effect on the environment.

**BAY AREA COUNCIL FOUNDATION**  
**East Bay Hills Fuel Reduction Collaboration**

**\$195,500**  
**Bay Area**

**Alameda & Contra Costa Counties**

Bay Area Council Foundation’s East Bay Hills Fuel Reduction Collaboration will work with the Oakland Firesafe Council to produce a report on the current state of fuel reduction efforts and interjurisdictional collaboration in Alameda and Contra Costa County’s East Bay Hills, as well as potential incentive and/or market structures to encourage the private sector to help reduce fuels in the area. The report will be compiled through research, discussions with subject matter experts, and analysis of existing and new data. The report will use the East Bay Hills as a case study for how to accelerate fuel reduction efforts by incentivizing the private sector, with the intent that the report’s findings could be applied to other regions.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s RFFCP. The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15306 (Information Collection) because it involves data collection and research activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The project is also statutorily exempt under Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) because it involves planning for possible future actions that have not been approved or funded.

**CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY**  
**San Luis Obispo County Vegetation Mapping Project**

**\$330,200**  
**Central Coast**

**San Luis Obispo County**

California Native Plant Society (CNPS)’s San Luis Obispo County Vegetation Mapping Project will produce fine-scale vegetation maps that will help local agencies, resource managers, planners, and conservationists make targeted, informed decisions about wildfire risk and land management. Current data and vegetation maps are piecemeal and large data gaps remain county-wide. The project includes engagement with stakeholders, acquiring access permits, conducting ground truthing and sampling, and developing vegetation classification maps and

associated reports. CNPS will host over 10 stakeholder meetings and develop an online public data portal for the project.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s RFFCP. The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15306 (Information Collection) because it involves data collection and research activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The project is also statutorily exempt under Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) because it involves planning for possible future actions that have not been approved or funded.

**CITY OF ALBANY**

**Albany Hill Wildfire Resilience Project**

**\$230,000**

**Bay Area**

**Alameda County**

The City of Albany’s Albany Hill Wildfire Resilience Project will mitigate wildfire danger on approximately 10 acres of City-owned property through vegetation management activities including mowing grasslands, pruning vegetation along fire roads, removing dead and downed material, and planting a variety of annual and perennial native plants. This work will be conducted by Urban Tilth, a Richmond-based 501(c)(3) non-profit involved in food justice and watershed stewardship. The project will also develop a plan for the removal of approximately 400 dead and dying Blue Gum Eucalyptus trees and future ecological restoration of the site including consultation with Lisjan-Ohlone tribal representatives.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s RFFCP. The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The development of the plan for future tree removal and restoration is statutorily exempt under 14 CCR Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) because it involves planning for a possible future action that has not been funded or approved. The vegetation management activities to reduce fire hazards are exempt under Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because those activities involve minor changes to the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees.



**CITY OF EL CERRITO**

**\$145,000**

**City of El Cerrito Wildfire Planning Project**

**Bay Area  
Contra Costa County**

The City of El Cerrito’s Wildfire Planning Project will develop a comprehensive Fire Resilience and Forest Conservation Management Plan for the El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area (HNA). The Management Plan will identify critical resource areas and provide guidance for the City’s fire fuel reduction, native forest conservation, and maintenance activities within the El Cerrito HNA. Additionally, the Management Plan will address emergency access and public recreation in the HNA by evaluating potential access improvements and enhancements to the trail network that connects natural features, schools, and other community assets, including development of a preliminary plan for potential expansion of the existing trail system. The project includes preparation of a CEQA document for the Management Plan.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s RFFCP. The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is statutorily exempt under 14 CCR Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) because it involves development of a management plan and related CEQA documentation for possible future actions that have not been funded or approved.

**CITY OF SANTA CRUZ FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**\$219,500**

**Pogonip/Arana Gulch Vegetation Management Project**

**Central Coast  
Santa Cruz County**

The City of Santa Cruz Fire Department’s Pogonip/Arana Gulch Vegetation Management Project will remove overgrown combustible vegetation and dead or dying trees from Pogonip and Arana Gulch open spaces in the City of Santa Cruz. The project comprises treatment of approximately 10 acres in the Pogonip area and approximately 5 acres in Arana Gulch. The project includes removal of overgrown combustible vegetation and dead or dying trees through methods such as hand crews, weed whackers, mowers, chain saws, and chippers to create shaded fuel breaks and improve access to fire roads. The project includes purchase of a chipper and masticator attachments to continue maintenance on treated areas. The project will improve fire road access, slow the potential spread of fire to homes adjacent to the wildland urban interface, and allow for fire suppression vehicles, such as fire engines, to safely access and extinguish wildland fires.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because the project involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth and existing fire roads, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**EAST BAY REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT** **\$512,800**

**East Bay Vegetation and Landscape Mapping Project** **Bay Area**  
**Alameda and Contra Costa Counties**

East Bay Regional Park District’s East Bay Vegetation and Landscape Mapping Project will collect data, develop a fine-scale vegetation map of 100+ vegetation types across all of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, and create a data portal for public use. The Park District will use imagery, lidar data, and field sampling to create various maps and a key and description of the vegetation types of the counties. The resulting products will be used to create a fine-scale vegetation map of Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. The fine-scale map and associated layers will support short- and long-term management activities for sustainable restoration of the health and wildfire resilience of East Bay natural areas. The Park District will also develop a data portal and a Wildfire Fuels Map tool to provide the public with access to findings and to support landowner and agency wildfire risk reduction activities.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s RFFCP. The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15306 (Information Collection) because the project involves data collection and research activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

**GRASSROOTS ECOLOGY** **\$82,300**

**Grassroots Ecology Community-Based Fire Resilience Project** **Central Coast**  
**Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties**

Grassroots Ecology’s Community-Based Fire Resilience Project will reduce fuel loads on approximately 127 acres across five city-owned parks and preserves in Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties. Parks include McClellan Ranch Preserve in Cupertino, Pearson-Arastradero and Foothills Nature Preserves in Palo Alto, Redwood Grove in Los Altos, and Stulsaft Park in Redwood City. These parks are popular and close to housing and public infrastructure. Project activities include removing dead woody debris and ladder fuel and reducing dense invasive vegetation through mowing, monitoring, and passive restoration. The project will provide

hands-on education and workforce development opportunities to San Jose Conservation Corps (SJCC) members, young adults ages 17-27 who are primarily Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (majority Latino/Latina) and low-income, many of them working toward their high school diplomas. SJCC members will also be trained in fire ecology and sustainable fire management. Vegetation management work will be conducted by SJCC members as well as volunteers, thereby providing opportunities for workforce development, education, and community engagement in land stewardship.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding for this project is the General Fund appropriation to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding sources.

**CEQA:** Projects activities on properties owned by the City of Palo Alto are within the scope of the Palo Alto Foothills Fire Management Plan (2009; updated 2016). The City approved a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Plan on October 26, 2009. The Management Plan and MND are attached as Exhibit 4. The MND assessed potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the Management Plan. All the Plan's potential impacts will be mitigated below the level of significance, as summarized below.

Biological Resources:

The project will mitigate potential impacts to special-status species, including steelhead, San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat, white-tailed kite, arcuate bush mallow, and western leatherwood by, among other measures: (1) training project personnel concerning protected species and habitats; (2) surveying for special status species and avoiding areas where species are found; (3) avoiding weed-whipping or mowing near wetlands; (4) cleaning tools and equipment to avoid spreading diseases and non-native plants; (5) employing a qualified biologist to monitor all treatment work; (6) limiting grazing to non-riparian areas; and (7) avoiding herbicide treatments adjacent to water bodies and riparian areas.

Geology, Soils, and Seismicity:

Potential soil erosion impacts would be mitigated by, among other measures: (1) developing erosion control plans; (2) avoiding work during periods of precipitation or immediately after storm events; (3) maintaining a buffer between mechanical treatment areas and water bodies and riparian areas; and (4) limiting the intensity and scope of grazing to avoid erosion.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials:

Potential impacts associated with prescribed burns and the use of mechanical equipment and herbicides would be mitigated by, among other measures: (1) implementing measures to reduce the potential impacts of fuel spills; (2) stopping work during high fire danger or red flag conditions; (3) developing a public safety plan and spill mitigation plan for herbicide applications; and (4) avoiding fuel treatment in areas adjacent to water bodies and riparian areas.

Hydrology and Water Quality:

Potential impacts to water quality caused by erosion or the release of hazardous chemicals would be addressed using the mitigation measures described above under Geology, Soils, and Seismicity and Hazards and Hazardous Materials.

Staff has independently evaluated the MND and Management Plan and concurs that there is no substantial evidence that implementation of the Plan will have a significant effect on the environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the Management Plan as mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that implementation of the Management Plan will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by 14 CCR Section 15382. Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Determination.

