San Diego Association of Governments
Dennery Canyon Restoration Project
City of San Diego
Quarterly Progress Report
Reporting Period: 01/01/2026 – 03/31/2026
Submission Date: 04/21/2026
SANDAG Contract Number: S1125503

Quarterly Status Report Overview

The City of San Diego received the Notice to Proceed (NTP) for the Dennery Canyon Rare Restoration Project on May 2, 2023. This quarterly progress report details work performed from January 1, 2026, through March 31, 2026. Work performed during this period included contract coordination, qualitative site assessments, quantitative monitoring of San Diego Thornmint and San Diego Ambroisa, photo monitoring, and weed maintenance. Work anticipated in the next reporting period will consist of continued weed management in Areas 1–4, qualitative monitoring, quantitative monitoring of Otay tarplant and Orcutt's bird's-beak, and continued coordination with San Diego Wildlife Alliance Native Plant Gene Bank staff on the seed-bulking effort for San Diego thornmint.

Work Performed this Period:

1. **Task 1- Area 1: SD thornmint restoration and vernal pool enhancement (1.55 acres)**
   Work start date: October 4, 2023.
   Percent complete: 75%

   Early-season rains followed by unusually high temperatures promoted rapid growth of both invasive weeds and native, sensitive species—including San Diego thornmint, Otay tarplant, and Orcutt's bird's-beak—thereby complicating weed management. Contract crews applied herbicide treatments only in areas free of rare plants, under the direction of the City Biologist. In areas supporting San Diego thornmint, City staff installed protective wire mesh cages around plant patches to prevent herbivory by rabbits and other small mammals. Herbicide use was restricted within these protected zones, and crews relied exclusively on hand weeding. Prior to each treatment visit, the City Biologist surveyed the site and flagged occurrences of Otay tarplant and Orcutt's bird's-beak. Crews then hand-weeded around all flagged plants to avoid herbicide impacts.

2. **Task 2-Area 2: SD thornmint buffer (1.54 acres)**
   Work start date: October 18, 2023.
   Percent complete: 75%

   Area 2 (the buffer) also experienced a period of rapid, dense plant growth. During surveys, the City Biologist identified and installed protective wire mesh cages around two patches of San Diego thornmint in areas that had not been seeded in November, indicating these individuals likely originated from the natural seed bank. Otay tarplant was also observed to be more abundant in Area 2 than in previous years. Due to the high density of both invasive weeds and sensitive plant species, management efforts emphasized intensive hand weeding in the immediate vicinity of rare plants. In the remaining portions of the buffer, crews implemented a combination of weed whacking and spot herbicide treatments, taking care to avoid impacts to all sensitive species.

3. **Task 3-Area 3: Otay tarplant restoration (3.36 acres)**
   Work start date: October 25, 2023.
   Percent complete: 75%

   Area 3 supported extremely dense populations of Otay tarplant, making it the most complex area to manage. In some locations, plant density was so high that crews could not access the area without stepping on sensitive plants. These areas were avoided, as weed control could not be conducted without risking unintended impacts to tarplant. Management efforts instead focused on the margins of dense tarplant patches, where crews carefully hand-pulled weeds and, in some cases, used scissors to cut back invasive species to

minimize soil disturbance. In less densely vegetated areas, crews conducted limited spot herbicide treatments under the oversight of the City Biologist, ensuring that all applications avoided impacts to sensitive species.

4. **Area 4: San Diego ambrosia, Orcutt's bird's-beak, and vernal pool restoration and enhancement (2.23 acres)**
   Work start date: November 1, 2023.
   Percent complete: 60%

   Area 4 supported relatively lower densities of Otay tarplant, which allowed for more effective use of herbicide-based weed management compared to other areas. However, tarplant remained more abundant than in previous years, with plants appearing larger and more robust. San Diego ambrosia also expanded its footprint within this area. Prior to each treatment, a City Biologist surveyed the site and flagged occurrences of San Diego ambrosia, Orcutt's bird's-beak, and Otay tarplant. Crews then conducted hand weeding within and immediately around all flagged areas to prevent impacts to sensitive plants. In portions of the site where rare plant density was lower, crews carried out targeted spot herbicide treatments under biologist oversight.

