FY26 Grant Application Summaries

Applicant: City of Cupertino
Project Name: Lawrence-Mitty Park and Trail Project
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $500,000.00
Project Summary: The City of Cupertino proposes to transform portions of the 7.83-acre Lawrence-Mitty site by repurposing blighted land into a new public park designed around an urban wildlands model prioritizing environmental stewardship, preservation of natural habitats and strengthening community connections to nature. Located along the west side of Lawrence Expressway, south of Interstate 280, and adjacent to Saratoga Creek in the City of Cupertino, the proposed project includes developing a 2.75-acre park with open space, enhanced native plantings of riparian and upland areas, soft surface trails (using existing trail corridor), play opportunities, shade, seating, and a berm with trees, as both a visual barrier to the expressway and for noise reduction for nesting birds and native wildlife. The larger project seeks to balance the goals of ecological restoration and access for outdoor recreation in an urban wildlands setting. Located on the eastern end of Cupertino, this project will create a publicly accessible open space, providing parkland, habitat restoration and community gathering space in a part of the city that currently has a park deficit. Through an extensive community visioning process, staff finalized a Story Trail conceptual design and obtained Cupertino city council approval in July 2024. To implement the community's vision, foster environmental stewardship and protect creek-adjacent habitats, the portion of the larger project proposed for funding by Valley Water will:

- Remediate soils that have been exposed to lead and pollutants
- Remove non-native plants and replace them with native riparian-conducive vegetation; preserve native trees
- Reduce impervious areas on the property
- Employ green infrastructure for pollution reduction and filtration of stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces
- Implement wildlife protection through thoughtful mitigation of impacts to and preservation of riparian and freshwater aquatic habitats
- Install park amenities for public use, resulting in improvement health and wellbeing for park visitors, while encouraging environmental stewardship through an urban wildland park

Applicant: City of San Jose
Project Name: Installing AMI Advanced Metering Infrastructure in San Jose
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $500,000.00
Project Summary: The San José Municipal Water System (SJMWS) provides drinking water to portions of the City of San José (City) across four major service areas: North San José/Alviso, Evergreen, Edenvale, and Coyote Valley. SJMWS is one of three retail water suppliers in the City. SJMWS provides potable and recycled water service to 27,000 metered connections with a service population of approximately 143,000

residents, which is roughly 12% of the City. As a critical utility within Silicon Valley, SJMWS is committed to delivering reliable, efficient, and sustainable water services to meet current and future demands. The implementation of an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system represents a major part of our strategy to enhance water conservation efforts, reduce water loss, and improve operational efficiency. This proposal seeks funding to support the full deployment of the AMI system across our service areas. The project will involve a full meter replacement of all water meters in the system as well as upgrading the meter reading technology from the current drive-by collection system to fully remote AMI.

Applicant: Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District
Project Name: Santa Cruz Kangaroo Rat Habitat Management Plan Implementation
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $500,000.00
Project Summary: Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) seeks Valley Water grant funding to implement strategies from the Habitat and Population Management Plan (HPMP) for the Santa Cruz kangaroo rat (SCKR; Dipodomys venustus venustus) within Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve (Sierra Azul) through a phased, adaptive management approach. The HPMP identifies strategies to protect, manage, and expand the Sierra Azul population of SCKR, a narrowly endemic species found within shrublands in the Santa Cruz Mountains and currently known to exist only in Sierra Azul and the Santa Cruz sandhills within Henry Cowell Redwoods State Park. The Santa Cruz kangaroo rat is a California Species of Special Concern and is considered critically imperiled due to its extremely limited distribution and ongoing habitat threats. The species is named for its unique bipedal locomotion, hopping on large hind legs like a kangaroo, and its endemic habitat in the Santa Cruz Sandhills. Population in Sierra Azul Open Space Preserve: Since SCKR was first detected in Sierra Azul in 2019, extensive camera trapping research has documented occurrences in eight areas that occupy approximately 44.5 acres within Sierra Azul, where the species occurs at low abundance compared to the Santa Cruz sandhills (Alinaeem et al. 2024, Hickman 2026). The process of ecological succession coupled with fire suppression has caused vegetation to encroach on limited habitat for this population of the critically imperiled SCKR within Sierra Azul, according to a 2024 Habitat Assessment report prepared for Midpen (Nomad 2024). SCKR occupies open montane chaparral habitats along ridgelines, dirt roads, and maintained fuel breaks, where sandy soils support burrowing and patchy vegetation provide space for movement and foraging. Midpen has most frequently observed SCKR along the Cathermola Road corridor, which extends from Loma Prieta Road to Lake Elsman, and within the former William’s property, approximately 2 km south of Mount Thayer (see the location map upload). Habitat Constraints and Threats: Ecological succession and decades of fire suppression have increased vegetation density, reducing the open conditions required by the species and limiting mobility, habitat connectivity, and population expansion. These changes have constrained the availability of suitable habitat and contributed to fragmentation across occupied areas. Studies and Pilot Findings: Since 2021, Midpen has collaborated with other experts and partners to advance understanding of SCKR distribution, habitat needs, and conservation opportunities. A 2024 habitat assessment

