

California Regional Water Quality Control Board  
San Diego Region

Revised Project Application Form

Name of Project: Escondido Creek Invasive Plant Removal

Project Applicant: The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC)

Applicant Contact Person: Ann Van Leer

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REQUIRED INFORMATION:

Problem Statement:

Invasive exotic plants have changed the hydrology and wildlife values of some reaches of Escondido Creek. An ongoing program of exotic removal and restoration has returned several miles of the creek to native riparian habitat. If funded this proposal will continue the effort along the next downstream section of Escondido Creek, where it crosses TECC-owned APN# 264-053-10-00. The site is about two acres of riparian Eucalyptus woodland with about 600 lineal feet of creek.

Work Plan containing tasks and deliverables compartmentalized into partial funding opportunities:

1) Removal of Arundo and fennel:

- Biological survey before and during work to avoid nesting birds
- Cut, haul and stump treat with herbicide approximately 10 patches of arundo and one large patch of fennel.
- Retreat resprouts after 4 months and again after one year.

2) Removal of palm trees:

- Biological survey before and during work to avoid nesting birds
- Cut, haul and stump treat with herbicide approximately 12 large *Washingtonia* fan palms and one large *Phoenix* date palm

3) Removal of Eucalyptus trees:

- Biological survey before and during work to avoid nesting birds
- Cut, haul and stump treat with herbicide approximately 28 large Eucalyptus trees and 8 small Eucalyptus trees.
- Retreat resprouts after one year.

Timeline (from funding approval) with milestones and end dates:

Timeline, milestones and end date for all three compartments, done separately or concurrently:

Start work – by first November after funding, as soon as nesting season is over. (All removal work must be done during non-nesting season.)

Complete initial removal and stump treatments – by end of first January after starting.

Retreat stump resprouts after 4 months (Arundo) – by end of first May after starting.

Retreat Stump resprouts after one year (Arundo, fennel, Eucalyptus) – by end of second January after starting.

Budget broken down into tasks:

Biological surveys/oversight -	\$ 4,000
Arundo and fennel removal -	\$12,000
Palm Removal -	\$18,000
Eucalyptus Removal -	\$30,000
Retreatment after 4 months -	\$ 2,000
Retreatment after 1 year -	\$ 2,000
TECC indirect costs (25%) -	<u>\$16,250</u>
Project Total -	\$84,250

Permitting requirements:

None. Work will be performed under the existing permit held by the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy for riparian restoration in the Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit.

Watershed Affected:

Escondido Creek watershed, a constituent of the Carlsbad Hydrologic Unit.

Describe if this project can be the basis for additional funding from other sources:

The effort to remove invasive exotic plants and restore Escondido Creek between the cities of Escondido and Encinitas has been ongoing for more than twenty years. Projects by the Olivenhain Municipal Water District, the San Diego County Water Authority, and The Escondido Creek Conservancy (TECC) have resulted in more than two miles of creek returned to native riparian habitat. TECC has partnered with third parties who needed riparian mitigation, and received grants from the San Diego Foundation to facilitate restoration of the creek where it flows through TECC property. The funding of this grant will continue the project and, if timing permits, this grant may be used as a match for other funds from other sources. At a minimum funding this grant will further the overall goal of a restored Escondido Creek and encourage others to participate in the future.

Monitoring, success criteria, and other tools to track long-term success:

Success criteria will be the permanent eradication of arundo, fennel, palms and Eucalyptus from the project site. The site will be monitored regularly and included in TECC's annual report as part of TECC's stewardship.

Description of how the project is resilient to climate change:

Removing invasive exotic plants allows native plants to return and increases biodiversity. This increased biodiversity creates an ecosystem with more plasticity to respond to changes in climate. The elevation of the project is such that it will be unaffected by sea level rise.

Applicants ability/authority to receive and distribute funds:

TECC is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, which holds title to over 1500 acres of natural open space land (including this project site) in the Escondido Creek watershed, and has field and office staff able to support this project. In the past 10 years TECC has successfully completed several restoration projects and land acquisitions with funding from private, state and federal organizations.

Is the project to conduct work required by any other entity/agency?

No.

