

**San Diego Association of Governments
El Monte Preserve Bat Hotel Project
Earth Discovery Institute
Final Report
Project Period: 05/02/2023 – 09/13/2024
Submission Date: July 15, 2024
SANDAG Contract Number: S1125486**

Executive Summary

Include a brief introduction describing the grant project, methodology for completing the project, and project goals and objectives. Summarize any applicable results and successes, as well as any significant conclusions that can be made from the project (i.e. additional management needed, long-term monitoring required, etc.).

Please note that executive summaries for short-term threat reduction projects will likely be less extensive due to the shortened timeframe and complexity of the project. However, an executive summary is still required in the final report.

The Bat Hotel Project, located within the El Monte Ecological Preserve in Lakeside, California, successfully achieved its specified goals within the project period. The project aimed to address the decline of locally declining bat species, including Townsend's big-eared and pallid bat, by creating a long-term roost site, developing replicable building plans for future use, and engaging the public in bat conservation efforts.

The El Monte Preserve's attributes, such as its proximity to the San Diego River, year-round water source, optimal foraging conditions, and restricted public access, made it an ideal location for the Bat Hotel. Through collaborative efforts with de Boer Engineering, the Bat Hotel was constructed and installed, providing potential roosting habitat for vulnerable bat species. Replicable building plans were shared online, enabling other land managers to create similar roosting structures.

Five public engagement events were held at the El Monte Ecological Preserve, engaging 78 community members and raising awareness about bat ecology and conservation. Information about the project was disseminated through social media channels and EDI's website, engaging several hundred people and extending the project's reach.

The project's success contributes to the conservation and recovery of MSP species by supporting essential roosting and foraging habitats for vulnerable bat species. Ongoing monitoring of the Bat Hotel and continued public engagement efforts will ensure the project's long-term success and support for bat conservation.

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Final Report Overview

PLEASE DO NOT CHANGE OR ALTER THE FORMATTING OF THIS DOCUMENT!

SANDAG has developed a standardized grant monitoring and tracking program for the Environmental Mitigation Program (EMP) Land Management Grant Program. The purpose is to collect information on individual projects and the grant program as a whole for reporting to the Regional Habitat Conservation Taskforce, SANDAG policy advisory committees, and the SANDAG Board of Directors. SANDAG monitors grantees through invoices, progress reports, performance measures, and designated photograph points. These standardized reporting templates and instructions for submittal are included below.

Table of Contents Instructions

To use the automatic **Table of Contents**:

- First add all of your data to the *Project Tasks, Conclusions, Geographic Information System (GIS), Photographs, Figures, and Appendices* sections.
- When you are finished adding, removing, or editing *Work Performed by Task, Conclusions, GIS, Photographs, Figures, and Appendices* sections, simply click once on the **Table of Contents**.
- Then click *Update the Table* in the upper left-hand corner of the Table.
 - A window will open for you to choose to update just the page numbers or the entire table, choose to **update the entire table**.
- The Table will automatically update the headers and page numbers from the information you inputted in the rest of the report.

**Each header will be hyperlinked to the corresponding page for easier access.*

Please do not manually update the Table of Contents. It will automatically update when you add, remove, or edit the Work Performed by Task templates below on page 4 and click update the entire table on the Table of Contents.

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Project Background

Provide an in-depth background on the project including:

- Project Setting: project site size, preserve name, preserve location.
- The need and how the project pertains to the goals and objectives specified in the MSP Roadmap (<https://sdmmp.com/portal.php>; <https://sdmmp.com/tracker.php>).
- Project location and site description.
- How does the project anticipate addressing the issue(s) identified (methods/approach to be used)?

