

Name of Project: Ocean Connectors Habitat Restoration and Education Project

Project Applicant: The Ocean Foundation **Tax I.D. #:** 71-0863908

Applicant Contact Person: Frances Kinney, Ocean Connectors Director

Applicant Phone Number: 619-336-7744

Applicant Email Address: frances@oceanconnectors.org

Geographic Areas: National City (Paradise Creek, primary site, program expansion), San Diego (Otay River, secondary site, original program); both sites located in District 1

Watersheds Affected: Sweetwater River Watershed, Otay River Watershed

Problem Statement

Ocean Connectors provides a unique opportunity to deliver outreach and education programs that significantly benefit the health and quality of some of San Diego's most polluted watersheds, and that support the mission and objectives of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board, including Chapters Three and Four of the Practical Vision Plan. This SEP brings proactive new educational opportunities to Environmental Justice communities through hands-on involvement in the restoration of two acres of wetland, stream, and river corridor habitat around one of the Water Quality Control Board's priority waterbodies, San Diego Bay, in partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Paradise Creek Educational Park, Incorporated (PCEPI).

The Ocean Connectors Habitat Restoration and Education Program addresses some of the most pressing environmental challenges facing San Diego today. The project will directly improve a 303(d) segment of impaired river and stream corridor, Paradise Creek. Primary methods to protect, restore, and maintain local habitats and open spaces include water and soil testing, litter abatement, invasive plant removal, native plant installation, and site monitoring and maintenance, as well as community-based education and outreach programs for schoolchildren and the general public.

Ocean Connectors teaches participants how to reduce the major impacts on our coastal habitats and wildlife, such as drought, overdevelopment, water contamination, trash, climate change, and invasive species. Our bilingual (English and Spanish) classroom curriculum educates National City elementary students about stewardship actions, such as pollution prevention, waste reduction, water conservation, and preparing for climate-related risks such as flooding and drought. Ocean Connectors works to protect and restore natural habitats with broad community support and partnerships, outreach and education programs in Environmental Justice neighborhoods by using targeted habitat restoration efforts around environmentally-sensitive areas of San Diego Bay.

Work Plan

Site Attributes

Ocean Connectors has identified two urban stream and wetland areas that form part of the San Diego Bay Watershed Management Area and are heavily impacted by litter, invasive species, and inadequate public access and awareness: Otay River and Paradise Creek. The work to be performed under this SEP fulfills the objectives of the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board Practical Vision Plan and directly supports the San Diego Bay Watershed Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP). The project fully aligns with the WQIP goal to protect, preserve, enhance, and restore water quality through adaptive planning and management of priority waterbodies.

Ocean Connectors has successfully conducted youth-led habitat restoration programs around the Otay River for five years in partnership with USFWS. Under this SEP we intend to expand this restoration effort to Paradise Creek in National City, which will directly improve conditions for a section 303(d) segment of impaired river and stream corridor. Both sites are located in Environmental Justice communities (San Diego and National City), contain ecologically-sensitive habitats with vulnerabilities to sea level rise, urban runoff, and invasive species, and require targeted restoration efforts to create suitable habitat for native species and community access, such as bird watching, walking, and interpretation.

The Ocean Connectors restoration sites were selected due to:

- Close proximity to our partner elementary schools in National City,
- Impaired water quality, habitat vulnerabilities, and environmental challenges,
- Need for increased community awareness, education, and access, and
- Existing involvement of close organizational partners (USFWS, PCEPI).

In addition to the WQIP, this SEP also supports various other established monitoring and management plans for the San Diego Bay, including:

- San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program, 1992
- California Wildlife Action Plan, 2007
- Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy for San Diego Bay, 2012
- San Diego Bay Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan, 2013
- California Water Action Plan, 2014

The restoration of both Ocean Connectors sites is fully consistent with the overall mission of the Regional Water Quality Control Board to protect and restore the

biological integrity and health of the region's waters, particularly in disadvantaged communities and environmentally sensitive areas of San Diego Bay.

