

Environmental Mitigation Program

2023 Annual Report

Conservation | Research | Stewardship



Overview



Vision



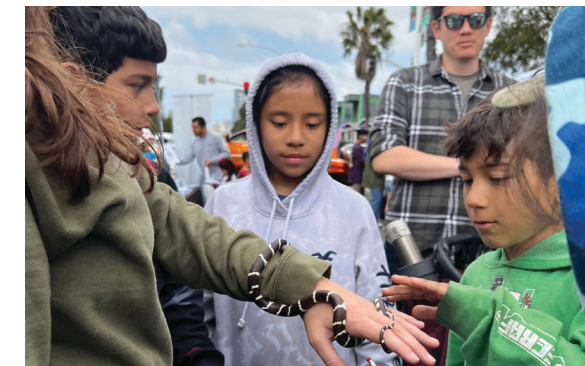
Habitat Conservation



Scientific Research



Environmental Stewardship



Regional Coordination

About the Environmental Mitigation Program

Since its inception in 2008, the TransNet Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) has played a vital role in Habitat Conservation, scientific research, and land management across San Diego County.

Through the TransNet EMP, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) purchases, conserves, and restores native habitat to offset potential impacts from the development of transportation projects. TransNet, a regional half-cent sales tax for transportation approved by San Diego County voters, sets aside \$850 million to fund the EMP. The TransNet Independent Taxpayer Oversight Committee closely monitors program expenditures to ensure public accountability.

As of January 2024 – the EMP has helped acquire more than 9,215 acres of valuable open space in partnership with other government agencies and conservation groups. The program also provided 136 grants to local organizations and jurisdictions for land management efforts, such as species removal, signage, and fencing.

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[SANDAG.org/LanguageAssistance](https://www.sandag.org/LanguageAssistance) | 619.699.1900



Overview

9,215

total acres preserved by EMP and partners

5,627

acres preserved by TransNet EMP

\$164 million

(including leveraged funds) in open space investments

Mitigation secured for over

3/4

of TransNet Early Action Projects

\$33.2 million

in leveraged funds from conservation partners

136

land management grants awarded since the start of the EMP, totaling \$18.8 million awarded to local organizations, jurisdictions, and non-profit organizations

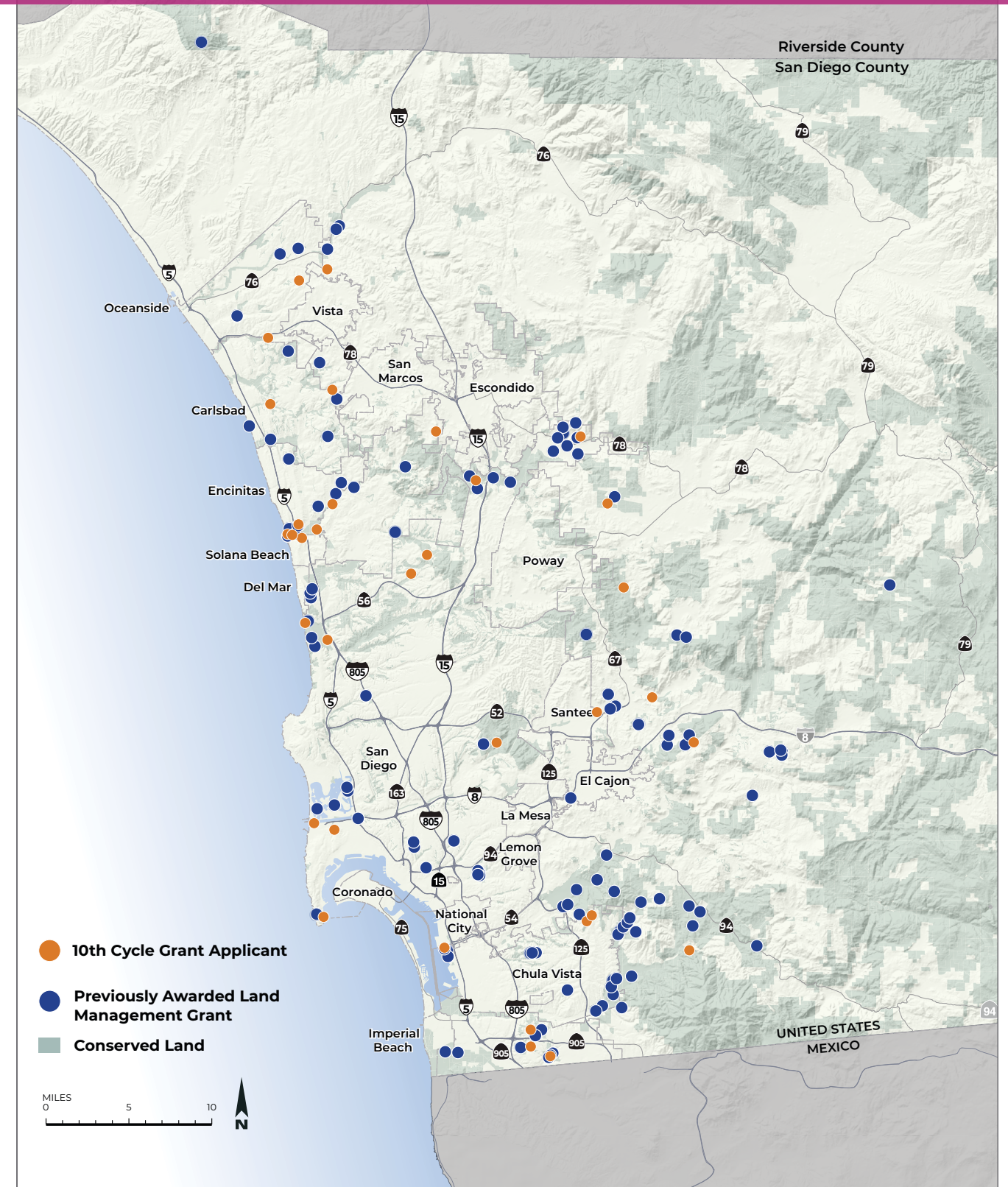
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Land Acquisition Grants totaling \$20 million