**Use sub-headings as necessary to organize this section.*

Project Setting

The Bat Hotel Project is situated within the El Monte Ecological Preserve, along the upper San Diego River in Lakeside, an unincorporated community in San Diego County, California. This property falls within the County Subarea Plan Area, specifically the Metro-Lakeside-Jamul Segment. The El Monte Preserve is owned and managed by the Endangered Habitats Conservancy, a nonprofit land trust organization dedicated to acquiring, managing, monitoring, and maintaining land in Southern California for habitat protection and restoration, agricultural preservation, and other conservation purposes. Established in 2005, the Conservancy oversees approximately 10,000 acres of conserved open space lands within the County Subarea Plan Preserve, including the 142-acre El Monte Preserve.

Several features make the El Monte Preserve an ideal location for the proposed project:

- **Proximity to the San Diego River:** The preserve is adjacent to a section of the river.
- **Year-round Water Source:** The preserve contains a pond that retains water throughout the year.
- **Optimal Foraging Conditions:** The area includes flat, open spaces suitable for foraging.
- **Restricted Public Access:** The preserve is closed to the public, minimizing human disturbance.
- **Ongoing Habitat Restoration:** Beginning in February 2022, a 15-acre cactus scrub restoration project, funded by the Wildlife Conservation Board through the State's Local Assistance Grants Program, at El Monte Ecological Preserve, adjacent to the bat hotel. Cactus scrub is a preferred foraging habitat for pallid bats.

These attributes collectively support the Bat Hotel Project, enhancing conservation efforts and contributing to the preservation of critical bat habitats.

Project Goals

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The Bat Hotel project aims to support the recovery of locally declining bat species through the following objectives:

1. **Establishing a Long-term Roost Site:** Create a thermally stable roost site, or "bat hotel," on the El Monte Preserve that will provide a habitat for bats for 50-75 years.
2. **Developing Replicable Building Plans:** Design building plans for the "bat hotel" that can be replicated and used as a prototype on other conserved lands.
3. **Public Engagement and Education:** Engage and educate the public about the ecological importance and conservation value of bats online and through in-person educational events.

Project Needs

Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) was historically described as "widely and commonly distributed from the seacoast to the desert" in San Diego County (Kruttsch 1948, as quoted in Stokes 2018). This species was found wherever suitable roosting places were available, showing no preference for any specific vegetation. As an obligate cave-roosting species, Townsend's big-eared bat typically roosts in caves and cave-like structures, including abandoned mines and other man-made structures. In San Diego County, its range is strongly associated with the presence of caves and boulder habitats. However, surveys conducted in 2017 detected only one Townsend's big-eared bat colonial roost site within the MSCP Plan Area (Stokes 2018).

Similarly, the pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) was once considered "widely and commonly distributed west of the divide" in San Diego County (Kruttsch 1948, as quoted in Stokes 2018). Pallid bats are known for their high fidelity to large, long-used roost sites. Of the 12 known historic colony sites in San Diego County, all of which were in man-made structures, none remain. In the past decade, only two new colonial roosts have been documented, both in vulnerable settings on private, non-conserved land (Stokes 2018).

The Townsend's big-eared and the pallid bat are California Species of Special Concern. Mr. Stokes, Wildlife Biologist and local bat expert from the San Diego Natural History Museum, has detected both at El Monte Ecological Preserve. This project addresses the MSP goals of protecting Townsend's big-eared bat and pallid bat diurnal, nocturnal, and maternity roosts from destruction and human disturbance. Additionally, it aims to enhance foraging habitats within commuting distance of nocturnal and maternity roosts to increase resilience to environmental and demographic variability, maintain genetic diversity, and improve long-term persistence (over 100 years).

Building roost habitats for these two species was identified as a 2022 management priority in the MSP Roadmap Transnet Management Priorities 2022-2026 document (SDMMP 2021). This project aligns with these priorities by providing essential roosting and foraging habitats, thereby contributing to the conservation and recovery of these vulnerable bat species.

Implementation

de Boer Engineering, working closely with Mr. Stokes, constructed the bat roosting structure. The goal was to create a durable, low-maintenance, and cost-efficient "bat hotel." This prototype is envisioned for replication on other suitable preserves throughout the MSCP Plan Area, contributing to a long-term recovery strategy for bat species on a landscape scale.