Tasks

- **Ocean Connectors will restore two or more acres of degraded natural habitat near the southern end of San Diego Bay, including at least one half mile of section 303(d) shoreline.** The restoration will address the source of the problems through litter and invasive plant removal and native plant revegetation, which will lead to habitat improvements that benefit wildlife, enhance water quality, and increase community awareness.
- **Ocean Connectors will expand our environmental education programs by 30% by adding a third grade curriculum to our existing fourth through sixth grade programs.** The third grade program will focus on new environmental themes and topics that are not currently covered in the Ocean Connectors curricula, such as climate change, ecosystem services, and invasive species. With this expansion we will reach approximately 3,000 elementary students in National City each year. Children and their families will learn about the connection between their quality of life, community wellbeing, and watershed health. This baseline understanding cultivates a future generation of environmentally-aware residents.
- **Ocean Connectors will provide 100 schoolteachers our bilingual environmental science curriculum,** developed with educational experts and scientists, free of charge. Teachers will attend professional development workshops and trainings to obtain tools for reinforcing environmental themes throughout the year. Ocean Connectors works in partnership with National School District to meet learning standards such as Common Core, Next Generation Science Standards, and Ocean Literacy Principles.
- **Ocean Connectors will connect students, parents, and community members with local park rangers, activists, and scientists,** which will provide an important mentorship opportunity to this underserved audience of predominantly Latino students. Ocean Connectors cultivates a strong curiosity for the natural world that begins from a young age and continues into adulthood, inspiring individuals who are typically underrepresented in scientific fields to stay in school and pursue college.
- **The expanded Ocean Connectors program will engage 500 volunteers in community events and habitat restoration outings.** While planting native vegetation, removing invasive weeds, carrying out soil and water testing, and performing litter abatement, community members will make a direct contribution to increasing the resiliency of urban stream and San Diego Bay ecosystems.

Environmental Benefits

Ocean Connectors conducts a hands-on restoration of upland, wetland, and river corridor habitat within the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge and lower reaches of the Otay and Sweetwater River Watersheds. We are seeking to expand our existing restoration programs to Paradise Creek in National City. The direct benefits to water quality and ecosystem health include:

- Revegetation with native plants leads to **increased carbon uptake and decreased erosion and sediment deposition into Paradise Creek, and the Otay and Sweetwater Rivers**. Planting native plants along the banks and tributaries of these rivers traps sediment and prevents substrate from eroding into the water and degrading water quality. Native plants also trap carbon, enhancing the condition of freshwater sources for fish and other wildlife.
- Removal of invasive plants, such as chrysanthemum, ice plant, and star thistle, creates **better quality nesting and foraging habitat for native wildlife, in addition to reducing fire danger and beautifying open spaces**. Invasive plants inhibit native plant pollination, interfere with ecosystem hydrology, and degrade water and soil quality. Invasive plants will be removed in the target areas as well as surrounding zones to minimize spreading and re-infestation of invasive plant growth.
- Litter removal around freshwater sources **prevents trash from being ingested by wildlife using San Diego Bay and improves watershed quality by preventing harmful substances, heavy metals, and chemicals from leeching into urban streams and groundwater**. Litter contaminates water quality and smothers native plants, causing further damage to impaired waterways in South San Diego County.
- This project **improves natural hydrologic processes through concentrated restoration efforts that promote resilient ecosystems, prevent drought, and reduce flooding**. Strategically placed salt-tolerant and drought-tolerant plants serve as a natural buffer and protect local communities from climate-related risks and habitat vulnerabilities.
- Targeted education and outreach activities **create more environmental stewards in communities around San Diego Bay, leading to future generations that protect and conserve environmental resources**. Multiyear outreach and education programs are the key to long-term preservation of urban waterways and waterbodies.

In summary, Ocean Connectors addresses priority conditions for the watersheds of San Diego Bay, including surface water quality, aesthetics, and swimmable waters, through removing trash along essential habitat areas of South San Diego Bay. Our planning efforts, assessments, and studies play a leading role in contributing to water quality improvements, enhancing natural hydrologic processes, and providing benefits to community health and wellbeing.