## Eligibility Requirements

1. Does the project address and environmental justice issue or benefit a disadvantaged community? Yes, the Escondido Creek watershed contains many disadvantaged communities, centered in the city of Escondido. TECC has an active education and outreach program where young people from those DAC communities visit the watershed and the Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve Interpretive Center. With this project, DAC visitors will be able to experience the watershed in its natural (i.e., not infected) state.
2. Does the project address disadvantaged community water related infrastructure needs? Yes. Southern California's watersheds, like Escondido Creek, are its fundamental natural infrastructure. This project will help improve the health of the Escondido Creek watershed.
3. Does the project promote preservation or restoration of aquatic ecosystems in the San Diego region? Yes. This project proposes exotic plant removal in a riparian zone along Escondido Creek that will restore wildlife and scenic values and enhance the ecological function of the down-stream San Elijo Lagoon.
4. Does the project implement or further recovery of streams, wetlands and riparian systems? Yes. By removing invasive exotic plants and allowing native riparian habitat to regenerate ecologic function and scenic values are increased.
5. Does the project implement or further the monitoring and assessment framework in the San Diego Water Board's Practical Vision Chapter Two? No.
6. Does the project implement or further a strategy for achieving a sustainable local water supply? No.

## Project Attributes

1. Does the project directly contribute to improvements of water quality objectives and/or beneficial uses? Yes. Removal of invasive exotic plants allows native riparian habitat to return, increasing habitat and scenic values.
2. Does the project propose measurable environmental outcomes? Yes. When the project is finished there should be complete eradication of Arundo, palms, fennel and Eucalyptus in the project area.
3. Does the project demonstrate sustained longevity of environmental outcomes? Yes. The project is located on land held in fee by TECC. Once the project is completed, TECC commits to maintain the project site free of these invasive species and include an assessment of the site in the internally prepared Annual Report for the larger Los Cielos Preserve where the project is located.
4. Is the project part of a larger vetted, adopted or established plan with support of multiple and diverse partners? Yes. The project supports and furthers earlier projects completed by OMWD, SDCWA, TECC, the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy and the Carlsbad Watershed Network to restore Escondido Creek.
5. Does the project improve conditions for a 303(d) limited segment or preserve conditions in a high quality water body? Yes. Restoring riparian habitat along Escondido Creek will have beneficial effects on the 303(d) listed San Elijo Lagoon.
6. Does the project improve a designated priority listed in a Water Quality Improvement Plan? Yes. Riparian habitat was listed as the highest priority in the Escondido HA section of the Carlsbad WMA Water Quality Improvement Plan. This project directly improves riparian habitat along Escondido Creek.
7. Does the project improve conditions of a key beneficial use category in a key area? Yes. The project improves conditions of a stream system in an area with special protection for habitat and wildlife. The project site is entirely on land owned by TECC with a conservation easement to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and thereby protected in perpetuity.
8. Does the project address the source of the problem at/near the source of the problem? Yes. The source of the problem is upstream invasive plant propagules washing down stream. This project continues a program of removing invasive plants in an upstream to downstream order, thereby minimizing re-infestation after project completion.
9. Does the project address problems to sensitive/vulnerable/rare/ places/waters/uses? Yes, in that riparian systems in arid San Diego County are sensitive, vulnerable and rare.
10. Can the project be used for leverage for other funding/actions/benefits? Yes. TECC regularly applies for restoration grants from the San Diego Foundation and the SANDAG EMP program. Depending on the timing of

the funding, this grant could be used as matching funds which greatly enhances the second proposal. Even without the match opportunity, funding this application demonstrates to other funders that the decades long program to restore Escondido Creek is an active endeavor and worthy of support.

11. Does the project provide a cost-effective means of attaining water quality goals? Yes. TECC has an active team of land stewardship volunteers who will maximize the benefits of each dollar spent on this project.
12. Does the project integrate outreach and education to targeted audiences? Yes. TECC sends out monthly e-newsletters and semiannual paper newsletters. This project will be featured in both.

## Applicant Attributes

1. Does the applicant have an established record of project completion with the Water Board? No.
2. Does the applicant have an established record of project completion with other awarding agencies? Yes. TECC has completed riparian restoration projects with funds from a Conservation Catalyst grant from the San Diego Foundation and several land acquisition projects with grants from USF&W, California Wildlife Conservation Board, and SANDAG.
3. Does the applicant demonstrate a commitment to continue the water quality/restoration effort into the future, beyond the elements which are sought for funding? Yes. TECC holds title to the project site and has committed to management and monitoring in perpetuity. TECC also holds title to riparian areas along Escondido Creek adjacent to the project site and will continue to work our way downstream restoring the riparian habitat.
4. Does the applicant have the institutional stability and capacity to complete the project including the ability to accomplish the work and provide the products and reports expected? Yes. TECC has been operating for 25 years, manages over 1700 acres of open space land in the Escondido Creek watershed, and has successfully completed similar restoration projects in the past. TECC has three full-time employees, including an Office Administrator, an Education Manager, a Conservation Land Manager, and a half time Executive Director.