The Bat Hotel measures 7.5 feet by 7.5 feet by 7.5 feet and consists of Styrofoam and wire mesh coated with a concrete/stucco-like material. These durable and lightweight materials offer an advantage over traditional bat concrete panels. Composite shingles cover the roof. The structure stands on 22-foot tall legs embedded in 4.5 feet of underground concrete, placing the hotel approximately 17.5 feet above ground level. The installation site is primarily bare ground, ensuring no direct disturbance to native vegetation.

Mr. Stokes, who has been conducting baseline bat surveys at El Monte since 2022, will continue to monitor bat activity at the El Monte Preserve and the Bat Hotel to verify its use by bats.

The Earth Discovery Institute facilitated five outreach events focused on local bats, their ecology, preferred habitats, and conservation efforts. During one of these events, Mr. Stokes presented his bat research, and handheld bat monitors were used to detect and observe bats.

The Endangered Habitats Conservancy has committed to maintaining the Bat Hotel as part of its long-term management responsibilities, funded by the Preserve's endowment. The hotel's design requires minimal long-term maintenance.

Project Goals

What are the objectives of the project/expected results? Were the project goals achieved? If not, explain why the project goals were not achieved or partially achieved.

Project Objectives and Expected Results

Objectives:

1. Create a thermally stable, long-term roost site, or Bat Hotel, at El Monte Ecological Preserve.
2. Develop replicable building plans for the Bat Hotel to serve as a prototype for other conserved lands.
3. Engage and educate the public about the ecological importance and conservation of bats.

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Achievement of Annual Goals:

We successfully achieved the primary goal of creating a long-term roost site within the first year. The roosting structure was designed and built through consultations between Earth Discovery Institute's Conservation Director and Executive Director, Mr. Stokes from the San Diego Natural History Museum, and Jim DeBoer from de Boer Engineering. The Bat Hotel was installed at the El Monte Ecological Preserve on January 27, 2024.

Five outreach events focusing on bat ecology, conservation, and monitoring were held at the El Monte Ecological Preserve on September 7, 2023, November 20, 2023, January 28, 2024, March 3, 2024, and May 2, 2024. These events engaged 78 individuals.

DeBoer Engineering provided replicable building plans, which are available to download on our website and the SDMMP project page.

Work Performed by Task

Task 1- Bat Hotel Construction and Installation

Budget: \$61,400 (from grant agreement)

Spent: \$61,400 (to date)

Match for Task: \$7,200 (to date)

Provide the exact start date(s), detailed the work completed for each task during the course of the year, any issues encountered, steps taken to address the issue(s), and percentage complete. Include your assessment per the Performance Measures outlined.

On August 15th, 2023, the EDI Conservation Director, Executive Director, and Mr. Stokes (bat expert at the San Diego Natural History Museum) met with Jim DeBoer of DeBoer Engineering at the San Diego Natural History Museum to discuss building plans and design for the Bat Hotel. The EDI Conservation Director also met with Jim DeBoer on 8/9, 9/8, 9/11, 9/14, and 9/20 to further discuss the design and building plans. On September 7th, Jim DeBoer and the EDI Conservation Director met with Gafcon to ensure labor compliance.

In September 2023, Jim DeBoer gathered the required building materials, and work on the Bat Hotel began in October 2023. On November 1st and December 20th, 2023, the EDI Conservation Director met with Mr. Stokes and Jim DeBoer at Jim DeBoer's workshop in Vista, CA, to review building progress and advise on the design. On January 12th, the EDI Conservation Director met with Gafcon to discuss labor compliance requirements. On January 17th, the EDI Conservation Director met with Jim DeBoer, Drew Stokes, and the EHC Senior Land Manager at El Monte Ecological Preserve to prepare for the installation of the Bat Hotel. On January 27th, Jim DeBoer installed the Bat Hotel at the site. EHC provided the staff time required by the Senior Land Manager for consulting and preparation of the installation site as an in-kind match for this grant.