Scalability

Ocean Connectors is in high-demand in South San Diego Bay Environmental Justice communities, and our programs are scalable based on the amount of funding available. Our highest priority is engaging more underserved schoolchildren in habitat restoration and environmental education around Paradise Creek and Otay River.

- **With a grant of \$50,000**, Ocean Connectors will be able to reach 100 additional students with classroom activities, and initiate planning, site assessment, permitting, and volunteer recruitment for the Paradise Creek habitat restoration.
- **With a grant of \$100,000**, Ocean Connectors will be able to reach 100 additional students with classroom and field activities, conduct planning, site assessment, permitting, teacher trainings, and volunteer recruitment, create partner agreements, initiate curricula design and printing, and launch habitat restoration.
- **With a grant of \$200,000**, Ocean Connectors will be able to reach 200 additional students with classroom and field activities, conduct teacher trainings, volunteer recruitment, and curricula design and printing, initiate public events, and expand the habitat restoration.
- **With a grant of \$600,000**, Ocean Connectors will be able to reach 300 additional students with classroom and field activities, expand the habitat restoration, teacher trainings, volunteer recruitment, and public events, as well as initiate the construction of interpretive areas at Paradise Creek.
- **With a grant of \$900,000**, Ocean Connectors will be able to reach 500 additional students with classroom and field activities, expand the habitat restoration, teacher trainings, and public events, produce educational videos and materials, complete the construction of interpretive areas, and conduct a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Paradise Creek.
- **With a grant of \$1,000,000**, Ocean Connectors will be able to reach 600 additional students with classroom and field activities, expand the habitat restoration, teacher trainings, and public events, fulfill partner agreements, conduct site assessment, produce educational videos and materials, complete the construction of interpretive areas, conduct a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Paradise Creek, press release, and submit reports.

Deliverables

Ocean Connectors is responsible for implementing and managing all aspects of the work, in partnership with PCEPI and in accordance with sponsor agreements and participating agencies. Quarterly progress reports will be available to sponsors upon commencement of the project, describing the ongoing status of the restoration. A thorough final report will be delivered, including before and after photos of both sites, a summary of progress towards stated objectives, along with a copy of any curricula developed during the project. Before and after photos of the sites, as well as photos of

the restoration work in-action, will be provided. Sponsor names and logos will be spotlighted on the Ocean Connectors website under [Partners](#).

Timeline

- Year One: \$100,000
Planning, site assessment, permitting, partner agreements, class activities, volunteer recruitment
- Year Two: \$100,000
Curricula design and printing, class and field activities, teacher trainings, volunteer recruitment, launch habitat restoration
- Years Three to Six: \$400,000
Expand restoration, class and field activities, teacher trainings, volunteer recruitment, public events
- Years Seven to Nine: \$300,000
Continue restoration, class and field activities, teacher trainings, volunteer recruitment, construct interpretive areas, produce educational videos and materials, ribbon-cutting ceremony
- Year Ten: \$100,000
Continue restoration, class and field activities, site assessment, produce final report, press release

Budget

OC Habitat Restoration and Education Project	Total
<u>Personnel Expenses</u>	
Ocean Connectors Lead Staff	300,000.00
The Ocean Foundation Management	100,000
PCEPI Stipends	50,000.00
Restoration Contractors	245,000.00
Taxes, Benefits & Insurance	105,000.00
Total Personnel Expenses	\$800,000.00
<u>Operating Expenses</u>	
Restoration Supplies	145,000.00
Educational Supplies	40,000.00
School Bus Rentals	5,000.00
Automotive Mileage	5,000.00
Marketing, Web & Promotions	3,000.00
Spanish Translations	2,000.00
Total Operating Expenses	\$200,000.00
Subtotal	\$1,000,000.00
Total Expenses	\$1,000,000.00

Permitting Requirements

Otay River

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15304(d), which exempts minor alteration in land, water, and vegetation within an officially designated wildlife management area. The restoration activities undertaken through this project will take place on the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge, including the Ocean Connectors SEP, is covered by a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), which guides wildlife and habitat conservation and restoration and educational activities in the Refuge. The FWS determined in 2007, through National Environmental Policy Act compliance documents, that activities covered by the CCP will not adversely affect coastal resources. The Coastal Commission in its federal consistency determination concurred with the FWS determination.