Project activities at the remaining project sites are categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because they involve minor alterations to the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees; Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because they involve maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth; and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because they involve fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**MATTOLE RESTORATION COUNCIL**

**\$317,000**

**Prosper Ridge Prairie Restoration Project**

**North Coast  
Humboldt County**

The Mattole Restoration Council’s Prosper Ridge Prairie Restoration Project is a collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management to restore historical prairies and landscape level fuel breaks on Prosper Ridge in the King Range National Conservation Area in Humboldt County. Project tasks include the mechanical removal of approximately 42 acres of encroaching vegetation; propagation of up to 30,000 native grass and forb plugs; mechanical and manual thinning on approximately 41 acres of forested areas; and an approximately 100-acre prescribed burn led by the Bureau of Land Management and assisted by the Council’s prescribed burn crew, local fire departments, and tribal members of the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. The Council will also host a wildland firefighting training and certification for the aforementioned groups in order to build workforce capacity.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 4799.05(d), which exempts state funding of projects undertaken on federal lands that consist of prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire. This exemption is applicable only to projects that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and if the Secretary for Natural Resources has certified

that NEPA and laws that affect management of federal forest lands in California have not been substantially amended since August 31, 2018. On January 13, 2022, the Secretary for Natural Resources made the necessary certification. The proposed project was reviewed in the Prosper Ridge Prairie Plan Environmental Assessment, dated 1/18/2014 (DOI-BLM-CA-N030-2013-0002). Accordingly, Conservancy funding of the proposed project is exempt from CEQA under Section 4799.05(d).

**MENDOCINO COUNTY FIRE SAFE COUNCIL** **\$677,500**

**Mendocino Fire Safe Council Community Chipper and Defensible Space Program** **North Coast  
Mendocino County**

The Mendocino County Fire Safe Council’s Community Chipper and Defensible Space Program project consists of two years of operations of the Community Chipper Program, work of the Brooktrails Greenbelt Defensible-Space Clearing project on 75 parcels, and purchase of a truck for safe transport of crews and gear in Mendocino County. The Community Chipper Program designates chipper days in which residents clear their own defensible spaces (with assistance available to income-eligible seniors and disabled residents) and the Fire Safe Council chips and removes or broadcasts cleared woody materials at no cost to residents. Two years of operations will provide an estimated 120 chipper days throughout Mendocino County to approximately 800-1200 parcels (est. 2000-3000 residents). The Brooktrails Greenbelt Defensible-Space Clearing project will provide training and implementation for an existing crew from the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians to clear vegetation around structures on approximately 75 parcels of the Brooktrails Greenbelt. Finally, a truck will be purchased and used to transport equipment and crews for fuel reduction work in the County.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because the project involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT** **\$591,700**

**Garland Ranch Wildfire Resilience Project** **Central Coast  
Monterey County**

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District’s Garland Ranch Wildfire Resilience Project will work to reduce the fire risk in Garland Ranch Regional Park and the Carmel Valley through a combination of fuel reduction, data collection, and community outreach. The project includes the following: 1) thinning of approximately 11 acres of invasive flammable eucalyptus in

Garland Ranch Regional Park; 2) creation of an approximately 6.2 acre shaded fuel break as a defensible space in Garland Ranch Regional Park less than one mile from Carmel Valley Road and Carmel Valley Village; 3) implementation of ongoing spot-treatment and grazing to maintain treated areas in the park; 4) hiring of a technical specialist, such as a GIS consultant, to collect data and execute GIS mapping recommendations for alternate evacuation routes, safer fire retardant drop zones, additional fuel reduction sites, and/or potential habitat restoration sites; and 5) facilitation of community outreach through in-person meetings, online updates, and educational signage.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because the project involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**MORAGA ORINDA FIRE DISTRICT**

**\$250,000**

**Moraga Orinda Fire District Grazing Project**

**Bay Area,  
Contra Costa County**

The Moraga Orinda Fire District's Grazing Project will provide a year-round prescribed grazing program at Painted Rock Preserve in Contra Costa County. Coordinating with the John Muir Land Trust (the landowner) and local Moraga cattle ranchers, the Fire District will expand their current grazing program into a long-term, more sustainable version. The project includes purchase of necessary equipment, including fencing and corrals and water meter and line. The Fire District will work with John Muir Land Trust staff and local ranchers to install equipment, implement an annual target grazing schedule, and evaluate program progress against established goals, objectives, and benchmarks. The Fire District will develop and implement a community marketing campaign showcasing the program.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) because it involves small improvements to land, including installation of fencing. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because it involves minor alterations to the condition of vegetation through livestock grazing.