The construction and installation of the Bat Hotel took longer than expected, but they were completed well within the project deadline. Coordinating and communicating with the subcontractor, DeBoer Engineering presented challenges that required significant management by the EDI Conservation Director. These challenges were addressed through regular check-in phone calls and meetings to ensure the project was completed on time.

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DeBoer Engineering also provided EDI with building plans for easy replication of the Bat Hotel structure. These building plans are available on the EDI website and SDMMP project page for public access.

Task 1 is 100% completed.

Task 2- Bat Surveys, Structure Monitoring, and Data Analysis

Budget: \$4,560 (from grant agreement)

Spent: \$4,560

Match for Task: \$2,180

Provide summary as described in Task 1.

Mr. Stokes, the bat expert at the San Diego Natural History Museum, conducted baseline bat monitoring using anabats at the Bat Hotel site before the inception of this grant on 4/4/22, 7/18/22, 9/12/22, 11/18/22, and 5/15/23, and analyzed the results. During this period, 13 species of bats were recorded, six of which are California Species of Special Concern, including the Pallid Bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) and the Townsend's Big-Eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*). Mr. Stokes has continued his in-kind monitoring at the site during the performance of this grant, conducting monitoring using anabats on 12/7/23, 11/20/23, 1/19/24, 3/18/24, and 5/2/24. He has also analyzed the data, and again, 13 species of bats were observed. However, during this monitoring period, no Pallid Bats were observed. Instead, a new species, the Big Free-Tailed Bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*), was added to the species list, also a California Species of Special Concern.

The last two monitoring events took place after the Bat Hotel was installed. Although there was a lot of bat activity near the hotel, no bats were observed actively roosting in the structure. However, bat guano was noted on the structure wall below one of the panels, suggesting that some bats have started using the structure as a night roost. It can take several years for bats to start using a new roosting site. As such, Mr. Stokes is dedicated to continuing his monitoring at the Bat Hotel in the future to track bat activity closely and record any bats using the structure.

Task 2 is 100% complete.

Task 3- Bat Education and Outreach

Budget: \$4,250 (from grant)

Spent: \$4,250

Match for Task: \$0

Provide summary as described in Task 1.

Five outreach events focusing on bat ecology, conservation, and monitoring were held at the El Monte Ecological Preserve to engage and educate the public about local bat natural history. On September 7th, 2023, an event called "Bats, Birds, and Biodiversity" was held at El Monte Ecological Preserve, focusing on bats' roles in the ecosystem, threats to bats, the Bat Hotel, and biodiversity. Thirteen people attended the event. On November 20th, 2023, a public Bat Monitoring Event was held at El Monte Ecological Preserve, concentrating on bat conservation. This event demonstrated active anabats, and a handheld bat monitor was utilized to track bats

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and UV lights to find scorpions, one of the pallid bats' preferred prey. Fifteen members of the public attended.

The day after the Bat Hotel was installed, a "Bats and Birds" event was held at the site, attended by 20 members of the public. This event showcased the Bat Hotel, taught participants about bats, and provided an opportunity to observe migratory birds visiting the El Monte Preserve. On March 3rd, EDI held a "Bats and Blooms" event at the Preserve, focusing on the Bat Hotel, bat conservation, and bats' role as flower pollinators. Ten people attended. Mr. Stokes participated in our May 2nd Bat Monitoring Event, which 18 people attended. Mr. Stokes discussed local bats, used handheld bat monitors and spotlights to observe bats, and highlighted the Bat Hotel.

These five public events engaged 78 community members. The EDI Conservation Director created educational materials about bats for these events and a permanent sign on the bat hotel explaining the structure and its importance. The EDI webpage was expanded to include information on bat conservation and the Bat Hotel project. Several social media posts about the project and bats have engaged several hundred people. EDI has over 1,800 followers on Facebook and over 800 followers on Instagram.

Task 3 is 100% completed.