The educational project component is categorically exempt under Section 15322, which applies to educational or training programs that involve no physical alteration in the area affected, in that the project provides financial support for a marine education and conservation program without any physical changes in the school structures for this program.

Paradise Creek

The restoration activities to be undertaken on the shoreline of Paradise Creek fall under voluntary park cleanup activities on City of National City property. Ocean Connectors staff, PCEPI, and restoration contractors will thoroughly consult with City of National City staff, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other agencies to carry out all permitting required for this SEP, including obtaining a Section 404 permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers if it is determined to be needed under the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. 1344).

Monitoring and Success Criteria

USFWS and PCEPI will provide ongoing management and supervision of the Ocean Connectors habitat restoration sites, and they are key partners and supporters of the overall project. All long-term maintenance on Refuge land, including watering, future planting, modifications, and weed and litter abatement, is coordinated and supervised by park rangers of the USFWS Refuges Complex. Monitoring, enforcement, and maintenance of the Paradise Creek location is supervised by PCEPI and the City of National City. In addition, outside volunteers and students from other outreach programs and colleges are involved in the restoration of both sites, which helps provide year-round habitat improvements. USFWS and PCEPI are active partners in designing and leading the development of the Ocean Connectors educational resources and materials, and planning restoration events. Although long-term monitoring, preservation,

and maintenance extend beyond the scope of this SEP, this project makes a significant contribution to long-term habitat management in our targeted areas.

The criteria that will be used to measure success include:

- Perform 100% litter abatement and invasive plant removal over two acres of coastal habitat.
- Install 1,000 native plants along river corridor, upland, and wetland habitats.
- Engage 3,000 underserved schoolchildren and their families, 500 volunteers, and 100 teachers in learning about climate change, conservation of migratory species, and habitat restoration and protection.
- Increase the community's knowledge of these topics by at least 10%, as measured by pre and post knowledge evaluation surveys.

Resiliency to Climate Change

The selected sites are most vulnerable to the climate-related risks of drought and species habitat loss. The current drought has led to die-off of native plants, erosion, and reduced biodiversity. The design of the project will reduce climate change vulnerabilities through installing drought-tolerant native plants in the upland transition area, which will serve multiple purposes for habitat conservation and provide nesting and foraging space for endangered, threatened, and migratory wildlife. In the river corridor and wetland areas, participants will install native plants with a high-tolerance for salt, as inundation is expected to increase. Ocean Connectors is committed to working closely with its partners USFWS, PCEPI, and the Port of San Diego to implement adaptive management techniques that can ensure the continued success of the restoration process alongside changing climatic conditions and impacts.

The sites could be prone to flooding and erosion due to climate change impacts. However, data incorporated into the Sea Level Rise Adaptation Strategy for San Diego Bay indicates that even with a sea level rise of 55 inches, the majority of both sites would remain above water. The project's educational curriculum and restoration component will focus on climate change to ensure that the project goes beyond short-term outcomes to promote awareness of and preparation and adaptation for climate change affecting the entire San Diego Bay.

Applicant Ability to Receive and Distribute Funds

The Ocean Foundation is an international public foundation styled as a community foundation, and is a tax-exempt IRC 501(c)(3) charity corporation (pursuant to our most recent exemption letter from the Internal Revenue Service). The Ocean Foundation is an active California "domestic nonprofit" corporation in good standing, recognized by the California Attorney General, and Secretary of State (pursuant to our original Articles of Incorporation filed December 17, 2001).