5. **Monitoring and Reporting**
   Work start date: 05/08/2023
   Percent complete: 75%

   City biologist staff conducted qualitative monitoring visits to inform the timing and approach for weed management. During these visits, staff identified and flagged rare plant occurrences to guide crews and minimize potential impacts, and provided field oversight during implementation.

   City biologists also completed photo monitoring and IMG surveys for San Diego thornmint and San Diego ambrosia. These surveys included population counts, mapping of current extents, quantitative vegetation cover estimates within established sample plots, and assessments of threats across the full extent of each species population.

   In addition, City staff prepared a quarterly progress report summarizing activities conducted between October 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, which was submitted to SANDAG on January 21, 2026.

6. **Administrative**
   Work start date: 07/01/2023
   Percent complete: 75%

   City staff administered purchase orders, coordinated work schedules with contracted crews, reviewed contractor invoices, and processed invoices for payment.

Work Anticipated Next Period

Work anticipated in the next reporting period will include:

1) City Biologist staff will continue to coordinate with contractors to perform targeted herbicide applications and hand weeding as needed to control invasive weed species in Areas 1-4.
2) City Biologist staff will conduct qualitative monitoring of invasive plant cover and occurrences of rare plant species in Areas 1–4.
3) City Biologist staff will conduct quantitative IMG surveys for Otay tarplant and Orcutt's bird's-beak.

Issues to Note

1) The Notice to Proceed for this grant was issued on May 2, 2023. Due to the delay in the issuance of the NTP, the timeline for active restoration and weed management activities had to be adjusted accordingly. These activities are now anticipated to start in September 2023.

2) While conducting baseline monitoring surveys, biologists noted prickly goldenfleece (*Urospermum picroides*) was present in low numbers in Area 1 and abundant in the northern part of Area 2. This is a newly documented invasive plant species for San Diego County (see Photo 5). Weed management efforts will target this species in the project area and the City plans to seek additional funding sources to help control it outside of the project area.

3) In 2023, the Otay tarplant continued to flower into early September. This pushed back the start date for dethatching work because we wanted to give the tarplant time to senesce and set seed before weed whipping the area.

Photographs & Figures

Area 1: Photo Monitoring

Photo 1.1: Photo point 1 shows baseline conditions for Area 1. Nonnative species cover in Area 1 is estimated at 90%. The most abundant nonnative species include Tocolote thistle (*Centaurea melitensis*), Mediterranean stork's bill (*Erodium malacoides*), Annual yellow sweetclover (*Melilotus indicus*).

Photo 1.2: Photo point 1 on September 27, 2023. Nonnative species cover in Area 1 is estimated at 90%. Most nonnative species have senesced.

Photo 1.3: Photo point 1 on November 14, 2023. Dethatching of Area 1 occurred on October 4th and 6th, 2023.

Photo 1.4: Photo point 1 on March 8, 2024.

Photo 1.5: Photo point 1 on June 20, 2024.

Photo 1.6: Photo point 1 on August 8, 2024

Photo 1.7: Photo point 1 on December 17, 2024.

Photo 1.8: Photo point 1 on March 10, 2025

Photo 1.9: Photo point 1 on June 24, 2025

Photo 1.10: Photo point 1 on September 4, 2025

Photo 1.11: Photo point 1 on November 13, 2025. San Diego thornmint seed was dispersed within the hardware cloth cage. Stepping stones were placed inside the caged area prior to seeding to provide biologists and weed maintenance crews with designated, safe places to step, helping to avoid accidental trampling.

Photo 1.12: Photo point 1 on March 20, 2026. Flags indicate San Diego thornmint plants.

Area 2: Photo Monitoring

Photo 2.1: Photo point 2 shows baseline conditions for Area 2. Nonnative species cover in Area 2 is estimated at 80%. The most abundant nonnative species include Tocolote thistle, Italian ryegrass (*Festuca perennis*), slender wild oat (*Avena barbata*), and Mediterranean stork's bill.

Photo 2.2: Photo point 2 on September 27, 2023. Nonnative species cover in Area 2 is estimated at 80%. Most nonnative species have senesced.

