

New Grant Expands Restoration Impact Across the Wash

REDLANDS, CA (September 4, 2026) — A \$3.28 million grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board will help the San Bernardino Valley Conservation Trust build on successful regional conservation work in the Santa Ana River Wash, restoring habitat for endangered wildlife, reducing wildfire risk and helping more water reach the Bunker Hill Basin, which provides drinking water for more than 700,000 San Bernardino Valley residents. The project draws on efforts by the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District (SBVWCD) at Plunge Creek and throughout the Wash.

“This award allows us to take what we have learned through years of hands-on work and apply it much more broadly,” said Dr. Milan Mitrovich, Executive Officer for the San Bernardino Valley Conservation Trust and Land Resources Manager for SBVWCD. “Plunge Creek, our fuels management work and our collaboration throughout the Wash have shown us how restoring natural processes can benefit habitat and water resources at the same time. We can now apply that experience across a larger landscape and create lasting benefits for the species and communities that depend on it.”

The project will restore and enhance 200 acres of native habitat southeast of Highland, where decades of mining and changes in water flow have altered the landscape and allowed nonnative plants to take hold. The project will help bring back more of the natural conditions that native plants and wildlife need to thrive, including the San Bernardino kangaroo rat, coastal California gnatcatcher, coastal cactus wren, Santa Ana River woollystar and slender-horned spineflower.

The grant builds on years of restoration success across the Wash. Previous efforts at Plunge Creek have helped recharge 6,177 acre-feet of groundwater and restored 18.76 acres of novel wetted habitat. The new project will restore 44 acres of terraces along Plunge Creek, 15 acres of floodplain and 30 acres of alluvial fan sage scrub, expanding work completed through a Bureau of Land Management Fuels Management Grant and enhancement activities with CEMEX at Plunge Creek West.

The cooperative project brings together the San Bernardino Valley Conservation Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, San Bernardino County Flood Control District and SBVWCD. It is part of a long-term regional effort to care for the Wash while supporting the water resources, wildlife and communities connected to it.

The Wildlife Conservation Board approved the \$3.28 million award on August 27. Funding comes from Proposition 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024.

To learn more about SBVWCD’s work to protect groundwater resources and steward the Upper Santa Ana River Wash, visit sbvwaterconservation.gov.

###

About San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District

For more than 100 years, the San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District has worked at the intersection of infrastructure, environment, and community to support local water reliability while preserving open space and biodiversity. Through science-based stewardship and collaborative partnerships, SBVWCD captures stormwater, recharges groundwater basins, and advances solutions that reflect balanced policy, sound decision-making, and responsible resource management across the San Bernardino Valley region.