identified key habitat constraints, while live trapping and genetic work documented a small but extant population and confirmed localized extirpation in some areas. Midpen is also working with UC Davis researchers to better estimate population genetic health and dynamics and inform adaptive management. Recent genetic findings by UC Davis found that the populations at the William's property (near Lake Elsman) and in Sierra Azul are distinct and disconnected. An analysis of the genetic effective population size (Ne), which is a measure of genetic health, found that the Sierra Azul population had an Ne of 5. Ne below 50 is considered at high risk for extinction/extirpation. A 2024- 2025 pilot project treating 5.5 acres provided important early insights into effective SCKR habitat enhancement treatments. A post-treatment assessment showed that vegetation management successfully increased open canopy conditions and reduced dense knobcone pine, key objectives for improving SCKR habitat. Building on this foundation, the Habitat and Population Management Plan (2026) provides implementation-ready guidance, including habitat suitability modeling, corridor analysis, and monitoring strategies. The HPMP is currently being finalized and will be completed in June 2026.
Pre-Contract and Valley Water Grant Funding: Funding for a period of five years will support the SCKR HPMP's first phase of implementation and will focus on:

- Final planning and design to advance HPMP recommendations to an implementation-ready work plan, the development of a bid package, finalization of permits, and regulatory compliance (This task includes pre-contract planning work that is not part of the Valley Water grant funding request as well as Valley Water support from December 2026 through June 2027).
- Conducting vegetation management and fuels reduction to increase the amount of available habitat and improve connectivity for existing SCKR populations on approximately 40 acres along the Cathermola Road corridor and surrounding areas, priority locations identified in the HPMP due to their proximity to occupied SCKR habitat and their potential to expand population distribution and improve connectivity (see the location map for detail).
- Pre- and post-implementation monitoring and maintenance.
- Community and tribal engagement.

Ecological and Watershed Benefits: Implementation will support the recovery of the critically imperiled Santa Cruz kangaroo rat by enhancing and expanding suitable habitat and increasing population resilience. Habitat enhancement treatments will address decades of fire exclusion. Strategic vegetation management will improve overall landscape function and climate resilience while supporting multiple successional stages. These actions will reduce fuel loads and wildfire intensity, lowering the risk of high-severity, landscape-scale disturbances that could degrade habitat and water resources. By reducing wildfire severity, the project will also lower post-fire erosion, sediment transport, and downstream flood risk, helping protect the watershed. Management actions will enhance habitat connectivity and maintain refugia for SCKR and other sensitive species during and after implementation. The project's treatments will also deliver important co-benefits for other special-status species, including enhanced foraging conditions for Blainville's horned lizard (Phrynosoma blainvillii, California Species of Special Concern) and the creation of snag habitat to support purple martin (Progne subis arboricola, California Species of Special Concern).
Partnerships and Community Engagement: This effort aligns with the County Hazard

