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U.S. EPA awards \$90,000 to San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy for hands-on environmental education in Escondido Elementary Schools

SAN FRANCISCO – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has awarded an environmental education grant of \$90,000 to San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy in Encinitas, Calif., to improve environmental science education by focusing on nature and conservation through a watershed project.

“We’re delighted to support this project and reach over 1500 students in protecting the Escondido Creek watershed,” said Alexis Strauss, EPA’s Acting Regional Administrator for the Pacific Southwest. “This project will unleash much youthful energy and creativity in support of our local watersheds.”

“As we head into San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy’s 30th Anniversary, we are proud to be recognized for our conservation education program,” said Doug Gibson, the Conservancy’s Executive Director/ Principal Scientist. “Support from EPA will allow us to instill a conservation ethic among thousands of elementary students for a cleaner and brighter future for all.”

The Our Living Watershed project will provide environmental education to children in grades 3, 4 and 5 at four underserved elementary schools in Escondido, Calif., through field trips, family weekend stewardship events, professional development for teachers, and advanced education trainings for docents and teacher guides.

The program is expected to reach 1,500 students, more than 50 teachers, and 300 family members of students. San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy will be partnering with Central Elementary School, Felicita Elementary School, San Diego Gas & Electric, State of California Coastal Conservancy, the California Coastal Commission and the Escondido Charitable Foundation, an affiliate of The San Diego Foundation, to complete the project.

The Escondido Creek watershed faces many environmental challenges, including improper waste/oil disposal, runoff, trash and litter, sewage and climate change. Many of these challenges can be effectively addressed through educational programs that teach kids how to care for their environment from an early age. The three overarching goals of the project are to instill a life-long conservation ethic among grade school youth to connect them with nature, develop the Environmental Education skills of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy’s volunteer docents and partnering teachers, and to protect the Escondido Creek watershed.

Since 1992, EPA has distributed between \$2 million and \$3.5 million in grant funding per year, for a total of over \$68 million supporting more than 3,600 projects. The EPA's Pacific Southwest Regional Office received over 75 applications this year, and the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy project is one of four projects in the region receiving an environmental education grant.

This highly competitive grants program supports environmental education projects that increase public awareness about environmental issues and provide participants with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. The program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate or disseminate environmental education practices, methods or techniques.

More about EPA environmental grants: <http://www.epa.gov/education/environmental-education-ee-grants>.

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