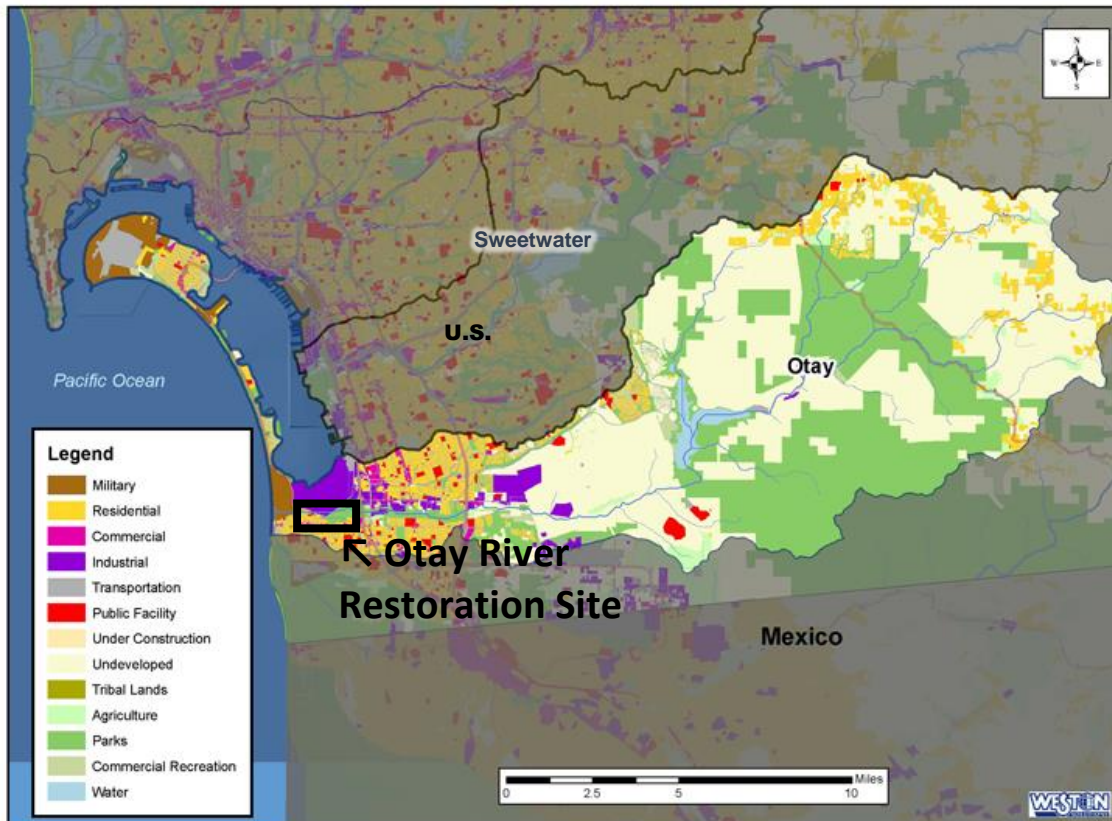
As of August 2009, The Ocean Foundation became the fiscal sponsor organization for the Ocean Connectors project. As with all fiscal sponsorships, Ocean Connectors may solicit gifts, contributions, and grants on behalf of The Ocean Foundation, which are for the activities of the Ocean Connectors project. The Ocean Foundation gives consent to Ocean Connectors to apply for funding from the Water Quality Control Board, and to enter into an agreement (with The Ocean Foundation as the signatory) if funding is awarded under this SEP.

