

Conservation Technician Update

January 2026

The CDFW Cannabis Restoration Grant Program pre-submittal was completed on January 19th. This built on our initial pre-application and addressed nine pages of reviewer feedback from CDFW. The package included updated narrative sections, a revised budget spreadsheet, and maps of all eight project sites on MSHCP conservation lands. We also got letters of support from RCA and SAWA. If we get invited to submit the full application and it gets funded, this planning grant would set up a larger implementation grant for cannabis site remediation in the district. The application process has been a lot of back and forth with CDFW, but having clear feedback to work from made it manageable.

On January 30th we had a meeting at Greer Ranch with CDFW and G. Young from Murrieta Fire. This was a big step for the easement. The goal is to develop a long-term management plan that determines which activities work best for the habitat, including fire prevention. In the meantime, we are working within the easement constraints and coordinating with US Fish and Wildlife to do an initial cleanup of dead and dying vegetation, in collaboration with the Greer family. Having both CDFW and Murrieta Fire involved makes this a lot more workable. The conversation covered what kinds of activities we can do now versus what needs to wait for the management plan, and everyone seemed to be on the same page about priorities.

With the home hardening funding secured through IECF, I have been getting the program ready to actually launch. This month I put together the sign-up form for residents to request assessments, created a guide on local wildfire-resilient plants to hand out during assessments, and worked on advertising materials. The sign-up form went through a few iterations to make

sure we are collecting the right information without making it too long for people to actually fill out. The plant guide focuses on species that do well in our area and are relatively low maintenance, since that tends to be what residents are most likely to actually plant and maintain. In February I am attending a Cal Fire Qualified Entities workshop, which will certify me to use their defensible space and home hardening assessment platform. The certification means our assessments will meet the same standards as Cal Fire inspectors.

Monitoring continued as usual. I did homeless monitoring routes on January 7th and January 21st, both on the Temecula Creek and Lake Elsinore channels. Conditions have been stable. I also completed easement monitoring during this period. Another homeless monitoring route will happen the week of the board meeting. The channels have been relatively quiet compared to some months, which makes the monitoring quicker but also means less to report.

I spent a good amount of the second half of January on the WETA portion of the website. I added enhanced materials pages with more resources for producers, reorganized things so it is easier to navigate, and linked to CDFA materials. A lot of the work was just going through existing resources and figuring out how to present them in a way that makes sense. The website helps reach producers who cannot make it to farmers markets or events, so having it actually usable matters. I also attended the Murrieta Farmers Market on January 18th, and have scheduled 1-2 farmers market visits per month going forward.

On the Lake Elsinore cleanup, I have been visiting the site weekly this month to check if we can bring equipment in. It is looking like we might be able to get them in the week following the board meeting, but there is about a 30% chance of rain in the forecast so that could push things back.