

# Memorandum

To: CHAIR AND COMMISSIONERS

CTC Meeting: March 21-22, 2024

From: TANISHA TAYLOR, Executive Director

Reference Number: 4.20, Action

Prepared By: Naveen Habib  
Associate Deputy Director

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Subject: Approval of the 2023 California Natural Resources Agency's  
Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, Resolution G-24-33

## **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the California Transportation Commission (Commission) approve the 2023 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, which includes eight projects totaling \$9,350,924 as provided in Attachment B, with the following stipulations:

- The Commission expects that the funds allocated will be expended timely.
- For land acquisition projects, funding recipients are encouraged to reduce overall project costs by exploring the feasibility of acquiring easements rather than fee title when appropriate.
- Due to the uniqueness of the individual projects in this program, the California Natural Resources Agency must provide on-site inspection and auditing of the projects included in the program.

## **Issue:**

The California Natural Resources Agency's evaluation team used the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program procedures and criteria to evaluate 15 applications received as part of the 2023 grant cycle. As a result:

- Eight projects totaling \$9,350,924 are recommended for funding in the 2023 grant cycle.
  - 57 percent of the available funding is recommended for four projects in Northern California, totaling \$5,373,937.
  - 43 percent of the available funding is recommended for four projects in Southern California, totaling \$3,976,987.
- Seven projects were not recommended for award because they were either ineligible to compete or not competitive. These projects provided no environmental mitigation benefits, no link to the related transportation facility, or a weak connection to the related transportation facility for mitigation and benefits.
  - One project in Northern California, totaling \$205,000.
  - Six projects in Southern California, totaling \$4,574,159.

The California Natural Resources Agency proposes to use project cost savings and the remaining funds from the 2022 grant cycle to fund the 2023 grant cycle, which is oversubscribed.

The funding available to the California Natural Resources Agency for the 2023 grant cycle is from the following sources: \$6,700,000 from the Budget Act of 2023, \$2,534,511 from the Budget Act of 2022, and \$116,413 from the Budget Act of 2018.

As the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency, the California Natural Resources Agency determined all eight projects are Categorical Exemption from CEQA and filed Notices of Exemption for each project.

Recommended Project Highlights:

**El Rancho Unified Emerald Necklace Natural Infrastructure High School Complex (\$735,459)** - The Amigos de los Rios is an urban forest project that will plant 250 trees and 1,500 shrubs, all native and Mediterranean, at the approximately 56-acre El Rancho Unified School District High School complex comprising El Rancho High School, Ruben Salazar Continuation High School, and El Rancho Adult School. They will host events inviting students, Conservation Corps members, and community stakeholders to plant and care for the plants. This project will provide multiple benefits by capturing stormwater and runoff and create habitat and recreational opportunities.

**Tiburon Ridge (Martha Property) Acquisition (\$1,500,000)** - The Trust for Public Land is a resource lands project that will acquire in-fee the 110-acre Martha Property near the tip of the Tiburon Peninsula. The property offers well-established social trails and wildlife corridors, native grassland, and wetland habitats that support five special status species. The project will permanently prevent development and protect, in perpetuity, coastal live oak woodland, freshwater wetland, and California red-legged frog upland habitat. The community has been working to protect the property for more than three decades. Ownership will be transferred to the Marin County Open Space District for management as a public open space preserve. The project provides enhanced mitigation for the construction impacts of adding two carpool lanes on 16-miles of the US101 Marin Sonoma Narrows related transportation facility.

Background:

The Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program was established by the state Legislature in 1989 to fund environmental enhancement and mitigation projects directly or indirectly related to the environmental impact of modifying new or existing transportation facilities. Pursuant to Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56, seven million dollars (\$7,000,000) is appropriated annually to the program from the State Highway Account. The Commission awards annual grants to fund projects as recommended by the California Natural Resources Agency.

The California Natural Resources Agency develops and adopts procedures to determine eligibility, evaluate project proposals, recommend projects for funding to the Commission, and manage the grants post award. Any local, state, or federal agency, or nonprofit entity may apply for and receive funding to undertake environmental enhancement and mitigation projects. Eligible projects must fit at least one of the following three categories:

1. **Urban Forestry** - projects designed to offset vehicular emissions of carbon dioxide.
2. **Resource Lands** - projects for acquisition or enhancement of resource lands to mitigate the loss of, or the detriment to, resource lands lying within the right-of-way acquired for proposed transportation improvements.
3. **Mitigation Projects Beyond the Scope of the Lead Agency** - projects to mitigate the impact of proposed transportation facilities or to enhance the environment, where the ability to effectuate the mitigation or enhancement measures is beyond the scope of the lead agency responsible for assessing the environmental impact of the proposed transportation improvement.