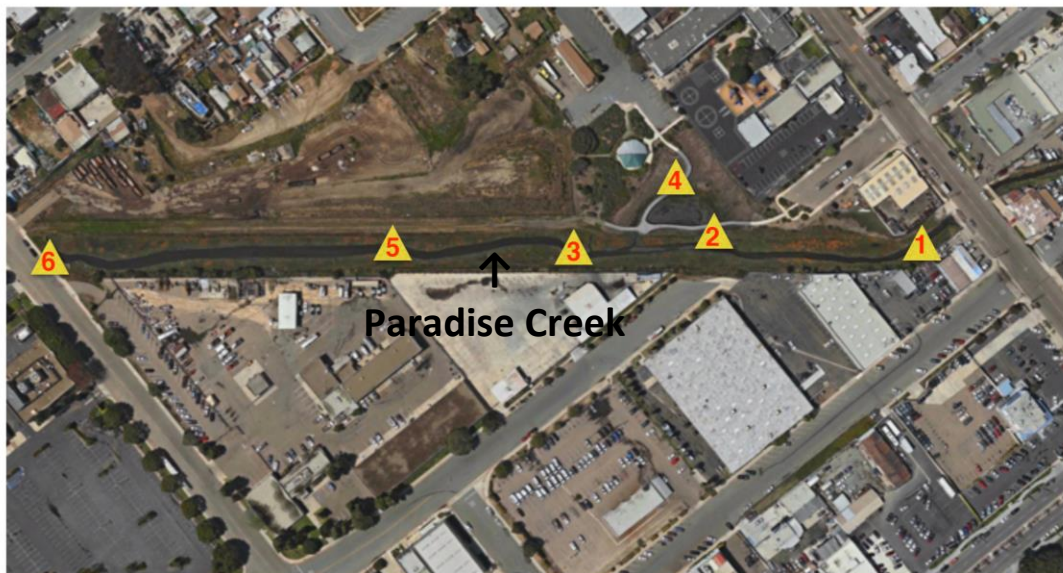
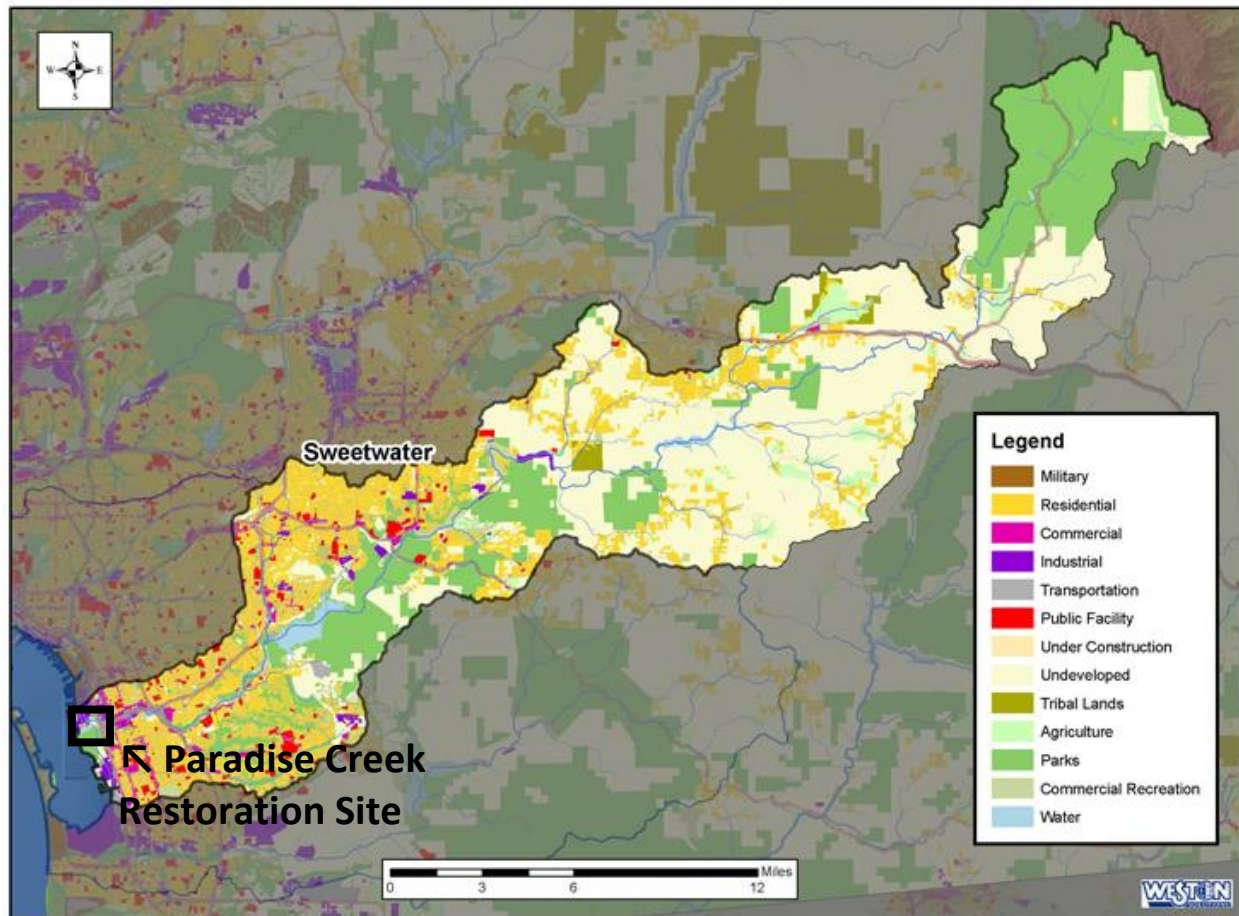
Ocean Connectors has demonstrated a commitment to water quality and has a strong track record of successful project completion with USFWS, the California Coastal Commission, the State Coastal Conservancy, Port of San Diego, USEPA, and various other awarding agencies. Ocean Connectors is fiscally sound and has the institutional stability and capacity to fulfill all stated project objectives, and to accomplish the work and deliverables described in this SEP.