Task 4- Project Management / Administrative / Reporting

Budget: \$7,630 (from grant)

Spent: \$7,630

Match for Task: \$0

Provide summary as described in Task 1.

The EDI Conservation Director, Executive Director, and Office Administrator have been preparing and submitting quarterly invoices and progress reports throughout the project. Quarterly report and invoice 1 were submitted on July 21, 2023, followed by Quarterly report and invoice 2 on October 12, 2023. Quarterly report and invoice 3 were submitted on January 11, 2024, and Quarterly progress report and invoice 4 were submitted on March 27, 2024. The final report and invoice will be submitted in early July, ahead of the deadline of July 21, 2024.

Task 4 is 100% completed.

**Add additional tasks as necessary outlined in the grant agreement by copying the formatting of Tasks 1-3 and paste to edit and represent additional tasks. If tasks include multiple locations, use sub-headers to separate work performed.*

Photographs & Figures

Photographs and figures are invaluable! Please include photos/videos in the final report and any figures (if applicable). Both photos and figures may be included throughout the document under corresponding tasks or at the end following the Discussion/Conclusion section and are required to be submitted as separate files from the Word/PDF document. Photographs taken at the same place or photographic points (photo-points) throughout the grant period assist SANDAG staff in tracking the project's progress over time.

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It is required that **Photographs include:**

- A before and after comparison sequence from the start to the completion of the project for photo points.
- A brief description of the corresponding tasks, date, and activity in the photograph.
- **A copy of each photograph included in the report submitted in a .jpeg or .png file format.**

It is required that **Figures include:**

- A caption with a brief description.



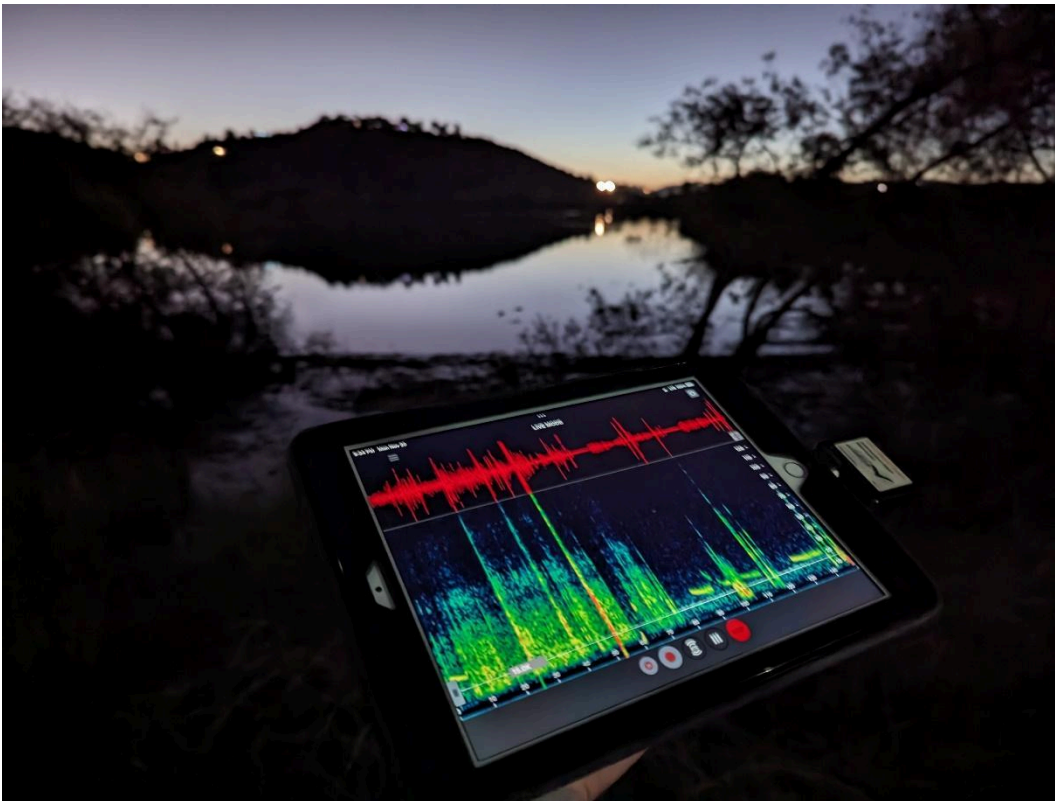
Bats, Birds, and Biodiversity Event held at El Monte Ecological Preserve on 7/11/23.