Photo 2.3: Photo point 2 on November 14, 2023. Dethatching of Area 2 occurred on October 18th and 20th, 2023.

Photo 2.4: Photo point 2 on March 8, 2024.

Photo 2.5: Photo point 2 on June 20, 2024.

Photo 2.6: Photo point 2 on August 8, 2024.

Photo 2.7: Photo point 2 on December 17, 2024

Photo 2.8: Photo point 2 on March 10, 2025.

Photo 2.9: Photo point 2 on June 24, 2025.

Photo 2.11: Photo point 2 on September 4, 2025.

Photo 2.11: Photo point 2 on November 13, 2025.

Photo 2.12: Photo point 2 on March 20, 2026.

Area 3: Photo Monitoring

Photo 3.1: Photo point 3 shows baseline conditions for Area 3. Nonnative species cover in Area 3 is estimated at 85%. The most abundant nonnative species include Tocolote thistle, crown daisy, Italian ryegrass, and slender wild oat. *Note: previous reports incorrectly labeled this as photo point 4.*

Photo 3.2: Photo point 3 on September 27, 2023. Nonnative species cover in Area 3 is estimated at 85%. Most nonnative species have senesced. *Note: previous reports incorrectly labeled this as photo point 4.*

Photo 3.3: Photo point 3 on November 14, 2023. Dethatching of Area 3 occurred on November 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 2023.

Photo 3.4: Photo point 3 on March 8, 2024.

Photo 3.5: Photo point 3 on June 20, 2024.

Photo 3.6: Photo point 3 on August 8, 2024.

Photo 3.7: Photo point 3 on December 17, 2024.

Photo 3.8: Photo point 3 on March 10, 2025.

Photo 3.9: Photo point 3 on June 24, 2025

Photo 3.10: Photo point 3 on September 4, 2025

Photo 3.11: Photo point 3 on November 13, 2025

Photo 3.12: Photo point 3 on March 20, 2026.

Area 4: Photo Monitoring

Photo 4.1: Photo point 4 shows baseline conditions for Area 4. Nonnative species cover in Area 4 is estimated at 90%. The most abundant nonnative species include Tocolote thistle, black mustard (*Brassica nigra*), crown daisy (*Glebionis coronaria*), and Mediterranean stork's bill. *Note: previous reports incorrectly labeled this as photo point 3.*

Photo 4.2: Photo point 4 on September 27, 2023. Nonnative species cover in Area 4 is estimated at 90%. Most nonnative species have senesced. *Note: previous reports incorrectly labeled this as photo point 3.*

Photo 4.3: Photo point 4 on November 14, 2023. Dethatching of Area 4 occurred on October 25th, 26th and 20th, 2023. *Note: previous reports incorrectly labeled this as photo point 3.*

Photo 4.4: Photo point 4 on March 8, 2024.

Photo 4.5: Photo point 4 on June 20, 2024.

Photo 4.6: Photo point 4 on August 8, 2024.

Photo 4.7: Photo point 4 on December 17, 2024

Photo 4.8: Photo point 4 on March 10, 2025.

Photo 4.9: Photo point 4 on June 24, 2025.

Photo 4.10: Photo point 4 on September 4, 2025.

Photo 4.11: Photo point 4 on November 13, 2025.

Photo 4.12: Photo point 4 on March 20, 2026.

Additional Photos:

A patch of San Diego ambrosia intermixed with tarplant. Photo taken on March 20, 2026.

A close-up of San Diego ambrosia. Photo taken on March 20, 2026.

San Diego thornmint seedings being watered using a clean “water-only” back sprayer on February 6, 2026.

Crews hand weeding around tarplant seedlings on January 20, 2026.

Crews hand weeding along edges of dense tarplant patches in Area 4 on March 20, 2026.

Some Otay tarplant were observed flowering on March 20, 2026.

SDMMP Project Page

This quarterly report will be added to the Dennery Canyon Rare Plant Restoration Project Page on the SDMMP website on 04/21/2026.

Performance Measures

Project performance measures are included in the attached Excel workbook.