Pursuant to Streets and Highways Code Sections 187 and 188, the California Natural Resources Agency tries to award 40 percent of the total funding to projects in northern counties and 60 percent of the total funding to projects in southern counties. The percentages vary slightly each year depending on the applicant pool.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Resolution G-24-33
- Attachment B: California Natural Resources Agency's Proposed 2023 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program Recommendation

**CALIFORNIA TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
APPROVAL OF THE 2023 ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION  
PROGRAM**

**RESOLUTION G-24-33**

- 1.1 **WHEREAS**, Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56 establishes the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program to fund environmental enhancement and mitigation projects directly or indirectly related to the environmental impact of modifying new or existing transportation facilities; and
- 1.2 **WHEREAS**, the California Natural Resources Agency evaluates proposals submitted for this program and provides a list of proposals recommended for funding to the California Transportation Commission (Commission); and
- 1.3 **WHEREAS**, the Commission awards grants to fund proposals as recommended by the California Natural Resources Agency; and
- 1.4 **WHEREAS**, the California Natural Resources Agency has prepared a list of Projects Recommended for Funding (Attachment B) totaling \$9,350,924 for eight projects; and
- 1.5 **WHEREAS**, the funding available is from the following sources: \$6,700,000 from the Budget Act of 2023, \$2,534,511 from the Budget Act of 2022, and \$116,413 from the Budget Act of 2018 to the California Natural Resources Agency; and
- 1.6 **WHEREAS**, as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Lead Agency, the California Natural Resources Agency determined all eight projects are Categorically Exempt from CEQA and filed Notices of Exemption for each project.
- 2.1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Commission approves the 2023 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program, as indicated in Attachment B; and
- 2.2 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that for projects which include land acquisition, the Commission encourages funding recipients to reduce overall project costs by exploring the feasibility of acquiring easements rather than fee title when appropriate; and
- 2.3 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that due to the uniqueness of the individual projects in this program, the Commission recommends the California Natural Resources Agency provide on-site inspection and auditing of the projects included in this program.



**GAVIN NEWSOM**, Governor  
**WADE CROWFOOT**, Secretary for Natural Resources

February 14, 2024

Tanisha Taylor  
Executive Director  
California Transportation Commission  
1120 N Street, MS 52  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Taylor:

As provided in Section 164.56 of the Streets and Highways Code, the California Natural Resources Agency (Agency) has evaluated the 2023 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation (EEM) program grant proposals and provided the attached recommendations. Projects on the Recommended for Funding List meet the statutory requirements and contribute to the mitigation of the environmental effects of transportation facilities.

Agency recommends that the projects on the Recommended for Funding List be authorized to receive immediate funding. These recommendations were determined by a multi-disciplined evaluation team. The list includes 8 projects with a total value of \$9,350,923 which includes \$116,412.55 from a project that was terminated, \$2,534,511 rolled over from 2022, and \$6,700,000 from the 2023 appropriation.

If you have any questions about the recommended projects or the process used to evaluate them, please contact Teresa Mallory, Unit Manager, Bonds and Grants at (916) 541-5153 or by email at [teresa.mallory@resources.ca.gov](mailto:teresa.mallory@resources.ca.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wade Crowfoot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Wade Crowfoot  
Secretary for Natural Resources

Enclosures

715 P Street, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814 Ph. 916.653.5656 [www.resources.ca.gov](http://www.resources.ca.gov)



# ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND MITIGATION GRANT

## 2023 GRANT CYCLE

### RECOMMENDATION

Approve grants for 8 projects totaling 9,350,924.

### BACKGROUND

Under Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56(a), the California Transportation Commission (Commission) is charged with the responsibility of funding an annual Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation (EEM) Program administered by the California Natural Resources Agency (Agency) at the funding level provided in the State Budget.

The EEM Program awards grants to environmental enhancement and mitigation projects that are directly or indirectly related to the environmental impact of modifying existing transportation facilities or the design, construction, or expansion of new transportation facilities.

California Streets and Highways Code Section 164.56 (as amended in 2013, SB 99) provides for grants to be awarded in three categories:

- Urban Forestry: Projects designed to offset vehicular emissions of carbon dioxide.
- Resource Lands: Acquisition or enhancement of resource lands to mitigate the loss of, or the detriment to, resource lands lying within the right-of-way acquired for proposed transportation improvements.
- Mitigation Projects Beyond the Scope of the Lead Agency: Projects to mitigate the impact of proposed transportation facilities or to enhance the environment, where the ability to effectuate the mitigation or enhancement measures is beyond the scope of the lead agency responsible for assessing the environmental impact of the proposed transportation improvement.