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Bat Monitoring Event held for the public on 11/21/23.



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Handheld bat monitor used during the public Bat Monitoring Event held on 11/21/23.



Bat Hotel structure under construction during EDI Conservation Director and Mr. Stokes visit to DeBoer Engineering's workshop on 12/20/2023.



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Installation of the Bat Hotel at El Monte Ecological Preserve on 1/27/24.



Bat Hotel after installation at El Monte Ecological Preserve.



Bats and Birds Event held at El Monte Ecological Preserve on 1/28/24.



Permanent signage on the Bat Hotel.



Bat Monitoring Event held with Mr. Stokes at El Monte Ecological Preserve on 5/2/24.

Conclusions

Provide overall conclusion for the entire project.

- Was it successful and did it accomplish the specified goals?
- What could have been done differently to improve the project outcome?
- How have the results contributed to the conservation of MSP species and has it enhanced recovery/prevented further decline?
- What work still needs to be done?
- What are the future management recommendations and how can they be accomplished?

The project successfully accomplished its specified goals, including installing a thermally stable, long-term roost site, the Bat Hotel, at El Monte Ecological Preserve. This structure provides potential roosting habitat for up to approximately 3200 bats, including the Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*) and the pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), both of which are identified as management priorities in the MSP Roadmap Transnet Management Priorities 2022-2026 document. Replicable building plans have been shared on the EDI website and the SDMMP page, enabling other land managers to create similar roosting structures on their lands. Additionally, EDI effectively engaged and educated the public about the ecological importance and conservation value of bats through five public engagement events, online social media posts, and website content, raising awareness about bat conservation.

The project contributes to the conservation and recovery of MSP species by providing essential roosting and foraging habitats for vulnerable bat species. This effort aligns with management priorities by supporting the ecological needs of Townsend's big-eared bat and the pallid bat, thereby enhancing their recovery and preventing further decline.

A more specific work plan could have improved project efficiency and simplified management, ensuring all tasks were clearly defined and executed smoothly. However, the project goals were successfully met within the set deadlines.

Ongoing monitoring of the Bat Hotel is essential to determine the timeline for bat occupancy and identify which species use the structure for roosting. Regular checks by EDI staff, Mr. Stokes, and EHC staff will ensure the Bat Hotel remains a viable habitat. Monitoring the structure's robustness and sharing data with other entities interested in installing large-scale bat roosts will provide valuable insights. Additionally, maintaining and expanding public engagement efforts will foster ongoing community support and awareness for bat conservation.

Geographical Information Systems Data

Please provide GIS data or mapping if applicable to the project. If GIS data or maps are included:

- Spatial data should accompany all Performance Measures as either a point, line, polygon, or list of coordinates.
- Spatial data should be attached to San Diego Management and Monitoring Program's (SDMMP's) website project page and shared publicly except when it is absolutely necessary to keep private. *If the data needs to be private, please reach out to (smccutcheon@usgs.gov) or Emily Perkins (eperkins@usgs.gov).*
- Spatial data should be provided as either a shapefile, KML/KMZ, or spreadsheet of coordinates.

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- Treated or planted areas should be tracked as points or polygons.
 - Fencing or trails should be tracked as lines.
- Spatial data should have the following attributes:
 - Date of Activity,
 - Type of Activity,
 - Area or Length Completed,
 - Goal Area or Length, and
 - Any notes specific to the activity.

Not applicable to project S1125486.