**PALA BAND OF MISSION INDIANS**

**\$445,200**

**Pala Fuels Reduction Project**

**South Coast  
San Diego County**

The Pala Band of Mission Indians’ Fuels Reduction Project will implement fuels treatments that were identified in the tribe’s fire prevention planning process. The project will reduce fuels and clear vegetation around structures and along roads on approximately 119 acres of tribal land. The Tribe intends to hire staff to carry out the project. The project area is rated by the CAL FIRE as High Fire Severity and has experienced past fires.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because it involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, including fuel management activities within 100 feet of structures that will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species or significant erosion and sedimentation of surface waters. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**PIE RANCH**

**Pie Ranch Fuels Reduction and Native Planting Project**

**\$361,000  
Central Coast  
San Mateo County**

Pie Ranch’s Fuels Reduction and Native Planting Project will remove high-fire risk invasive plants and revegetate previously burned areas within Pie Ranch with native plants. Fire burned approximately 27 acres at one site, and Pie Ranch is looking to revegetate approximately 3 acres within that boundary. Pie Ranch is a nonprofit education center and organic farm located on the southern San Mateo County coast, about 14 miles south of Pescadero and 22 miles north of Santa Cruz. Portions of the Pie Ranch property burned in 2020 during the CZU complex fire. The proposed project will remove high-fire-risk invasive plants, including approximately 90 high-risk eucalyptus trees, and revegetate burned areas with native plants. The large tree removal will be contracted to experts at Community Tree Service in Watsonville (Santa Cruz County), which has already removed dozens of trees at Pie Ranch since the CZU fire. Pie Ranch will work with the San Mateo Resource Conservation District to ensure all work associated with tree and invasive species removal and restoration is compliant with all documentation and permits, Lake and Streambed Alteration, and local grading permits.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is exempt under 14 CCR Section 15333 (Small Habitat Restoration Projects) because it will remove non-native trees and revegetate previously burned areas with native vegetation in an area that is smaller than 5 acres. The project is also exempt under Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**REDWOOD COAST LAND CONSERVANCY**

**\$268,000**

**Mill Bend Preserve Wildfire Management Program**

**North Coast  
Mendocino County**

The Redwood Coast Land Conservancy’s Mill Bend Preserve Wildfire Management Program will use a variety of vegetation management techniques to reduce fuels on approximately 50 acres within the Mill Bend Preserve in Humboldt County. Vegetation debris left after logging, dead or dying trees, high-fire-risk invasive plants will be removed. Project tasks also include restoration of low-fuel native vegetation, implementation of a multi-year grazing program, creation of shaded fuel breaks, and the repaving of old roads to provide emergency vehicle access. The project includes the purchase of vehicles, hand tools, and other equipment required to carry out the project tasks and for the future maintenance of the land. Work will be carried out by California Conservation Corps or Local Conservation Corps crews, volunteers, paid summer youth, and qualified contractors.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed fire fuel reduction activities on the Mill Bend Preserve are categorically exempt pursuant to 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because they involve minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth and repaving of existing emergency access roads, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**RESORT IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT NO. 1**

**\$324,000**

**Shelter Cove Shaded Fuel Breaks Project**

**North Coast  
Humboldt County**

Shelter Cove Resort Improvement District No. 1 is a special-purpose district established in 1965 pursuant to Public Resources Code Sections 13000-13233. The Resort Improvement District No. 1’s Shelter Cove Shaded Fuel Breaks Project will provide roadside fuels removal and maintenance of shaded fuel breaks along approximately 8 miles of roadways in Shelter Cove within King Range National Conservation Area in Humboldt County. The project includes the



purchase of heavy equipment and hiring of contractors needed to carry out the projects' fuels reduction and maintenance work.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because it involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth and roads, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**SAN DIEGO AUDUBON SOCIETY**

**\$73,700**

**San Diego Audubon Sanctuary Fuels Reduction Project**

**South Coast,  
San Diego County**

San Diego Audubon Society's Sanctuary Fuels Reduction Project will reduce invasives and fire fuels and restore native fire-resistant plants to Anstine-Audubon Nature Preserve in Vista and Silverwood Wildlife Sanctuary in Lakeside, both in San Diego County. Project tasks include removal of high-fire-risk invasive plants, removal of vegetation around structures, and pruning and thinning to create defensible spaces. Invasive plant treatment will include spot use of herbicide. The project will also propagate native shrubs and annuals. To educate the public on native fire-resistant plants they can plant in their own yards, the project includes replacing all plant labels at both Anstine and Silverwood with labels that indicate common and scientific names, as well as whether the plant is fire resistant.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because the project involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, including fuel management activities within 30-100 feet of structures. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**SONOMA COUNTY REGIONAL PARKS**