\$59 million

secured for Regional Management and Monitoring

Where are these 136 Land Management Grants located?



Regional Habitat Conservation Vision

The 2021 Regional Plan set aside \$3 billion to make the Habitat Conservation Vision a reality



Protect

existing native species through the strategic acquisition, management, and monitoring of critical habitat areas identified in regional Habitat Conservation plans



Connect

habitat areas through wildlife corridors and linkages, as well as connecting people to local species and natural habitats



Respect

native species and habitat. Balance the demands for recreation opportunities while protecting natural landscapes. Encourage respect for natural lands through increased public outreach and education of San Diego's unique biodiversity

Habitat Conservation

Highlighted projects for FY 2023. Learn more by clicking on a location.





Scientific Research

The purpose of the Regional Management and Monitoring Program scientific research is to better inform land managers about best management and monitoring practices for rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats in San Diego County.

Pollinator Monitoring Plan



Seed Banking



Tricolored Blackbird Surveys



Golden Eagle Management Plan





> Pollinator Monitoring Plan

Pollinator Monitoring Plan

In November of 2023, through funding from SANDAG, the University of Central Missouri released a study that investigated the types of pollinators that are found within coastal sage scrub habitat. The data collected will be utilized for the development of a Pollinator Monitoring Plan.

DID YOU KNOW?

San Diego is the most biodiverse county in the continental United States, with over 600 species of native bees calling the region home.

[Learn more about Seed Banking](#)



> Seed Banking

Seed Banking

SANDAG partnered with the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Conservation Alliance to preserve collections of rare plant species in the San Diego region. Collected seeds will be used for future restoration work and to conserve current levels of genetic diversity in rare plant populations.

HIGHLIGHTS:

In 2023, seeds were collected from 12 targeted species and collection goals were met for 8 high priority species. Seed collection efforts will continue in 2024.

[Learn more about the Pollinator Monitoring Plan](#)

[Learn more about the Tricolored Blackbird Surveys](#)



> Tricolored Blackbird Surveys

Tricolored Blackbird Surveys

Tricolored blackbirds (*Agelaius tricolor*) are a state-listed endangered species that were once widespread and abundant in San Diego County. In 2023 tricolored blackbird nesting habitats were surveyed and mapped on Conserved Lands in San Diego County to determine their presence, breeding status, and assess habitat conditions.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Data collected from the 2023 surveys will be used along with previous surveys in 2021 and 2022 to develop management recommendations for the species.

[Learn more about Seed Banking](#)

[Learn more about the Golden Eagle Management Plan](#)



> Golden Eagle Management Plan

Golden Eagle Management Plan

The golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are threatened by increasing urban and rural development and recreational activities that have led to habitat loss and habitat fragmentation. The United States Geological Survey in coordination with regional stakeholders developed a draft Golden Eagle Management Plan that is currently under review. The purpose of the plan is to identify and prioritize regional management strategies for the Golden eagle in San Diego County.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Golden eagles is one of the largest, fastest, and most wide-ranging raptors in North America, with a wingspan of up to seven feet.

Learn more about the
Tricolored Blackbird Surveys



Environmental Stewardship

The SANDAG Board of Directors awarded \$2.4 million of funding for 19 TransNet EMP Land Management Grants (LMG). The purpose of this program is to assist regional land managers with the protection of threatened, rare, and endangered species and enhance their habitats to avoid future listing of endangered species in San Diego County.

Ocean Beach Estuary Enhancement Project



Rare Dune Plant Restoration Project



Safari Park Biodiversity Reserve Stinknet Removal II Project



El Monte Preserve Bat Hotel





> Ocean Beach Estuary Enhancement Project

Ocean Beach Estuary Enhancement Project

The San Diego River Park Foundation was awarded an EMP LMG to remove invasives, perform seed collection and propagation, and community outreach. There were three volunteer events hosted in 2023 to spread seed, pull weeds, and educate the public on invasive species.

