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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas
52nd District, California

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL MARKETS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL
INSTITUTIONS AND MONETARY POLICY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
ILLICIT FINANCE, AND INTERNATIONAL
FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

I am requesting funding for the “Sweetwater Park Coastal Salt Marsh Buffer” project in fiscal year 2025, in the amount of \$650,000. The entity to receive the funding is the Unified Port District of San Diego, located at 3165 Pacific Hwy, San Diego, CA 92101.

Sweetwater Park is a nature-focused park centered on native habitat restoration, nature-play, and wildlife viewing opportunities in the Chula Vista Bayfront area. This project would restore native coastal habitats, enhance connectivity between wildlife refuge units, and protect our coastal communities from sea-level rise, erosion, and coastal flooding around Sweetwater Park. The creation of a salt marsh buffer zone around Sweetwater Park will enhance the resilience and richness of the area, remove invasive species, and prevent their spread into the adjacent park.

The Chula Vista Bayfront is a historically underserved community that lacks adequate public park and open spaces. It is home to some of San Diego’s most vital coastal wetland habitat areas, which protect and provide for native fish, birds, and other wildlife, including those that are endangered, at risk, and/or dependent on the unique ecosystems within San Diego Bay. The Chula Vista Bayfront also contains several acres of environmentally degraded habitat, which are the focus of this proposal, and are ideally situated for coastal salt marsh and upland habitat restoration.

This project will provide multiple benefits including vital habitat restoration benefits that will protect the Refuge from future sea level rise impacts. This project also seeks to expand habitat connectivity by removing multiple acres of invasive species, specifically those rated as moderate and highly invasive by the California Invasive Plant Council. This project will provide a range of ecosystem services through the creation and restoration of tidal channels, mud flats, eelgrass, salt marsh, and coastal sage scrub and maritime succulent scrub habitat to improve water quality, carbon sequestration, erosion control along the shoreline, and mitigate future flood impacts from sea level rise. This will in turn increase native habitat acreage to support migratory birds and species endemic to southern California.

This project is a good use of taxpayer resources because it will restore a former industrial-use area into a thriving coastal ecosystem for the adjacent underserved community to view and benefit from its correspondent ecosystem services.

The project has a federal nexus because provided is for purposes authorized by Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. § 1451 et seq.).

This project has broad support from organizations and agencies operating in the community, including the City of Chula Vista, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex, the Living Coast Discovery Center, and the San Diego Audubon Society.

I certify that I have no financial interest in this project, and neither does anyone in my immediate family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Juan Vargas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress