

Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy



**PROPOSITION 68 GRANT PROGRAM**

Funded by the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and  
Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018

**Grant Guidelines**

Adopted November 19, 2018  
(Revised August 8, 2019)

Direct all inquiries, correspondence and grant applications to:

Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy  
73-710 Fred Waring Drive, Suite 112  
Palm Desert, CA 92260  
(760) 776-5026  
[www.cvmc.ca.gov](http://www.cvmc.ca.gov)

## I. Introduction

The Coachella Valley Mountains Conservancy (“Conservancy”) was established in 1991 by California Public Resources Code section 33501 to protect the natural and cultural resources of the Coachella Valley and its surrounding mountains, which include the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains and Sand to Snow National Monuments and portions of Joshua Tree National Park. The Conservancy has a history of working efficiently with state and federal agencies, Riverside County, local cities and tribes and numerous nonprofit organizations to preserve open space, wildlife, scarce water resources and historical artifacts through conservation land acquisition, habitat management or restoration, and educational and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Proposition 68, the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (“Proposition 68”), was enacted by the voters on June 6, 2018 to fund \$4 billion in public improvements throughout the state. The primary objectives of Proposition 68 are to expand public access to safe parks, wildlife preserves, trails and recreation areas, mitigate the effects of climate change and encourage water conservation and drought preparedness. To assist communities that have been historically underserved by outdoor recreational opportunities, Proposition 68 allocates a minimum of 20 percent of available funds to *severely disadvantaged communities*<sup>1</sup>, up to 10 percent for technical assistance to *disadvantaged communities*<sup>2</sup> and up to five percent for community access projects (such as transportation, programming, interpretative facilities and public education).

Chapter 8 of Proposition 68, entitled “State Conservancy, Wildlife Conservation Board, and Authority Funding,” allocates \$7,000,000 to the Conservancy for projects fulfilling the objectives above or otherwise implementing the Conservancy’s statutory mission. These Guidelines establish the Conservancy’s Strategic Master Plan required by section 80112 of Proposition 68 to identify priorities and criteria for selecting projects to fund and set forth the process for soliciting applications, evaluating proposals and awarding grants.

## II. Overview of the Conservancy Grant Program

The Conservancy CMVC has approximately \$4 million available for local assistance grants under its Prop 68 Grant Program. The minimum grant amount is \$2,500. The Conservancy plans to issue at least one request for proposals (“RFP”) in each fiscal year in which funding remains available, although applications will be accepted continuously. The RFP will be posted on the Conservancy’s website, and will be sent to local media, public agencies, tribes and nonprofit organizations. Conservancy staff will

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<sup>1</sup> Communities with median household incomes less than 60 percent of the statewide average.

<sup>2</sup> Communities with median household incomes less than 80 percent of the statewide average.

undertake extensive outreach to encourage applications from economically disadvantaged communities and areas underserved by recreational amenities.

### III. **Eligible Applicants**

State and local public agencies (including joint powers authorities), nonprofit organizations with 501(c)3 tax exempt status and tribes recognized by the state or federal governments.

### IV. **Strategic Master Plan for Use of Proposition 68 Funds**

The Conservancy has historically focused on acquiring, or funding the acquisition of, land for perpetual conservation in accordance with its statutory mission and the objectives of the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan (“CVMSHCP”). In addition, we have funded habitat restoration projects and small trail building projects, and since 2015, we have operated our Proposition 1 Grant Program which seeks to implement the California Water Action Plan in the Coachella Valley. In the course of our work, we have identified numerous needs in the Coachella Valley related to public recreation, historic preservation and climate change reduction which cannot be addressed with existing Conservancy bond funds.

(a) **Funding Priorities.** Projects that implement the following Conservancy objectives will be eligible for support from Proposition 68:

1. Enhancing access to outdoor recreation, including but not limited to:
  - a. Visitor-serving improvements (including buildings, athletic and visitor center facilities and landscaping), in parks, public open spaces or recreational areas;
  - b. Trails through urban or natural landscapes, whether for hiking, biking, walking or equestrian use;
  - c. Acquisition of land or restoration of natural features and habitat areas that expands public access; or
  - d. Community access projects, such as interpretive facilities or language services, disabled access improvements, transportation services, training or public education that focuses on natural resource management or land stewardship programs.<sup>3</sup>
2. Preserving cultural or historical resources, including but not limited to:
  - a. Stabilization or restoration of historically significant buildings, monuments or infrastructure features;

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<sup>3</sup> Pursuant to Department of Finance directives, only community access projects that qualify as capital improvements under bond law may be funded.

