

Urban Southern California Coalition

Proposition 50 Project Summary

County: San Diego

Sponsoring Agency: Sweetwater Authority

Project Title: Exotic Species Removal and Habitat Restoration at Sweetwater Reservoir

Preferred Proposition 50 Chapter: Chapter. 8, section 79561 (c)

Alternative Proposition 50 Chapter:

Project summary:

Built in 1888, the Sweetwater Dam and Reservoir has in recent years suffered adverse affects from the growing pressure of exotic, invasive plant species. The most prevalent of these species are salt cedar (*Tamarix sp.*) and giant reed (*Arundo donax*). Castor bean, among other exotic plants, is also found in large concentrations. These plants not only destroy native habitats and displace native plant and animal species, they have a significant impact on water resources; salt cedar and giant reed particularly so because they absorb and transpire ground and surface water at a rate many times that of native vegetation. Salt cedar causes an additional impact by directly depositing salts into the reservoir area as a part of its normal life process. The Authority is requesting assistance to expand and accelerate a program which has been underway for thirteen years at its expense. Under the Sweetwater Reservoir Habitat Management Program, exotic species removal and habitat restoration are being performed to benefit riparian habitat, the federally listed endangered least Bell's vireo, (*Vireo bellii pusillus*), Southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*), and other sensitive species.

Project Goal(s) and Benefit(s):

Perpetual long-term monitoring and maintenance will control invading exotic plants and ensures native riparian habitat values are retained for the least Bell's vireo and other species. When complete, the plan will provide 123 acres of habitat for the least Bell's vireo. The plan also allows completion of reservoir management objectives necessary to improve water quality within the reservoir.

Project status:

To date, approximately 200 acres have been cleared of invasive plant material. Additionally, two large ponds that were caused by the commercial mining of sand need to be filled with suitable material in order to restore native riparian vegetation. Recent studies have identified sufficient soil material within the managed reservoir area for transport. It is intended that a portion of the requested funds be used for the soil transfer.

Project Partners:

There is a pending allowance of \$185,000 from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under the Section 206 Aquatic Restoration Program of the Water Resources Act of 1996. Some of the funding, if approved, would go towards a Preliminary Restoration Plan, with the balance used for actual field restoration.

Project Timeline:

It is anticipated that the project, as initially designed, will be completed by 2010.

Was Project submitted for funding under Proposition 13? No

Total Project Cost: \$4,600,000

Local/Other Funding Committed: \$1,600,000 by Sweetwater Authority through 2002.

Proposition 50 Funding Request: \$2,300,000