**\$297,000**

**Monte Rio Redwoods Shaded Fuel Break Project**

**North Coast  
Sonoma County**

The Sonoma County Regional Parks’ Monte Rio Redwoods Shaded Fuel Break Project will reduce hazardous wildfire fuel loads along a key access road through the Monte Rio Redwoods Park and create a shaded fuel break to re-establish a section of the Monte Rio Fire Break. The shaded fuel break will provide access for firefighters to reach the main ridgeline in the event of a wildfire and provide a safer location to extinguish fuels in front of an advancing wildfire. Project tasks will include reduction of the horizontal and vertical continuity of fuel loads by removing small diameter trees and shrubs from the understory. The shaded fuel break will leave the biggest and healthiest trees that are more resilient to wildfires to provide shade and wildlife habitat. Contracted work crews will thin, lop, and scatter the woody material to create up to 27 acres of shaded fuel break along 1.7 miles of road and 100 feet on each side. The project includes the planning, coordination, permitting, and contractor oversight for the shaded fuel break, as well as invasive species management as part of their Early Detection Rapid Response program.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because it involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth and existing access roads, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**SONOMA ECOLOGY CENTER**

**\$889,900**

**Sonoma Ecology Center Wildfire Resilience Program**

**North Coast  
Sonoma County**

Sonoma Ecology Center’s Wildfire Resilience Program will conduct fuels management on twelve sites in Sonoma County and southern Mendocino County. All twelve sites need ecologically informed vegetation management. Overgrowth of vegetation, including non-native invasive weeds, has accumulated, now creating a threat of high-severity fire that could harm biodiversity, water resources, and homes and infrastructure. The Center will partner with six organizations to conduct the project: Sonoma Ecology Center, Sonoma State University, Rips Redwoods, Shelterwood Collective, Oak Hill Farm, and LandPaths. Each partner organization will identify sites and carry out work under the oversight of the Center. Project tasks will vary by site and will include ladder fuel removal, roadside fuel breaks, removal of dead trees, invasive

shrub and dead wood removal, grazing, and establishment of defensible space. Additionally, the project includes conducting training workshops for project partners on biochar, prescribed burning, and best practices in vegetation management. Across these twelve sites approximately 270 acres will be thinned and dead wood removed, 115 acres will undergo prescribed burn, 90 acres will be grazed and 40 acres will have invasive shrubs removed.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because the project involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth and roads, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**THE LAND TRUST FOR SANTA BARBARA COUNTY**

**\$90,000**

**Arroyo Hondo Permanent Fencing Project**

**Central Coast,  
Santa Barbara County**

The Land Trust for Santa Barbara County's Arroyo Hondo Permanent Fencing Project comprises installing fencing and instituting an annual grazing program to reduce fuel load on the Arroyo Hondo Preserve's eastern slope. The project includes placement of approximately 7,400 feet of permanent perimeter fencing surrounding up to 47 acres of Arroyo Hondo Preserve's eastern slope. Permanent fencing will enable the Land Trust to graze this area at very low cost well into the future, thus making annual grazing of this area financially self-sustaining. Using grazing to reduce fuel load, particularly fine fuels such as dense regrowth of annual grasses and mustards, will protect the Preserve's sensitive riparian habitat, the extensive already-restored areas of the Preserve, and the site's historic buildings, as well as buffering adjacent lands from wildfire.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation's Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy's block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** Construction of fencing pursuant to the proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15303 (New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures) because it involves construction of minor accessory structures. The proposed annual grazing program is categorically exempt under Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land), because it involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation through livestock grazing.

**THE PACIFIC FOREST TRUST**

**\$130,000**

**Fieldbrook Valley Fire Resilience Project**

**North Coast  
Humboldt County**

The Pacific Forest Trust’s Fieldbrook Valley Fire Resilience Project will restore approximately 80 acres of degraded redwood forestland across Fieldbrook Valley to prepare these lands for the prescribed reintroduction of low-intensity fire and native redwood forest stands. Tasks will include removal of abandoned vehicles, trash, and barbed wire fence; thinning and other fuels reduction; preparation of the area for prescribed burning; and the preparation of a Prescribed Burn Plan. The project area is in the heart of Humboldt’s County redwood region and is identified as a High Fire Severity Zone, as well as being adjacent to critical structures and infrastructure such as power lines and homes.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because it involves minor alterations in the condition of vegetation and land without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, including the removal of trash and debris. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire. The project’s planning activities are exempt under Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) because they involve planning for possible future actions that have not been approved or funded.