Site Maps

Ocean Connectors works with elementary schools throughout National City, and conducts habitat restoration at two sites within the San Diego Bay Watershed Management Area: Otay River (original site) and Paradise Creek (expanded program).

Otay River



Paradise Creek

Paradise Creek Educational Park 2016 — Wetlands Restoration Education (RestorEd) sites
 1- Salt Marsh shoreline at north end 4- Islands uplands plants
 2- Salt pan 5- Invasive plant removal at shoreline at midpoint
 3- Uplands native plants at south end of boardwalk 6- Invasive removal and plantings at south end

Online Resources

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

[The Ocean Foundation](#)

Organizational Achievements

Ocean Connectors

2010: Ocean Connectors received an Ocean Science Leadership award for Informal Teaching Excellence from the University of Southern California QuikScience Program, emphasizing program success and leadership on a binational scale.

2011: Ocean Connectors initiated habitat restoration around Otay River in partnership with USFWS. This same year Ocean Connectors received an American Meteorological Society award for Non-Formal Education, one of only three awards presented nationwide.

2013: Ocean Connectors formed a partnership with the School District of National City and began providing our free educational programs at public elementary schools located exclusively in National City.

2016: The IEA Research and Education Foundation awarded Ocean Connectors an award for Excellence in Community Leadership and Outreach, the first award of its kind.

PCEPI

1995: The City of National City provided funding for the design work to expand the wetlands and build a park at Paradise Creek.

1998: PCEPI completed design work with Landscape Architect firm Schmidt Design Group.

2001: PCEPI coordinated approval process with the City of National City, California Coastal Conservancy, Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Fish and Game, and San Diego County Department of Health.

2007: PCEPI assisted with the management of construction of Paradise Creek Educational Park, including toxic soil removal, wetlands design, and park amenities design.

2016: PCEPI partnered with Ocean Connectors to develop plans for the restoration of Paradise Creek as an expansion of the existing Ocean Connectors programs.



IRS Department of the Treasury
Internal Revenue Service

P.O. Box 2508, Room 4010
Cincinnati OH 45201

In reply refer to: 4077589886
May 12, 2015 LTR 4168C 0
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BODC: TE

OCEAN FOUNDATION
1320 19TH ST NW 5TH FL
WASHINGTON DC 20036-1610



051013

Employer Identification Number: 71-0863908
Person to Contact: M SCHATZ
Toll Free Telephone Number: 1-877-829-5500

Dear Taxpayer:

This is in response to your Apr. 20, 2015, request for information regarding your tax-exempt status.