Agency is responsible for developing and adopting guidelines (procedures and criteria) and determining eligibility, evaluating proposals, recommending projects for funding, and managing grants post awards. Agency's procedures and criteria contain a scoring mechanism to evaluate projects by assigning point scores to each project. Projects making the initial cut are then visited for further vetting. In accordance with the provisions of Section 187 and 188 of the Streets and Highways Code, Agency attempts to allocate 40% of the total amount recommended to projects in northern counties and 60% to projects in southern counties. The percentages vary slightly year to year depending on the pool of applications and competitiveness.

## **AVAILABLE FUNDING 2023**

Funds are available from the 2023 appropriation for 6,700,000 and from the 2022 appropriation 2,534,511, which represents 1,634,511 rolled over from 2022 and 900,000 from a 2022 grant terminated due to lack of leveraged funding. An additional 116,413 from 2018-19 appropriation has been added for a total of 9,350,924 available to award.

## **CEQA**

Notice of Exemptions has been filed for all eight projects recommended for funding.

## **HIGHLIGHTED PROJECTS**

- The City of Torrance will plant 121 native trees within the Cabrillo Avenue median between 213th Street to the north and Plaza del Amo to the south in Downtown Torrance. The City will also install a smart irrigation system and replace asphalt with a permeable surface to increase infiltration. The project provides enhanced mitigation for the construction of the Del Amo Blvd Extension project.
- The Mountains and Recreation Conservation Authority (MRCA) will acquire in-fee, the 31.24-acre Paradise Hill property within the City of Los Angeles. The project will permanently protect the property from development, will protect the grasslands, Southern California black walnut trees, and connectivity for wildlife between islands of remaining habitat. Existing informal trails provide views over the downtown L.A. skyline and coast. MRCA will manage the property for conservation and recreation. The project provides enhanced mitigation for the impacts of the construction of the I-405 Sepulveda Pass Widening Project.
- The Trust for Public Land will acquire in-fee the 110-acre Martha Property near the tip of the Tiburon Peninsula. The property offers irreplaceable panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay Area; well-established social trails and wildlife corridors; native grassland, and wetland habitats that support five special status species. The project will permanently prevent development and protect, in perpetuity, coastal live oak woodland, freshwater wetland, and California red-legged frog upland habitat. The community has been working to protect the property for more than three decades. Ownership will be transferred to Marin County Open Space District for management as a public open space preserve. The project provides enhanced mitigation for the construction impacts of adding two carpool lanes on 16-miles of the US101 Marin Sonoma Narrows related transportation facility.

## 2023 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program Projects Recommended for Funding

Applicant	Project	County	Eligibility	Requested	Recommended	Cumulative	Project Description
<b>SOUTHERN PROJECTS</b>							
Amigos de los Rios	El Rancho Unified Emerald Necklace Natural Infrastructure High School Complex	Los Angeles	Urban Forests	735,459	735,459	735,459	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to plant 250 trees and 1,500 shrubs, all native and Mediterranean, at the ~ 56-acre El Rancho Unified School District High School complex comprising: El Rancho High School; Ruben Salazar Continuation High School; and El Rancho Adult School in the City of Pico Rivera. Project will also provide events inviting students, Conservation Corps members, and community stakeholders to plant and care for the plants. Project will provide multiple benefits by capturing stormwater and runoff, create habitat, and recreational opportunities.
City of Torrance	Torrance - Cabrillo Avenue EEMP Urban Forestry Project	Los Angeles	Urban Forests	718,528	718,528	1,453,987	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to plant 121 native trees within the Cabrillo Avenue median between 213th Street to the north and Plaza del Amo to the south in Downtown Torrance. Project will also install a smart irrigation system and replace asphalt with a permeable surface to increase infiltration.
Arroyos & Foothills Conservancy	Sycamore Canyon Acquisition Project	Los Angeles	Resource Lands	1,023,000	1,023,000	2,476,987	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to acquire in-fee a 10-acre privately owned Sycamore Canyon property which is part of an urban wildlife corridor in the San Rafael Hills of Northern Los Angeles. Sycamore Canyon contains oak woodland, chaparral, and riparian habitats along with a seasonal stream. Cottonwood Canyon (2018 EEM Grant) was purchased creating the eastern entrance to this wildlife corridor.
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority	Paradise Hill Open Space	Los Angeles	Resource Lands	1,500,000	1,500,000	3,976,987	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to acquire in-fee the 31.24-acre Paradise Hill property within the City of Los Angeles. The project will protect one of the last remaining undeveloped hilltops in northeast Los Angeles. The project will protect grassland and Southern California black walnut trees and secure connectivity for wildlife between islands of remaining habitat in the region. Existing informal trails provide views over the downtown L.A. skyline and coast. MRCA will manage the property for conservation and recreation.
<b>4 SOUTHERN PROJECTS (43 % OF TOTAL FUNDING)</b>				<b>\$ 3,976,987</b>	<b>\$ 3,976,987</b>		



