

CALIFORNIA REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD
SAN DIEGO REGION

REVISED PROJECT APPLICATION FORM

Name of Project: San Diego River Restoration and Monitoring

Project Applicant: The San Diego River Park Foundation

Applicant Contact Person: Sarah Hutmacher, Associate Director

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REQUIRED INFORMATION

Applications that do not contain a discussion regarding each of the following items will not be considered for inclusion. If the item is included in a detailed supplemental report, please include the report and indicate where the information is located.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please provide additional information that addresses any of the items on the Application Checklist if it applies to your project. This information will be used for project ranking on the SEP/ECA List. Responses can be provided on separate/additional paper or, if the item is included in a detailed supplemental report, please include the report and indicate where the information is located.

Problem Statement:

The San Diego River is located in an urban watershed, and its health suffers from impacts of urban development in the watershed and channelization. Each year, over 200,000 pounds of trash are dumped, dropped, or washed into the San Diego River. Along with this are untold amounts of other less visible pollution and polluted runoff.

The San Diego River Park Foundation proposes to activate our volunteer citizen scientists and stewards to address this issue through strategic clean-ups and water quality monitoring.

Work Plan containing tasks and deliverables compartmentalized into partial funding opportunities, if applicable.

This proposal includes complementary restoration and monitoring components, which have been compartmentalized into partial funding opportunities.

Restoration:

This effort is scalable based on the size and need in the project area. Based on recent survey information and trends over the last 8 years, trash removal is an ongoing need at sites along more than 13 miles of the San Diego River. The San Diego River Park Foundation coordinates with landowners to coordinate clean-up efforts at locations from Santee to Mission Valley to the Pacific Ocean. By engaging the community in survey, monitoring and clean-up, we plan events that are efficient, effective, and foster long-term investment in health of the watershed.

For each segment targeted, clean-up efforts will consist of:

- Coordination with appropriate landowner, plus pre-clean-up field surveys by volunteers to document with GPS and photographs the precise locations and quantities of trash.
- Volunteer clean-up event (or events) planned based on data to target 100% removal of the identified sites. These events engage 10-150 volunteers and typically remove 1,000-10,000 pounds of trash.

The San Diego River Park Foundation conducts twice annual comprehensive surveys to document the state of the River as well as weekly data updates, and thus have data year-round about the current needs for clean-up. Dependant on funding availability, clean-up projects can be proposed with expenses from \$1,000 to over \$100,000 dependant on quantity, type and location of trash and debris. As an example, typical clean-up at one staging area costs about \$3,000-5,000 and engages ~50-75 volunteers in removing 4,000+ pounds of trash.

Monitoring:

Funding will enable the San Diego River Park Foundation to engage citizen scientists in water quality monitoring through the RiverWatch program. Funding will enable these volunteers to contribute to 15 years of data collection along the San Diego River, where they serve as a watchdog for emerging water quality issues. We currently have equipment for one team to collect data on dissolved oxygen, conductivity, temperature, pH, and flow. This data, as well as monthly reports, will be made available to the public on our online web portal, and shared with appropriate agencies when measurements indicate an issue.

Dependant on funding availability, support is needed to sponsor one or more sampling location for \$1,000 each, or to sponsor the West Team or East Team for \$7,000 each.

In addition, recent data has indicated the importance of adding volunteer teams to monitor major tributaries to better understand the source of water quality issues. \$15,000 is needed to create a new tributary team, which would allow us to purchase another water monitoring Sonde and additional sampling kit and testing chemicals, as well as develop sampling protocols, locations and landowner coordination. This team would be activated to conduct sampling on major tributaries, such as Forester Creek or Alvarado Creek.

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

The timeline will be dependent on the number of clean-up sites targeted and the amount of monitoring included. If multiple projects are funded, these timelines can begin concurrently.

For restoration work, from the date of funding approval, the timeline would include:

- Comprehensive surveys take place in October and April to collect trash data along the lower San Diego River.
- Within 6 weeks of funding approval, conduct field surveys to refine data for trash locations and quantities.
- Within 8 weeks of funding approval, complete work plan with adaptive strategy for trash removal.
- After work plan is completed, trash removal will be scheduled over the following 1-6 months dependant on the number of sites targeted for removal.
- Follow-up surveys to confirm removal scheduled in the month following completion of volunteer trash removal events, with adaptive strategy to respond to any incomplete removal or new issues by the end of month 10.
- Final report completed for SEP funding by the end of month 10.
- State of the River Report issued in November.

The water quality monitoring component of this proposal is a vital way to monitor the impacts of this trash removal effort, but is separated as it can also stand alone as a funding need. For the monitoring work on the main stem of the San Diego River, the timeline would include:

- Monthly water quality monitoring will occur at all sites supported by funding, beginning the month of funding approval.
- Monthly reports will be compiled and shared online within one month of monitoring events.

- Annual reports will be completed at the end of each water year (October) and shared online.
- Final report completed for SEP funding by end of year 1.

For the development of a tributary water quality monitoring team, the timeline would include:

- Within 4 months of funding approval, development of work plan and sampling protocols and locations for tributary team monitoring, and complete purchasing of new equipment and supplies to outfit the volunteer citizen scientists.
- Within 6 months of funding approval, complete training of at least 4 volunteer team leaders to complete sampling.
- Within 7 months of funding, begin monthly monitoring and monthly reporting.
- Within 9 months, staff to complete evaluation and make recommendations for protocol modification or improvement.
- Annual reports will be completed at the end of each water year (October) and shared online.
- Final report completed for SEP funding by the end of year 1.

Budget broken down into tasks.

For trash removal, the average trash site requires the following budget:

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| <u>Restoration Staff:</u> Volunteer Coordination (20 hours/event) Field Clean-Up Coordinator (20 hours/event) Field Assessment Coordinator (10 hours/event) Admin/Web (4 hours) | \$1,500+ |
| <u>Restoration Materials:</u> Clean-up supplies: trash bags, grab sticks, leather gloves, hand tools | \$500+ |
| Volunteer support: hand sanitizer, sunscreen, snacks, water, t-shirts, first aid kits | \$150 |
| Survey materials (cameras, GPS units, tablets, clipboards, backpack field kits), cost/survey | \$35 |
| Event supplies: table, tent, banner, barricades, parking signage (per use), cost/event | \$50 |
| Printing: waivers, data sheets, State of the River Report | \$15 |
| <u>Expenses:</u> Hauling and disposal | \$500-1000 |

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| Mileage | \$150 |
| Web | \$100 |
| TOTAL: | \$3,000-\$5,000 depending on trash site selected and number of clean-ups needed |

For water quality monitoring, the annual budget per sampling location for one year:

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|--|---------|
| <u>Monitoring Staff:</u> Volunteer Coordination (4 hours/site) River Ecosystem Manager (12 hours/site) Admin/Web (2 hours) | \$560 |
| <u>Restoration Materials:</u> Monitoring kit (per use): Sonde, batteries testing bottles and chemicals and standards | \$170 |
| Volunteer support: hand sanitizer, sunscreen, snacks, water, t-shirts, first aid kits | \$30 |
| Printing: waivers, data sheets, State of the River Report | \$20 |
| <u>Expenses:</u> Lab | \$120 |
| Web portal | \$100 |
| TOTAL: | \$1,000 |

For water quality monitoring on a new Tributary Monitoring team:

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| <u>Monitoring Staff:</u> Volunteer Coordination (100 hours) River Ecosystem Manager (160 hours) Admin/Web (25 hours) | \$8,090 |
| <u>Restoration Materials:</u> Purchase new monitoring kit: Sonde, batteries testing bottles and chemicals and standards | \$5,000 |
| Volunteer support: hand sanitizer, sunscreen, snacks, water, t-shirts, first aid kits | \$400 |
| Printing: waivers, data sheets, protocols and training materials | \$150 |
| <u>Expenses:</u> Lab | \$720 |
| Improvements to web portal | \$640 |
| TOTAL: | \$15,000 |

Discuss all permitting requirements, including CEQA, and their status. If exempt, cite applicable statute.

Permits are not required for this project, as the work only requires monitoring and minor non-disturbance alterations to land. If CEQA was required due to the funding source, we would pursue a categorical exemption based on these statutes:

- **15306. Information Collection**

Class 6 consists of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. These may be strictly for information gathering purposes, or as part of a study leading to an action which a public agency has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

- **15330. Minor Actions to Prevent, Minimize, Stabilize, Mitigate or Eliminate the Release or Threat of Release of Hazardous Waste or Hazardous Substances.**

Class 30 consists of any minor cleanup actions taken to prevent, minimize, stabilize, mitigate, or eliminate the release or threat of release of a hazardous waste or substance which are small or medium removal actions costing \$1 million or less.

- **15304. Minor Alterations to Land**

Note: Authority cited: Section 21083, Public Resources Code; Reference: Section 21084, Public Resources Code.

Watershed(s) affected.

The proposed project is entirely in the San Diego River Watershed.

Describe if this project can be a basis for additional funding from other sources.

Yes, this project could be used a match to leverage investment and other grants for monitoring and trash removal along the whole San Diego River. Our trash removal program is strategically designed to be adaptable, and the survey data we collect allows us to be both efficient and precise as we allocate the right resources to each trash site. With additional funding, we can

scale up the effort to engage more volunteers, pay for more hauling, coordinate with more partners, and continue to advance the trash-free River vision.

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

As part of this proposed project, we will monitor the following metrics to track our success:

- Number of miles of riverbed surveyed
- Number of trash sites identified and removed
- Number of pounds of trash, e-waste and recycling removed
- Number monitoring locations sampled, and report of data collected
- All data will be compiled to be included in an annual State of the River Report
- Number of community volunteers engaged, and number of hours of service

Description of how the project is resilient to climate change.

Development of the floodplain has resulted in habitat loss for sensitive species, loss of permeable surfaces for safe and consistent groundwater infiltration, and decreased flow of clean, cool water for aquatic species. For the land that remains undeveloped, habitat degradation like trash accumulation, dumping, and pollution threatens the sensitive species that rely on the increasingly rare habitats along the San Diego River. At the same time, freshwater ecosystems and estuary ecosystems are particularly sensitive to effects of climate change, including increase of surface water temperatures and changes in precipitation amounts and intensities.

This project increases the climate resilience of these ecosystems by protecting the environmental quality and function of the ecosystems that remain. In addition, by engaging the public in this solution, we hope to activate an engaged and responsible citizenry with the knowledge to act to protect habitat and water resources for the region.

Applicant's ability/authority to receive and distribute funds.

The San Diego River Park Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and has extensive experience in successfully executing contracts and performing on grants. In addition to many grants from private and corporate foundations, we have recently completed or are in contract on over \$1 million for restoration, community engagement, and conservation projects through SANDAG's TransNet EMP program, The U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, the State of California, the County Water Authority, and more.

Our stewardship programs have been recognized regionally and nationally for innovative and effective strategies to advance the goal of a trash-free river, including the Take Pride in America

Distinguished Service Citation, received at the White House. Our volunteers removed the 2 millionth pound of trash from the San Diego River in October 2016, thanks to the over 20,000 hours of service we coordinate annually.

Is the project to conduct work that is required by any entity/agency? (e.g. cleanup or mitigation)

The proposed project is not part of a mitigation project or other required action.