Our records indicate that you were recognized as exempt under section 501(c)(03) of the Internal Revenue Code in a determination letter issued in May 2002.

Our records also indicate that you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because you are described in section(s) 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provisions of sections 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

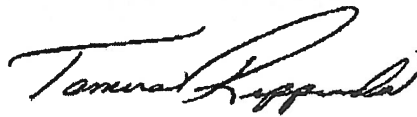
Please refer to our website www.irs.gov/eo for information regarding filing requirements. Specifically, section 6033(j) of the Code provides that failure to file an annual information return for three consecutive years results in revocation of tax-exempt status as of the filing due date of the third return for organizations required to file. We will publish a list of organizations whose tax-exempt status was revoked under section 6033(j) of the Code on our website beginning in early 2011.

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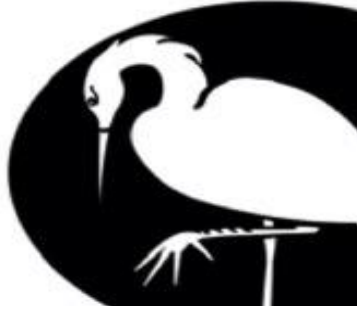
OCEAN FOUNDATION
1320 19TH ST NW 5TH FL
WASHINGTON DC 20036-1610

If you have any questions, please call us at the telephone number shown in the heading of this letter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tamera Ripperda". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Tamera Ripperda
Director, Exempt Organizations



October 15, 2016

To: Regional Water Quality Control Board

Re: SEP program funding application from Ocean Connectors

Paradise Creek Educational Park, Inc. (PCEPI) would like to extend its support for Ocean Connectors' SEP funding application. PCEPI was formed in 1999 as a 501(c)(3) and is an organization committed to continued improvement of water quality, and to providing educational and participation opportunities to the communities that surround wetlands and waterways. Through our success with the restoration of Paradise Creek and the creation of associated educational programs, we know that water quality improvement projects can provide unique educational opportunities for the local community and foster stewardship. We look forward to partnering with Ocean Connectors and we believe that this project matches our mission and meets the objectives of the Regional Water Quality Control Board as well.

Ocean Connectors' application contains many of the key components that have been successful at the wetlands restoration and programs at Paradise Creek and other projects nearby. First, the application's protection of open space is very important in this heavily urbanized area. Other important components include: wetlands restoration, environmental education, and increased public commitment to preserving the dwindling wetlands habitat in the South San Diego Bay area. We are very impressed with the work of Frances Kinney as Director of Ocean Connectors and see her as an important resource for future work at Paradise Creek.

We highly recommend the funding of Ocean Connector's SEP proposal for these reasons.

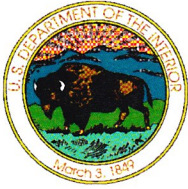
Sincerely,

Ted A. Godshalk

Director, Paradise Creek Educational Park Inc.

paradisecreek@mac.com

2143 Cleveland Avenue, National City, CA 91950



United States Department of the Interior
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE



San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex
San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge
1080 Gunpowder Point Dr.
Chula Vista, CA 91910

November 30, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

Ocean Connectors was founded in 2007 with the goal of using migratory wildlife to connect underserved youth to nature for the sake of conservation. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has been an Ocean Connectors partner since 2008, providing funding as well as logistical support and expert insight into project activities.

In 2011 Ocean Connectors kicked off new habitat restoration activities for San Diego students in partnership with the agency. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to supporting these activities and to continuing our partnership in the future. The Ocean Connectors habitat restoration program directly benefits the community by improving and protecting native habitats, while also providing students with a meaningful service-learning opportunity in the outdoors. Ocean Connectors advances the goals of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, enabling local youth to form a vital connection with the environment that contributes to lasting stewardship.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service intends to continue working with Ocean Connectors in the years ahead to involve hundreds of underserved youth from National City in habitat restoration around the San Diego Bay. I am a member of the Ocean Connectors Advisory Board, helping to provide guidance as the organization grows.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Chantel Jimenez
Environmental Education Specialist
San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex