

**ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
GRANT IMPLEMENTATION - 2013**

Chollas Creek

In 2011, the City's Environmental Services Department received a grant for Chollas Creek watershed improvement. This Creek, in essence, has become a vegetated flood control channel amid a highly urbanized community. Residential and commercial buildings occupy the perimeter of the Creek. Proposed 4.03 restoration site would occur within the City's Multi-Habitat Planning area (MHPA), one-quarter mile east of 54th Street within Chollas Creek floodplain. The site contains primarily riparian wetland habitat, with upland habitat along the banks. The project site is owned by the City of San Diego and managed by the Water Department and the Department of Park and Recreation Open Space Division. Access points to the site are located along the entire southern portion of Chollas Parkway. Interpretive signage placed at access points along the project boundary offers information about the Creek's native flora and fauna, as well as the City of San Diego, community, and California Conservation Corps involvement. Exotic plants will be hand removed and native habitat will be planted along the entire project area.

Restoration of the site would occur in three phases. In 2012, the first phase was the removal of transient camps and debris from the site, using standard practices associated with transient abatement. Transient abatement has been and will continually be conducted throughout the project site as needed. In late 2012 and throughout 2013, the second phase of the project was undertaken.

Phase II includes the removal of more than a dozen non-native plant species. Thus far, a total of 49.78 tons of non-native vegetation has been cut and removed from the site. Vegetation removed for the site is taken to the Miramar Landfill for composting. Removal activity focuses largely on the interior riparian corridor, with additional removal of upland non-native plants approximately 10-20 meters above the riparian zone. All activities are conducted outside the breeding season for sensitive bird species (i.e. work only occurs October to December). Additionally, the removal of debris and non-native vegetation is done by hand. No removal of healthy, mature, and/or scenic trees is allowed to occur and no staging areas are to be established, as existing roads and parking areas are sufficient for all associated project activities. Impacts to native vegetation are avoided by this project by limiting off-trail activity to areas with existing non-native vegetation.

The final phase (III) of the project will be the revegetation of native plants in the areas where non-native vegetation has been removed. Both riparian obligate and upland vegetation will be used. The mosaic of plants used in the revegetation will attempt to mimic natural vegetation conditions, integrating information from the surrounding native vegetation in the selection of plants. This phase was expected to commence in 2013 but has been rescheduled for 2014 due to the immense scale of vegetation removal that has occurred in 2013 and remains to be completed

in 2014. Revegetation will be accomplished using seeds from a local supplier. A majority of native potted plants needed are already available through the City's Environmental Services Department. Irrigation for this project will not be necessary as planting will occur in the wet season.

The completed restoration project will increase available habitat for local and migratory animal and bird species as well as improve the water quality of this urbanized creek for the surrounding community. The habitat restoration effort will also decrease the reoccurring transient population by removing non-native plant hideouts and in return decrease the source of transient related pollutants. Restoration of Chollas Creek is well integrated into the goals of the City's MSCP, by providing a net benefit to the ecosystem through removal of non-native plants and restoring the site with native plant species. Additional cascading effects will occur throughout the system, by providing suitable habitat for native species of vertebrate and invertebrate organisms, including those covered by the MSCP.

In 2014, the project will be in year four of five-year maintenance and monitoring schedule that is being followed. Quarterly site visits are conducted to monitor the condition and establishment of native plantings and the success of exotic plant eradication efforts. ESD Biologists are responsible for implementing the exotic plant eradication monitoring and management concurrently with the revegetation and restoration of the site. Additionally, volunteers and/or staff monitor transient activity levels, provide graffiti control, and regularly schedule cleanup efforts as needed within the project area. Support crews are called to assist if additional staff or equipment as necessary in the field. At the end of the five-year project term, management of this site will return to City Water and Park and Recreation Open Space Departments. They will not be responsible for subsequent monitoring or non-native plant removal after the term of the project.

Rose Creek

At the commencement of 2013, the grant for this project concluded. The only work which remains is to remove project revegetation signage. This project restored 3,670.4 linear feet and 8 acres of riparian and riverine habitat and added three acres of riparian habitat. Overall the project increased habitat for local and migratory animal species, as well as, improved the water quality of the urban creek. The Project also included the permanent placement of educational interpretive signs along the existing public trail. Please see the 2012 MSCP Annual Report for further details of this project.