

River Conservation Opportunities Fund

Conservation is often a matter of responding to an opportunity.

The challenge is that often before the River Park Foundation can respond to this opportunity, the property has been sold. Our nonprofit isn't in a position to have a large line of credit and doesn't have a large cash reserve. We wish we did.

We do have a track record of being awarded grants for acquisitions. This is a double-edged sword as these grants often require the River Park Foundation to acquire the property and then submit invoices to be reimbursed. Sometimes these grants retain 10% of the award until the project is entirely completed, final reports and all!

Conservation is critical. Opportunities can be once in a lifetime and really be the difference between saving a species or an essential wildlife linkage. Sometimes we just can't wait!

So here is where you come in!

Help create the River Conservation Opportunities Fund.

Our initial goal is \$100,000.

Fund Details:

San Diego River Conservation Opportunities Fund works like this: when we become aware of an opportunity to conserve high priority lands, we use the Fund to help acquire the land or an option on the property until we receive grants, donations or other funds for the acquisition. In this way, the River Park Foundation can act quickly to OPPORTUNITIES that became available.

When we receive the grant reimbursement or the donation that was dedicated for the project, we will then replenish the Fund. Then we will go on to the next opportunity!

In this way, conservation happens when the opportunity becomes available! This is truly the gift that keeps on giving. The Fund principle, your donation, will only be used on projects that there is a high likelihood that we will be reimbursed. Your donation will only be used for the acquisition cost, not for program costs or mysterious overhead costs – just the direct cost of the buying the land!

Once the funds are reimbursed, we will use them again for another critical wildlife conservation project. Imagine helping to first save a critical wildlife riparian corridor and then oak woodlands and on and on...

As a bonus, any investment revenue from the fund will go directly to the expenses of our conservation fund and helping to manage the properties conserved.

This is a model which has been used by The Conservation Fund and others. By creating a fund dedicated to the San Diego River Watershed, we can control the timing and the surety of receiving these vital funds and the ability to respond to opportunity.

Example #1:

A landowner approaches unexpectedly and indicates they are planning to sell their land. They want to give us the first opportunity to purchase the property, but they can only wait for a limited time before they put the property on the market publicly. We have 60 days to get the property under an option to purchase. The fund would be used to put the property in option while we raise the funds to complete the acquisition.

Example #1:

The San Diego River Park Foundation was awarded a \$1 million grant by the State of California for its land acquisition program around El Capitan Reservoir. The grant works on a reimbursement basis that can take six months or more. When a 40 acre property went on the market, the Foundation needed to be able to jump! The purchase price was \$115,500. We had \$10,000 in our acquisition fund for an earnest deposit. But we didn't have the balance of the funds. Our choices were to raise the funds or to try to secure a loan and pay the associated interest costs. If we had \$100,000 in the Opportunities Fund we would not have to pay the 6.5% interest our nonprofit would be asked to pay by a local bank or funder.

Example #2:

The San Diego River Park Foundation was approached by someone interested in donating a piece of property. Before we could accept the property we needed to do a survey, conduct a phase one analysis and other work. We needed to raise the funds to do this import diligence prior to accepting the property. The Fund would have allowed us to perform these activities while we did the fundraising to reimburse these costs. In this way, the person considering donating their property can get a speedy response to their offer and we can focus on the important part of meeting their needs and doing important conservation work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please contact,

Rob Hutsel

Executive Director, The San Diego River Park Foundation

619-297-7380 or rob@sandiegoriver.org