## 2023 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program Projects Recommended for Funding

Applicant	Project	County	Eligibility	Requested	Recommended	Cumulative	Project Description
<b>NORTHERN PROJECTS</b>							
Northcoast Regional Land Trust	Lost Coast Redwood Creek Conservation Easement	Humboldt	Resource Lands	1,500,000	1,500,000	5,476,987	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to acquire a conservation easement over an 895-acre working forest dominated by redwood and Douglas-fir. The property includes most of the headwaters of the Redwood Creek watershed, contains critical habitat for threatened steelhead trout, Coho & Chinook salmon, and drains directly to the South Fork Eel River. The project will create almost 20,000-acre block of privately-held headwaters managed for multiple ecosystem benefits of streamflow enhancement and sustainable forest management practices. The project will remove subdivision rights, highly restrict development, ensure forested portion of property is managed as a Late Seral Reserve, increase riparian buffers and enhance wildlife habitat/water quality.
Sierra Foothill Conservancy	Green Mountain Ranch Conservation Easement Acquisition	Mariposa	Resource Lands	873,937	873,937	6,350,924	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to purchase a 1,690-acre conservation easement on Green Mountain Ranch, which is part of the 4,407-acre Martin-Jensen owned ranches near the Madera County border, Eastman Lake, and the Chowchilla River. The project will permanently conserve the open-space grasslands, working rangeland, and valley oak riparian habitats that support many species including western pond turtle, California tiger salamander and other Species of Greatest Conservation Need. Green Mountain Ranch is a keystone of SFC's Madera Mariposa Focus Area for protecting and connecting 30,000+ acres of public and private land.
American River Conservancy	El Dorado Ranch Phase 5 Conservation	El Dorado	Resource Lands	1,500,000	1,500,000	7,850,924	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to purchase in-fee the 2,997-acre El Dorado Ranch (29 parcels, single ownership) located in southern El Dorado County containing 3.8 miles of riparian frontage along Slate Creek and Big Canyon Creek, two foothill tributaries to the Cosumnes River. El Dorado Ranch is a working ranch which maintains open space, water quality, and wildland fire protection in the Cosumnes River watershed. The property east-and west-facing slopes as well as north-facing slopes that support diverse microhabitats, providing refugia for species sensitive to climate change.
The Trust for Public Land	Tiburon Ridge (Martha Property) Acquisition	Marin	Resource Lands	1,500,000	1,500,000	9,350,924	<b>Recommend Full Funding.</b> Project to acquire in-fee the 110-acre Martha Property near the tip of the Tiburon Peninsula. The property offers irreplaceable panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay Area; well-established social trails and wildlife corridors; native grassland, and wetland habitats that support five special status species. Project will protect in perpetuity coastal live oak woodland, freshwater wetland, and California red-legged frog upland habitat. The community has been working to protect the property for more than three decades. Ownership will be transferred to Marin County Open Space District for management as a public open space preserve.
<b>4 NORTHERN PROJECTS (57% OF TOTAL FUNDING)</b>				<b>5,373,937</b>	<b>5,373,937</b>		
<b>8 PROJECTS - TOTAL RECOMMENDED</b>					<b>9,350,924</b>		

**2023 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation  
Program Not Projects Recommended for Funding**

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Requested</b>	<b>Recommended</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>	
<b>NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING - NOT INVITED TO STEP 3</b>						
Mendocino Land Trust	Hathaway Creek Conservation Easement	Mendocino	205,000	-	9,350,924	
<b>NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING - NO VISIT</b>						
City of Chino Hills	Morningside Park Restoration	San Bernadino	419,815	-	9,350,924	
City of Santa Ana	Pacific Electric Trail Enhancement Project	Orange	770,975	-	9,350,924	
Oswit Land Trust	Santa Rosa Hills Acquisition II	Riverside	1,500,000	-	9,350,924	
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Requested</b>	<b>Recommended</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>	<b>Ineligibility Notes</b>
<b>NOT RECOMMENDED FOR FUNDING - INELIGIBLE</b>						
Lakeside's River Park Conservancy	Enhancement of Conserved Land in the San Diego River Lakeside	San Diego	612,394	-	9,350,924	CEQA was not complete at time of application; Guideline requirement
City of Carson	Median and Side Panel Turf Replacement Project with Drought-Tolerant Plants	Los Angeles	500,000	-	9,350,924	Selected related transportation facility was ineligible; CEQA was not complete for the facility.
City of Anaheim	Anaheim River Park Urban Forestry Project	Orange	770,975	-	9,350,924	The urban forestry project was contingent on upon a future land acquisition; not allowed in guidelines