Mitigation Plan and Midpen's Wildland Fire Resiliency Program and builds on an existing collaboration through the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaboration. Ongoing community engagement and outreach will further strengthen public awareness and support for habitat restoration, wildfire resilience, and resource protection. Engagement with Tribal communities will support culturally informed stewardship. Project Readiness: The proposed project demonstrates strong readiness by being CEQA compliant, leveraging established partnerships, building on a successful pilot effort and strong scientific foundation, and by aligning with Valley Water's goals for environmental stewardship and watershed protection. Midpen has extensive expertise in conducting environmentally sensitive vegetation management and fuels reduction with adaptive monitoring frameworks that promote resilient, fire-adapted ecosystems while minimizing impacts to sensitive species. Since 2021, Midpen has led SCKR conservation in Sierra Azul, including detecting and documenting populations, assessing habitat characteristics, implementing a pilot habitat enhancement project, developing a management plan, and coordinating scientific studies with partners and researchers. The project's regulatory readiness, technical expertise, and on-the-ground experience ensures the project can achieve strong conservation outcomes for the Santa Cruz kangaroo rat.

Applicant: Mountain View Los Altos High School District
Project Name: From Rubble to Roots
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $76,286.00
Project Summary: This project will transform 1500 square feet of sterile, heavily compacted construction fill into a high-functioning California native habitat. By replacing impermeable base rock, which is underlain with a non-permeable plastic barrier, we will restore natural water infiltration, replenish local aquifers, and significantly reduce stormwater runoff and pollutant loading into the watershed. The project will achieve permanent water conservation- using up to 85% less water than traditional landscaping- while re-establishing critical biodiversity corridors for native pollinators and birds in an urban setting. The work to be done is to remove 125 yards (3375 cubic feet) of compacted construction fill and the underlying plastic barrier and fill in with native soil, a pond and bioswale, and create a biodiverse habitat of California native plants.

Applicant: Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency
Project Name: Pajaro River Riparian and Floodplain Restoration Project
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $500,000.00
Project Summary: The Pajaro River Riparian and Floodplain Restoration Project (project) is a multi-benefit habitat restoration effort located at the confluence of the Pajaro River and Llagas Creek in southern Santa Clara County. The project will convert farmland and ruderal farm margins into an approximately 22 acre matrix of floodplain, riparian, wetland, and upland refugia habitat by reconnecting a channelized reach of the Pajaro River to its historic floodplain and reestablishing key hydrologic and ecological processes once characteristic of the former Soap Lake system. Implementation will include excavation of secondary low-flow channels, creation of freshwater marsh and

seasonal wetlands, and establishment of native riparian and upland vegetation. Excavated materials will be beneficially reused to create microtopographic variation and upland refugia, enhancing habitat diversity, resilience, and flood protection for species. The project is designed using process-based restoration principles coupled with active native species planting to support long-term, self-sustaining ecological functions. Project Goals include:

- Creek, Wetland, and Riparian Restoration and Enhancement: Replace what is primarily monocrop farmland with a mosaic of riparian forest, freshwater marsh, seasonal wetlands, and open water habitats that support sensitive species including Central California Coast steelhead, California red-legged frog, northwestern pond turtle, least Bell's vireo, yellow warbler, tricolored blackbird, and monarch butterfly.
- Floodplain Reconnection and Natural Flood Protection: Reconnect the Pajaro River to a portion of its historic floodplain and modestly increase overbank storage through secondary channels and grading, reducing downstream flood risk while creating off-channel habitat for aquatic life such as juvenile steelhead.
- Watershed Function: Establish floodplain and wetland features that capture sediment, nutrients, support healthier aquatic ecosystems, and promote nutrient cycling and surface water-groundwater interactions. Incidentally, the project is likely to improve downstream water quality through sediment and contaminant capture by natural vegetation and expanded channel and floodplain area.
- Wildlife Habitat Connectivity and Enhancement: Strengthen a key east–west wildlife movement corridor (i.e., Wildlife Linkage #17, Pajaro River Corridor, in the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan) between the Santa Cruz Mountains and Diablo Range, benefiting wide-ranging and terrestrial species such as American badger, pallid bat, Swainson's hawk, white-tailed kite, and mountain lion.
- Multi-Benefit Nature-Based Solutions: Implement a process-based restoration approach that integrates habitat creation, flood attenuation (during certain storm events), groundwater interaction, and climate resilience into a single, self-sustaining system that will be protected in perpetuity and managed by the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency and Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority.
- Groundwater Recharge and Watershed Function (Co-Benefit): Enhance infiltration and surface–groundwater connectivity within the restored floodplain, supporting long-term watershed function and local groundwater recharge processes.

This is a follow-up project to a very successful 5-acre riparian and floodplain project implemented by the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency immediately upstream of the current proposed project, within the same property.

Applicant: Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
Project Name: Green Line Water Conservation Landscaping and Pocket Forests
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $276,760.00
Project Summary: The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), in partnership with Our City Forest (OCF), proposes to implement a countywide water conservation and landscape transformation project across VTA-owned Park & Ride

facilities. The project will replace existing water-intensive or low-function landscape areas - including irrigated turf, degraded planting strips, and compacted soil zones - with drought-tolerant, hydrozoned plant systems designed to significantly reduce potable water demand while improving site-level environmental performance. The project spans three VTA-owned Park & Ride and transit station sites with varying scales and configurations. Individual project areas include approximately 12,500 square feet at Great Mall Transit Center, 18,000 square feet at Curtner Station, and 23,800 square feet at Santa Teresa Station. Collectively, these sites represent approximately 54,300 square feet of convertible landscape area within approximately 1,140,000 square feet of total site area, providing a substantial opportunity to achieve measurable water savings and climate resilience benefits at scale. The selected sites were identified through coordination with VTA staff and preliminary site review, based on factors including available planting area, existing landscape conditions, and feasibility of implementation within active transit environments. The project sites are as follows:

1. Great Mall Transit Center (Milpitas)
   Address: 1330 Great Mall Drive, Milpitas, CA 95035
2. Curtner Station (San José)
   Address: 2348 Canoas Garden Avenue, San José, CA 95118
3. Santa Teresa Station (San José)
   Address: 6360 Santa Teresa Boulevard, San José, CA 95119

The VTA sites included in this project are located within or directly adjacent to census tracts identified by the State as Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) based on CalEnviroScreen data. These communities face some of the highest cumulative burdens from pollution, heat, and socioeconomic vulnerability in California, and in Santa Clara County Collectively, these three sites represent approximately 54,300 square feet of convertible landscape area within approximately 1,140,000 square feet of total site area, providing a substantial opportunity to achieve measurable water savings and climate resilience benefits at scale. This proposal builds directly on OCF's demonstrated success delivering water conservation landscape conversions through its LawnBusters program in partnership with Valley Water. Through that program, OCF has converted more than 250,000 square feet of turf and achieved approximately 8 million gallons of water savings annually, establishing a reliable baseline of approximately 31 gallons of water saved per square foot per year. Applying this same methodology to VTA-owned properties, the proposed project is expected to generate substantial and measurable water savings at scale. This per-square-foot estimate has been validated across both residential and non-residential landscape conversions, including institutional-scale sites, and is considered a conservative and appropriate baseline for VTA facilities. The project will utilize a standardized installation methodology refined through hundreds of OCF projects, including site-specific assessment, soil preparation through sheet mulching, installation of soil amendments, and planting of drought-tolerant species at densities based on mature coverage rather than initial spacing. Trenching methods used in residential settings will be modified or omitted for public-facing VTA sites to ensure safety and accessibility while maintaining water capture and soil health benefits through alternative design approaches. Planting will include a mix of 1-gallon, 5-gallon, and 15-gallon plant material, with 15-gallon trees serving as the structural backbone of each site to provide long-term canopy and climate benefits. Beyond water savings, the project

will improve stormwater infiltration, reduce runoff, mitigate urban heat conditions, and support habitat creation and overall watershed health by increasing vegetative cover and canopy. Based on OCF's prior tree planting initiatives, each installed tree is expected to contribute to measurable reductions in air pollutants, provide long-term carbon sequestration, and intercept stormwater runoff, with cumulative systemwide benefits increasing over time as canopy matures. The project is structured as a multi-site implementation effort that can be scaled across VTA's portfolio of Park & Ride sites using a consistent cost and design framework. All work includes installation and structured early-stage maintenance to ensure high survival rates, with OCF's model consistently achieving approximately 95% plant survival through its establishment care protocols. Our City Forest brings more than three decades of experience implementing water conservation and urban forestry projects in Santa Clara County, including a long-standing partnership with the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water). Through this partnership, OCF has served as a key implementation partner for landscape transformation initiatives aligned with Valley Water's conservation goals, most notably through the LawnBusters program and related Landscape Rebate Program efforts. Over the past decade, OCF has completed more than 350 turf conversion projects in collaboration with Valley Water, replacing over 250,000 square feet of water-intensive landscape with drought-tolerant, climate-appropriate plant systems and achieving approximately 8 million gallons of water savings annually. These projects are designed and installed in strict alignment with Valley Water's program requirements, including adherence to the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS) framework, hydrozoning principles, and plant coverage calculations based on mature plant size rather than initial installation density. This ensures that installations are not only compliant at the time of rebate approval, but continue to perform as intended under real-world conditions over time. OCF's role within these programs extends beyond installation to include site assessment, landscape design, plant procurement, installation, and structured establishment care. Through this work, OCF has developed a standardized, field-tested methodology for landscape conversion that prioritizes soil health, water retention, and long-term plant viability. Typical installations include full site preparation through sheet mulching, application of soil amendments to improve infiltration, and installation of drought-tolerant plant material at densities calibrated to mature growth patterns. This approach reduces long-term irrigation demand while avoiding common pitfalls such as overcrowding, plant stress, and premature landscape failure. In addition to delivering measurable water savings, OCF's partnership with Valley Water has contributed to the development of replicable models for landscape conversion that can be scaled across residential, institutional, and public sites. These projects serve as demonstration models for best practices in water-efficient landscaping and have been implemented across a wide range of site conditions throughout Santa Clara County. OCF's direct experience working within Valley Water's program framework - including plant selection, irrigation efficiency, and compliance requirements - ensures that proposed projects are both technically sound and aligned with program objectives. This depth of experience is directly applicable to the proposed VTA project.

Applicant: Town of Los Altos Hills
Project Name: Byrne Preserve Restoration Project
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $240,000.00
Project Summary: This project will restore native biodiversity, improve riparian habitat, and reduce wildfire risk along Moody Creek at Byrne Preserve in areas that have not been restored in the past. Currently there is dense vegetation, including dead coyote brush and invasive French broom along the southerly portion of the creekbed.. The project will remove these invasive species, which will reduce fire hazards, protect existing natives, and replant California native plant species. Unlike conventional clearing, this targeted approach supports ecosystem health, improves erosion control, and enhances groundwater recharge. New plantings will stabilize soil and provide habitat along the wildlife corridor.The project also expands community engagement and workforce development. The Town will partner will Grassroots Ecology, who will bring in volunteers and school groups to participate in restoration activities, while interns, AmeriCorps members, and San Jose Conservation Corps crews gain hands-on training in environmental restoration, building skills for future careers.

Applicant: Town of Los Altos Hills
Project Name: Heritage House Native Garden Project
Grant Category: Implementation
Funding Request: $456,000.00
Project Summary: The Town is proposing a native garden project adjacent to Heritage House that will remove invasive plants, install native plants, and implement rainwater harvesting. The project includes the installation of locally appropriate native vegetation along with green infrastructure features such as swales and rain gardens to capture, slow, and manage stormwater runoff (see conceptual site plan). These elements will improve water infiltration, reduce runoff, and help filter pollutants, contributing to better watershed health while supporting local wildlife. In addition to its environmental benefits, the site is intended to serve as a visible demonstration project for the community. Through signage and outreach efforts, residents will learn about native landscaping, stormwater management, and water conservation practices. The project aims to inspire the adoption of sustainable, low-maintenance landscape solutions that can be replicated throughout the Town.