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SDMMP Project Page

To complete the grant requirements, your Final Report (along with all annual or interim reports) must be added to your project's Project Page on the SDMMP website. Add any necessary photographs to the photo carousel and fill out the photograph information. Please contact Sarah McCutcheon (smccutcheon@usgs.gov) or Emily Perkins (eperkins@usgs.gov) if you are having trouble accessing or editing your project page.

The SDMMP Project Page for this project has been updated, and all reports, photographs, and building plans have been added.

Performance Measures Instructions

Grantee's performance will be measured against the Performance Measures (Exhibit D: Grant Agreement) during the term of the project. More details on Performance Measures and Grant Recovery Plans are outlined in the Grant Agreement.

To transfer the **Project Performance Measures Excel Spreadsheet** to the Final Report:

- Copy the Excel icon located under the *Project Performance Measures* section in your Quarterly Progress Report.
- Open the Final Report Template and under the *Project Performance Measures* section, paste the Excel Icon.
 - The excel spreadsheet icon will appear and when double-clicked, will open the most up-to-date version of the *Project Performance Measures*.

Performance Measures

Please include the Project's Performance Measures with the cumulative data from the entire project in order to complete the grant requirements.

Insert Excel Icon Spreadsheet here

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Outreach Events & Volunteer Hours								
Proposed Total Outreach Events	Total Outreach Events	Percent Proposed Total Outreach Events	Proposed Total Volunteer Hours	Total Volunteer Hours	Percent of Proposed Total Volunteer Hours			
5.00	5.00	100 %			0 %			
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Appendices

As necessary, please include any additional materials as separate appendices and reference them in the report as needed. Examples may include outreach materials, management plans, data sets, etc.

Not applicable to project S1125486.

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SDMMP and SANDAG will be collecting specific data from each grant project in order to update the *Status of the Regional Preserve System in Western San Diego County*. Information collected will become available on SDMMP's Dashboard.

- Please fill out the spreadsheet by simply double-clicking the *State of Preserve Monitoring* chart.
 - The excel sheet will open up and allow you to input data. Once you are finished inputting the data into the excel sheet, scroll the excel sheet to the top with the headers displayed. Then simply click once on the grey space to the right of the excel sheet to return to the Word document to resume editing.

[illegible]

Definitions

- **Management Strategic Plan (MSP):** [The Management and Monitoring Strategic Plan for Conserved Lands in Western San Diego County: A Strategic Habitat Conservation Roadmap](#) (or simply "MSP Roadmap" or "MSP") is a comprehensive, landscape-scale adaptive management and monitoring framework for prioritized species and vegetation communities in western San Diego County.
- **Habitat Type:** Please select from one of the MSP listed habitats. If the habitat type is not listed, please do not select from the dropdown and manually type in the habitat type name. Provide acreage by specific habitat types, **do not combine multiple habitat types with one acreage calculation.**
- **Habitat Enhancement through Invasive Species Control (acres):** removing invasive plant or animal species to improve ecological function.
- **Habitat Created/Restored (acres):** establishing habitat where it did not exist before; returning a damaged site to a natural or native state.
- **Fencing (feet):** fencing installed for grant purposes to lessen a threat or stressor to habitat
- **Acres Requiring Management:** activities such as vegetation thinning, invasive plant treatment, etc. that are necessary for maintaining previous enhancement, restoration, or creation efforts.
- **Acres Requiring Monitoring:** any regular monitoring conducted to establish baseline and/or determine success of grant project.
- **Sensitive Species:** MSP SL, SO and SS Species (https://sdmmp.com/msp_doc.php; Section 2.8 and 2.9; Table V1.1-1) that the management actions of the project are specifically designed to benefit to help ensure the species persists over the long-term on Conserved Lands in the Management Strategic Plan Area.
- **Sensitive Species Planted:** List any sensitive plant species that were seeded/planted for this project
- **Sensitive Species Benefitted:** List any other sensitive species that will or already have directly benefitted from the project