- b. Protection of archeological or cultural artifacts; or
  - c. Improvements, such as interpretive features, that provide education about habitat conservation, cultural artifacts or local history.
3. Responding to climate change, including but not limited to:
    - a. Restoration of open space or habitat areas to remove invasive plants that contribute to global warming, use excessive amounts of water or harm endangered or threatened species of plants or animals and replace them with indigenous plants;
    - b. Public improvements or facilities that contribute to a reduction in vehicle miles traveled, such as small electric vehicle or bike lanes, charging stations or public transit facilities or programs; or
    - c. Land use or management programs that prevent conversion of agricultural land to urban use, promote urban greening, enhance compost, grazing and fire prevention and similar practices.
  4. Protecting the open space, wildlife, scenic, biological, hydrologic, anthropological, cultural or recreational resources of the Coachella Valley in accordance with the Conservancy's statutory mission through other types of projects for which other Conservancy funding sources are not available.

- (b) **Disadvantaged Community Investment and Co-Benefits.** People who live in disadvantaged communities face health disparities due to poor air quality, exposure to harmful pollution, and lack of public amenities and services. The Conservancy seeks to invest in these areas to mitigate the disproportionately negative impacts to residents, particularly children and senior citizens. The Conservancy will allocate at least 20 percent of the funds available for projects serving severely disadvantaged communities, as well as additional funds to economically disadvantaged communities (as those terms are defined in footnotes 1 and 2) and other areas traditionally underserved by outdoor access or recreational amenities.

## V. Project Requirements

- (a) All projects must comply with applicable environmental review requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- (b) All applicants must agree to comply with the state audit requirements applicable to Proposition 68 funding, including that the grantee retain for at least three years following final payment, satisfactory financial records relating to the project and make them available to the Conservancy upon request.
- (c) All projects must comply with applicable federal, state and local permitting requirements.
- (d) Projects involving construction, demolition, restoration and similar activities must comply with prevailing wage requirements (except to the extent certified conservation corps or volunteer services are used), and if applicable, public contracting laws.

- (e) Any acquisitions must be from willing sellers for a price that does not exceed the fair market value of the property as determined by a Conservancy-approved appraisal, and the property acquired will be encumbered with a deed restriction in favor of the Conservancy that requires perpetual use of the property for conservation or other purposes consistent with the Conservancy's mission.
- (f) Projects are encouraged to include the California Conservation Corps or a certified conservation corps where feasible.
- (g) No funds will be granted to complete environmental mitigation requirements of other projects, except where the grant funds would support only aspects of the project that exceed the minimum mitigation requirements of the applicable permit condition.
- (h) Staff costs and expenses that are related to the funded project and are included in the approved project budget may be paid with grant funds.
- (i) Grantees whose projects are funded will have to execute a grant agreement with the Conservancy that includes all provisions required by Proposition 68 and state law, as well as the Conservancy's standard insurance and indemnification provisions. *(Copies available upon request.)*

## VI. **Application and Review Process**

Applications will be accepted continuously beginning January 1, 2019. The first step in the application process is for the applicant to complete the pre-application form. The pre-application form is included in the RFP and available on the Conservancy's website ("Pre-Application"). Conservancy staff will review the Pre-Application and then contact the applicant to discuss the project. Applicants whose projects are deemed eligible will be notified that they should complete the full application and narrative ("Full Application"). The Full Application components are set forth below, under "VI. Contents of Full Application." Applicants whose projects are appropriate for conservation corps participation should also use the [CORPS CONSULTATION PROCESS](#) located on the Conservancy's website prior to completing their application.

All Full Applications will be reviewed and evaluated for compliance with the Strategic Master Plan by staff (in consultation, where appropriate, with independent professionals with relevant expertise). Staff will then recommend grant awards for consideration by the Conservancy board. The board meetings are public in accordance with the Bagley Keene Act, and applicants may address the board regarding their applications.

Projects with scores of 80 points or more on the evaluation criteria described above will be eligible for funding, but the board retains discretion to reject any or all eligible projects. No final grant awards shall be made until compliance with CEQA has been achieved. The Conservancy resolution approving each award will include written findings detailing the objectives of the Strategic Master Plan that are met by the award.

## VII. **Contents of Full Application**

The Full Application consists of a form application and certification and a required written narrative not to exceed 10 pages (exclusive of exhibits such as photos, charts, schedules, staff resumes and support letters), that addresses the following:

1. **Project Description.** Provide a detailed explanation of the project, along with accompanying exhibits (e.g., conceptual designs, charts, etc.).
2. **Project Location.** Include a map with enough detail to allow a person unfamiliar with the area to locate the project, along with photos as needed to depict the current condition of the site as applicable. If the applicant does not own the land, please document site control or describe plan for obtaining it.
3. **Schedule.** List proposed estimated starting and completion dates, together with significant milestones. In the alternative, you may list the time periods required for each stage.
4. **Budget and Cost Effectiveness.** Detail the costs of the entire project and sources of all funds, including those requested from the Conservancy. Describe any use of the California Conservation Corps, volunteers or similar resources.
5. **Organizational Capacity.** Describe the applicant's staff capacity and record of accomplishing similar projects. Highlight local projects and achievements. Attach resumes of lead staff persons or contractors.
6. **Benefits to Underserved Communities.** If applicable, explain how the project will serve disadvantaged communities, severely disadvantaged communities or areas otherwise documented to be underserved by outdoor access or recreational amenities. Projects that are located in or adjacent to, and serve, a disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged community as defined by [CalEnviroScreen 3.0 tool](#) should document that in their application.
7. **Environmental Review.** To the extent possible, describe the proposed environmental review for the project. If you have considered whether the project qualifies for exemption under CEQA or has already been subject to environmental review for a larger project, provide the relevant exemption or project information.
8. **Project Sustainability.** Describe how the future of the project can be sustained to maximize the fulfillment of Proposition 68 objectives, including, ongoing maintenance and public access.
9. **Project Support.** Describe support anticipated from interested stakeholders, such as public agencies, nonprofit organizations, community groups, local businesses or landowners. If any significant opposition is expected, please describe that as well.
10. **Response to Project Evaluation Criteria.** Explain in detail how the project fulfills the project evaluation criteria set forth in the next section.

## VIII. Project Evaluation Criteria

Project applications will be assigned a score with a maximum of 100 points based on the following:

- (a) **Objectives.** The extent to which the project fulfills one or more objectives of the Strategic Master Plan set forth in Section IV above. (Up to 20 points.)
- (b) **Technical effectiveness and innovation.** Use of methods and techniques based on best available science, innovative and interdisciplinary approaches and demonstrated readiness to proceed with implementation. (Up to 10 points.)
- (c) **Cost Effectiveness.** Efficient use of funds and maximization of value. (Up to 10 points.)
- (d) **Leveraged financial support.** The ability of projects to leverage Conservancy funds by including funding or in kind contributions from other public agencies or private funding sources. (Up to 15 points.)
- (e) **Collaboration.** Private/public partnerships or cooperative projects among governmental agencies will be preferred, including use of the California Conservation Corps or certified community conservation corps in appropriate projects. (Up to 15 points.)
- (f) **Grantee capacity.** Applicants shall demonstrate relevant technical capability and a proven track record at implementing similar projects (Up to 10 points.)
- (g) **Local economic benefits.** The extent to which a project benefits severely economically disadvantaged communities or disadvantaged communities (as those terms are defined in footnotes 1 and 2) or other areas traditionally underserved by outdoor access or recreational amenities. (Up to 10 points.)
- (h) **Public and community support.** Evidence of a level of community and local stakeholder support. (Up to 5 points.)
- (i) **Consistency with Established Local Plans.** The extent to which a project contributes to the implementation of existing environmental, recreational, climate change and similar plans, such as the Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habit Conservation Plan, the Riverside county General Plan Open Space Element, the Northern Coachella Valley Trails Plan, the Desert Recreation District Master Plan, California 2030 Natural and Working Lands Climate Change Implement Plan. (Up to 5 points)

## IX. Further Information

Contact CVMC's office at (760) 776-5026.