**TRINITY COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**\$80,000**

**Lewiston Resilience Phase II Project**

**North Coast,  
Trinity County**

Trinity County Resource Conservation District’s Lewiston Resilience Phase II Project will implement approximately 20 acres of fuels reduction on Bureau of Land Management land along roadways and private property boundaries in Lewiston in Trinity County. The District will use a variety of techniques to return the landscape to a more natural, fire-resilient state. Proposed techniques include hand cutting and piling, mastication, lop and scatter, pile burning, and chipping. Predetermined treatment areas have been assessed to at least some extent by the Bureau of Land Management or the District, and work may occur outside of predetermined treatment areas if new areas become apparent. Once treated, these areas are expected to have low or moderate fire severity in the likely case of fire, greatly reducing future environmental impacts while also increasing public safety.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code section 4799.05(d), which exempts state funding of projects undertaken on federal lands that consist of prescribed fire, thinning, or fuel reduction to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire. This exemption is applicable only to projects that have been reviewed under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and if the Secretary for Natural Resources has certified that NEPA and laws that affect management of federal forest lands in California have not been substantially amended since August 31, 2018. On January 13, 2022, the Secretary for Natural Resources made the necessary certification. The proposed project was reviewed in the Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) Lewiston Community Protection Fuel Analysis, dated 9/29/2020 (DOI-BLM-CA-N060-2020-0017-DNA). Accordingly, Conservancy funding of the proposed project is exempt from CEQA under Section 4799.05(d).

**UC IRVINE NATURE**

**\$61,200**

**UC Irvine Wildfire Project**

**South Coast,  
Orange County**

UC Irvine Nature’s Wildfire Project will remove and thin non-native grasses, forbs, and Eucalyptus trees at the UC Irvine Preserve in Orange County to create defensible space within 100 ft of adjacent residences. Approximately two acres will be treated. The project will also seed the area with native forbs and grasses. The project will restore grassland with the goal of improving habitat and reducing fire risk to adjacent homes.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because it involves minor alterations to land without the removal of healthy, scenic, mature trees, including fuel management activities within 100 feet of structures. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping and native growth, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**URBAN CORPS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY**

**\$325,900**

**Urban Corps Northern San Diego County Fire Prevention Project**

**South Coast,  
San Diego County**

Urban Corps of San Diego County’s Northern San Diego County Fire Prevention Project will complete needed fuel breaks along evacuation routes in San Diego County, treating approximately 27 acres. The project will remove fuels, provide fuel breaks and clearance around structures, and remove invasive plants under the direction of partner fire departments. The project will create shaded fuel breaks along the evacuation corridors that will protect approximately 4,000 residents in San Marcos, Rancho Santa Fe, and Escondido. Urban Corps community Corps members will carry out the project.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire resilience. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) because the project involves minor alterations to the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, and scenic trees, including fuel management activities within 100 feet of structures. The project is also exempt under Section 15301 (Existing Facilities), because it involves maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth, and roads, and Section 15269 (Emergency Projects), because it involves fuel management activities necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire.

**VENTURA COUNTY RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

**\$1,153,100**

**Ventura Wildfire Resilience Planning Project**

**South Coast,  
Ventura County**

The Ventura County Resource Conservation District’s Wildfire Resilience Planning Project will build on the work of the multi-jurisdictional Ventura County Wildfire Collaborative. The project includes: 1) creating five locally focused Community Wildfire Resilience Plans; 2) creating a countywide vulnerability assessment and map with an online interactive data component; and 3) developing a county-wide wildfire resilience Regional Prioritization Plan and portfolio of projects. The goal of the project is to encourage stakeholder engagement and develop a pipeline of wildfire resilience implementation projects in Ventura County.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s RFFCP. The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed project is statutorily exempt under 14 CCR Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) because it involves planning for possible future actions that have not been approved or funded.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTRACT**

**\$900,000**

**Statewide**

Staff seeks authorization to hire a contractor that specializes in environmental documentation, permitting, and project planning to support wildfire resiliency project development. The Conservancy has identified a need for technical assistance to help local partners with the environmental documentation required to implement wildfire resilience projects. The contractor will provide technical assistance with developing environmental documentation and permitting under the guidance of Conservancy staff for project partners who are seeking to implement wildfire resilience projects in the Conservancy’s jurisdiction. Specific projects for which the contractor would provide assistance in compliance with environmental laws may include shaded fuel breaks, forest health measures, prescribed and cultural burns, mechanical and manual treatments, forest thinning, native plant restoration to improve wildfire resilience, prescribed herbivory (including infrastructure improvements) and other actions designed to improve overall resiliency to wildfire.

**Funding:** The proposed source of funding is a block grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation’s RFFCP. The RFFCP seeks to increase capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CEQA:** The proposed authorization is statutorily exempt under 14 CCR Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies) because it is a contract with a consultant to conduct environmental review and planning activities for possible future actions that have not been funded or approved.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

**Selection Criteria**

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

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

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

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

- **California’s Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan** (Governor’s Forest Management Task Force, January 2021), which calls for activities such as fuels reduction, forest

thinning, vegetation management, prescribed fire, shaded fuel breaks, defensible space, and enhancement of fire-prone habitats to reduce fire risk.