[Learn more about the Rare Dune Plant Restoration Project](#)



> Rare Dune Plant Restoration Project

Rare Dune Plant Restoration Project

Did you know that coastal dune habitats in San Diego are rare? Nature Collective was awarded an EMP LMG to restore the rare dune habitats within San Elijo Lagoon by removing non-native plants and planting native plant species, such as Nuttall's lotus (*Acemison prostratus*). Nuttall's lotus, when it blooms, has a yellow flower that helps attract coastal pollinators. When the dunes are thriving, it benefits local wildlife and our communities.

[Learn more about the Ocean Beach Estuary Enhancement Project](#)

[Learn more about the Safari Park Biodiversity Reserve Stinknet Removal II Project](#)



> Safari Park Biodiversity Reserve Stinknet Removal II Project

Safari Park Biodiversity Reserve Stinknet Removal II Project

SANDAG awarded funding to the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance to remove stinknet, an invasive fire-prone annual plant, from untreated and previously treated land in the Safari Park Biodiversity Reserve. This restoration project will help reduce wildfire risk and improve coastal sage scrub, the nesting habitat of the coastal cactus wren. In addition, five acres of disturbed land in the Reserve will be restored in collaboration with the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians and other tribal partners.

[Learn more about the Rare Dune Plant Restoration Project](#)

[Learn more about the El Monte Preserve Bat Hotel](#)



> El Monte Preserve Bat Hotel

El Monte Preserve Bat Hotel

SANDAG awarded the Earth Discovery Institute (EDI) an EMP LMG to aid in the recovery of locally declining bat species by creating a thermally stable and long-term roost site, or “bat hotel”. In 2023 EDI hosted multiple outreach events to educate the community on the importance of bat conservation. The bat hotel is scheduled for installation in early 2024.

Learn more about the Safari Park
Biodiversity Reserve Stinknet Removal
II Project



Connecting with the Public

The Earth Year Campaign highlighted the work SANDAG does to promote habitat conservation and protect rare species and their habitats in the region and increase regional awareness of the importance of San Diego's natural environment.

SANDAGregion

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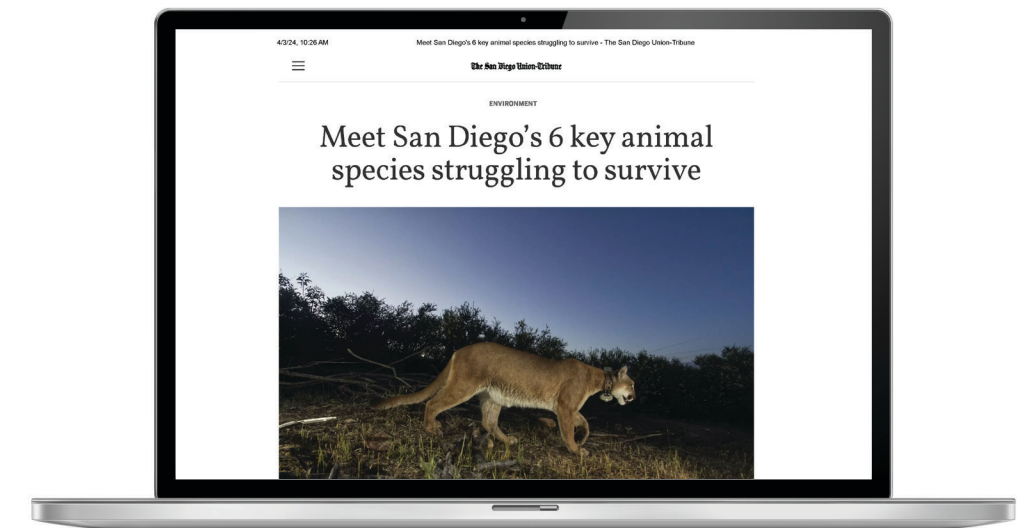
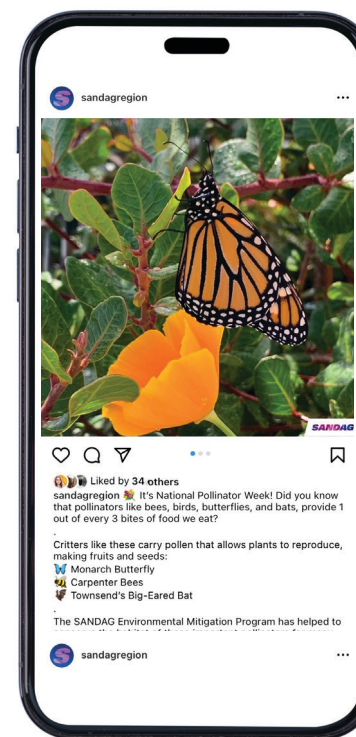
SANDAG

Visit:

Public Outreach

Social Media

State of the Preserve



SANDAG & the [San Diego Management Monitoring Program](#) participated in 3 public outreach events: State of Biodiversity Symposium, Barrio Logan Science & Art Expo, and Multiple Species Conservation Program Annual Workshop.

SANDAG shared over fifty posts across various social media platforms throughout the year related to the Earth Year Campaign.

In April of 2023, an article on the State of Preserve was published in the [San Diego Union Tribune](#) for Earth Day.