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National Innovation Grant Supports Community Efforts to Conserve Endangered Californian Habitat

Support Will Help Residents Landscape with Native Drought-tolerant Plants

One of 48 newly-announced *TogetherGreen* national innovation grants will enable San Diego Audubon Society to help community members reduce their water usage and create more scrub habitat for wildlife by promoting native, drought-tolerant landscapes over water-intensive grass lawns.

Southern California's coastline, once covered by coastal sage scrub, is now largely developed. Restricted to only 10% of its former range as a result of increasing urbanization and sprawl, the critically endangered sage scrub ecosystem - and the many local animals and birds that depend on it - is in trouble. By making informed decisions about what species to choose for their yards, Californians can make a big difference in saving this habitat.

The \$20,000 grant will power a partnership between San Diego Audubon Society, the City of Chula Vista Department of Conservation & Environmental Services, National Wildlife Federation and San Diego Flyway Cities Coalition to work with community residents and project partners to improve their own lawns as well as identify a community greenway that will house a habitat demonstration garden.

“This project brings together a lot of our local priorities – reducing water use, creating beautiful and sustainable parks and gardens, and preserving nature,” said Shannon Dougherty, Conservation Coordinator of the San Diego Audubon Society. “This grant in particular should help residents and families work with local governments and civic organizations to create places that everyone can enjoy, whether it’s a front yard or a city park.”

The habitat garden will serve as the setting for a workshop series that aims to raise awareness, build public support, and provide hands-on training to residents interested in learning how to landscape their own yards for wildlife. Through outreach, education, and engagement, San Diego Audubon will link community members with on-the-ground conservation action, saving water and wildlife alike.

“We are so excited to partner with Audubon to actively engage the community in sustainable landscaping. This will directly benefit the community of Chula Vista and will serve as an important model for expanding environmentally appropriate landscaping practices throughout Chula Vista and greater San Diego County,” said Cheryl Cox, Mayor of the City of Chula Vista.

“The project builds upon the success of the City's NatureScape program which provides on-site assessments, technical assistance and certification for sustainable residential and commercial landscape design throughout the community. The project also complements the City's goal of becoming a NWF Certified Community Habitat,” said Michael Meacham, Director of Conservation and Environmental Services, City of Chula Vista.

The San Diego Audubon Society innovation grant is part of \$1.1 million awarded by the *TogetherGreen* initiative this year. Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to fund

conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities that significantly benefit the environment. Grantees were selected from scores of applicants across America. Funds were awarded to Audubon organizations that demonstrated exceptional innovation in working with other groups on projects that will produce tangible benefits for environmental quality.

“Conserving habitat through hands-on efforts is critical, and we’re proud to be able to help San Diego communities achieve that,” said *TogetherGreen* Project Manager Judy Braus.

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About *TogetherGreen*

Audubon and Toyota launched the five-year *TogetherGreen* initiative in 2008 to build the promise of a greener, healthier future through innovation, leadership and volunteerism. Nearly 90 projects totaling more than \$2.5 million dollars have received Innovation Grants to protect land, water, and energy resources nationwide. For more information, visit www.togethergreen.org.

About Audubon

Now in its second century, Audubon connects people with birds, nature and the environment that supports us all. Our national network of community-based nature centers, chapters, scientific, education, and advocacy programs engages millions of people from all walks of life in conservation action to protect and restore the natural world. To learn about Audubon’s nationwide efforts to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, visit www.audubon.org

About Toyota

Toyota (NYSE: TM) established operations in the United States in 1957 and currently operates 10 manufacturing plants. Toyota is committed to being a good corporate citizen in the communities where it does business and believes in supporting programs with long-term sustainable results. Toyota supports numerous organizations across the country, focusing on education, the environment and safety. Since 1991, Toyota has contributed more than \$464 million to philanthropic programs in the U.S. For more information on Toyota's commitment to improving communities nationwide, visit www.toyota.com/community.