- The **California Forest Carbon Plan** (CNRA, 2018), which calls for restoration of the natural fire regime and forest composition through a multitude of approaches including thinning, prescribed burns, invasive vegetation management, and shaded fuel breaks.
- The **Community Wildfire Prevention & Mitigation Report** (CAL FIRE, 2019), which urges state and local agencies to implement the goals of the Forest Carbon Plan and provides recommendations to agencies to increase the scale and pace of management and mitigation actions to improve forest health and resiliency.

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

The recommended authorization includes a grant directly to one tribe (Pala Tribe) to conduct wildfire resilience projects that the tribe identified as a priority.

In addition, several grant applicants (Audubon Canyon Ranch, Mendocino Fire Safe Council, Mattole Restoration Council, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, Redwood Coast Land Conservancy, and San Diego Audubon Society) will work with tribes in carrying out their projects. For example, Mendocino Fire Safe Council’s crew consists entirely of Mendocino County tribal members of the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, and the Council is in the process of working to transition crew members to a Tribal owned business. The Mattole Restoration Council project will include working with tribal members of the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria. The City of Albany’s project includes consultation with Lisjan-Ohlone tribal representatives about future ecological restoration of the site.

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

All of the proposed projects will help increase fire resiliency in the context of anticipated climate change. Fire resilience is a critical issue due to increased average temperatures, reduced marine fog and longer and more severe droughts. California is facing unprecedented fire risk due to climate change, a growing populace and an increasing number of people living in high fire risk areas, including areas adjacent to wildlands. Both the 2020 and 2021 fire seasons broke numerous records.

Several projects include long-term investments that will enable wildfire resilience work to continue into the future. For example, the Land Trust of Santa Barbara is installing permanent fencing to reduce the cost of future grazing on their property.

**5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.**



The recommended projects were selected because they are multi-benefit projects that will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire impacts to communities. Added benefits of these projects include: native habitat restoration, workforce training, public education, and development of data and plans to support future vegetation management.

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

Many of the proposed projects will engage with local communities to promote planning and implementation of these wildfire resilience projects. For example, the Audubon Canyon Ranch’s Fire Forward program will provide education and technical assistance on fire management for landowners and other members of the public. Community input and engagement will be critical to Ventura County’s wildfire planning efforts including the successful development of five new Community Wildfire Protection Plans led by the Ventura County Fire Safe Council. The five locally focused plans will build on the recent successful engagement conducted during the countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan update.

There is enormous public support for wildfire risk reduction. An LA Times statewide poll in 2020 found that 74% of surveyed voters believe that wildfire threat is greater now than in the past.

**TOTAL PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$10,996,600</b>
Other Funding (excluding in-kind)	\$8,880,553
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$19,877,153</b>

The anticipated source of funding come from two sources:

- 1) Fiscal Year 2021-22 and 2022-23 appropriations from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire risk reduction. The Budget Act of 2021, as amended by SB 170 (2021); The Budget Act of 2022, as amended by AB 178 (2022). Projects funded by the General Fund appropriations are consistent with this funding source because they will help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.
- 2) A block grant of \$8.8 million to the Coastal Conservancy from the California Natural Resource Agency under its Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). The Conservancy is one of nine recipients of RFFCP block grants (Exhibit 1). The goal of the RFFCP is to increase regional capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that improve forest health and fire resiliency. The Conservancy’s block grant covers projects from Marin County south to Ventura County. Projects funded by the RFFCP block grant are consistent with the funding source because they include training, education, and purchase of equipment to increase local capacity to undertake wildfire resilience projects; regional planning, coordination, and data gathering activities to support future

fuel management projects; and support for local entities in the environmental review and permitting process.

The Coastal Conservancy does not typically require matching funds nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete the project.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

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

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

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

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

The proposed projects address the impacts of climate change on natural resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction because they will occur in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area (Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code) and/or will improve forests, grasslands, and other natural lands and reduce the risk of wildfire that would adversely impact water quality and habitat in coastal watersheds (Chapter 5.5).

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

The 27 projects proposed for funding assist the Conservancy in meeting a number of its Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives. Relevant Goals and Objectives are listed below, along with the names of the proposed projects that meet each goal. Please see the “Project Summary” section, above, for how each proposed project meets the relevant goal(s) and objective(s).

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective C** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed projects will restore the health and resilience of California forests, grasslands, and natural lands in a manner that reduces fire risk to communities. The projects will help California’s natural lands to be more resilient to catastrophic wildfires.

**Goal 16, Objective A** seeks to prioritize projects that are located in disadvantaged communities or directly benefit disadvantaged communities. The following 14 proposed projects will contribute to this goal:

- Audubon Canyon Ranch
- Mattole Restoration Council
- Mendocino County Fire Safe Council
- Pala Band of Mission Indians
- Redwood Coast Land Conservancy
- Resort Improvement District No. 1
- San Diego Audubon Society
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- Sonoma Ecology Center
- The Pacific Forest Trust
- UCI Nature
- Urban Corps of San Diego County
- Ventura Resource Conservation District

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

Conservancy staff reviewed the 27 proposed projects for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (14 CCR Sections 15000 et seq.).

Twenty-eight of the proposed projects are categorically exempt under CEQA. Please see the “Project Summary” section above, for more information on each proposed project and why it is exempt from CEQA. Applicable CEQA exemptions are listed below.

Development of fuel management and fire resilience plans is exempt under 14 CCR Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies), which applies to planning and feasibility studies for possible future actions that have not been approved, adopted, or funded.

14 CCR Section 15269 (Emergency Projects) exempts emergency projects, including: emergency repairs to service facilities necessary to maintain service essential to the public health, safety, or welfare, including those repairs that require a reasonable amount of planning to address an anticipated emergency; and specific actions necessary to prevent or mitigate an emergency. The projects that qualify for this exemption involve fuel management activities that are necessary to prevent catastrophic wildfire, which has a high probability of occurring at any of the project sites in the near future due to warming summer temperatures and severe drought caused by climate change. Some of the projects also involve repairs to emergency access roads, fuel breaks, and other infrastructure that will be needed to respond to wildfires when they occur.

14 CCR Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) exempts projects that consist of operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alterations of existing structures, facilities, or topographical features, involving negligible expansion of existing or former use of a site. Such projects include, but are not limited to, management of existing landscaping, native growth, and roads. The projects that qualify for this exemption involve management of existing native vegetation through the removal of dead and dying trees, thinning, reduction of ladder fuels, grazing, and other similar activities; and maintenance of fire roads and emergency access roads.

14 CCR Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) exempts projects that involve minor alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The projects that qualify for this exemption involve management of existing native vegetation through the removal of dead, dying, and immature trees, thinning, reduction of ladder fuels, grazing, and other similar activities. These fuel management activities will not change the nature of the land or alter the basic character of the vegetation and habitat at the project sites.

14 CCR Section 15306 (Information Collection) exempts projects that involve basic data collection and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a major disturbance to an environmental resource. The data gathering and research projects described in this staff recommendation qualify for this exemption.

14 CCR Section 15333 (Small Habitat Restoration Projects) exempts projects that do not exceed five acres in size to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife. Examples of small restoration projects include, but are not limited to, revegetation of disturbed areas with native plant species or projects to enhance habitat that are carried out principally with hand labor and not mechanized equipment. The Pie Ranch Fuels Reduction and Native Planting Project, which involves habitat restoration activities on approximately three acres, meets the requirements of this exemption.

14 CCR Section 15061(b)(3), the “common sense exemption,” applies when there is no possibility that a project will cause a significant effect on the environment. This exemption applies to the Marin County Wildfire Community Training project, which involves workshops and trainings that will not cause any environmental impact.

Public Resources Code section 4799.05(d) exempts state funding of prescribed fire, thinning, and fuel reduction projects undertaken on federal lands to reduce the risk of high-severity wildfire, provided that the projects have been reviewed under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the Secretary for Natural Resources has certified that NEPA and laws that affect management of federal forest lands in California have not been substantially amended since August 31, 2018. The Secretary made the required certification on January 13, 2022. The Lewis Resilience Phase II Project and Prosper Ridge Prairie Restoration Project, which were both reviewed in earlier NEPA documents, meet the requirements of this exemption.

Upon approval of the exempt projects, Conservancy staff will file Notices of Exemption for each project.

The portion of Grassroots Ecology’s Community-Based Fire Resilience Project that will take place on properties owned by the City of Palo Alto is within the scope of the Palo Alto Foothills Fire Management Plan (2009; updated 2016). The City adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Plan on March 11, 2009. The Management Plan and MND are attached as Exhibit 4. The MND assessed potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the Management Plan. Staff has independently evaluated the MND and Management Plan, and concurs that there is no substantial evidence that implementation of the Management Plan will have a significant effect on the environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the Management Plan as mitigated avoids, reduces or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that implementation of the Management Plan will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by 14 CCR Section 15382.