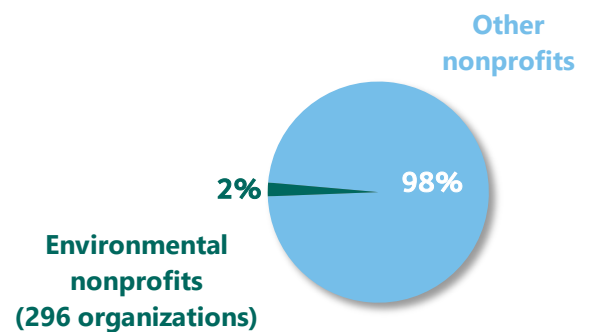


# Leading Climate & Environmental Action in the San Diego Region

The strengths and needs of the San Diego region's environmental nonprofits

## ONLY 2% OF NONPROFITS IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION FOCUS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The San Diego region is home to over 12,000 nonprofits, and environmental nonprofits represent 2% of them in terms of number of organizations and revenue. This sector is very small considering that climate change presents a vast array of challenges to the region. Environmental nonprofits are working on the frontlines, engaging in community- and nature-based solutions to enhance our resilience to climate change. Additionally, they are organizing and advocating for government funding and policy change, building public-private partnerships, and raising community awareness about the issue.



## CLIMATE CHANGE IS A TOP CONCERN, BUT FEW FOUNDATION GRANTS GO TO ENVIRONMENTAL NONPROFITS

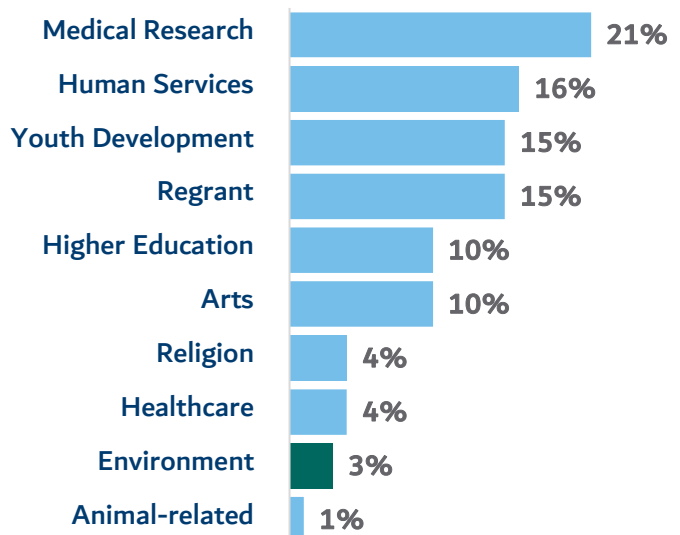
San Diegans are increasingly concerned about environmental issues impacting our quality of life, including climate change. In 2018, 3% of foundation grants were awarded to environmental organizations.<sup>1</sup>

### Top Concerns of San Diego Residents, 2022<sup>2</sup>

1. Housing
2. Wildfires\*
3. Climate change
4. Employment
5. Mental health
6. Public safety
7. Affordability of higher education
8. Drinking water quality\*
9. Quality of K-12 public education
10. Racial justice

\*environmentally-related concerns

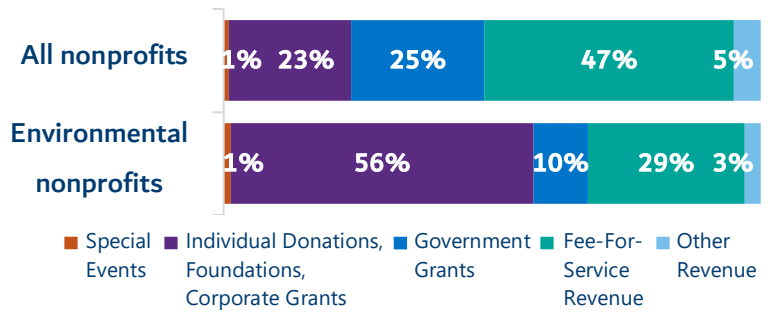
### Foundation Grants Awarded to San Diego Nonprofits by Subsector, 2018



## GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL NONPROFITS IS DISPROPORTIONATELY SMALL

On average, environmental nonprofits rely more on philanthropy (individual donations, foundations, and corporate grants) and less on government and fee-for-service revenue compared to the nonprofit sector as a whole.

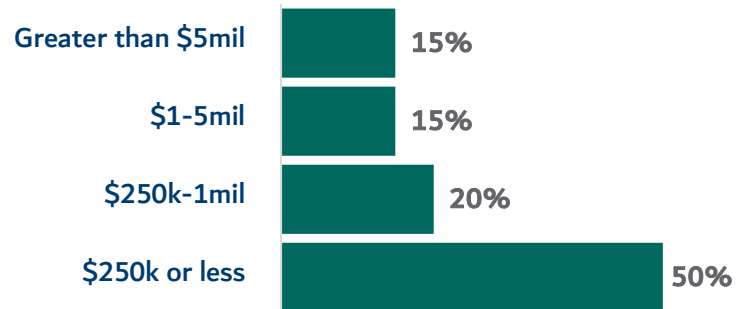
Primary Nonprofit Revenue Sources, 2020



## THE SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Budget size is a good proxy for measuring the size of an organization. This chart shows the budget sizes of environmentally-focused nonprofits. Half of these nonprofits are very small, having an annual budget size of less than \$250,000.<sup>3</sup> Many environmental nonprofits began as grassroots efforts to protect local air/water quality or natural areas. With deep community connections, they serve as vital liaisons for climate solutions.

San Diego Environment Nonprofits by Budget Size, 2020



## SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS: NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

Nonprofit organizations have played a vital role in protecting and connecting natural areas, fighting for clean air and government, and philanthropy, nonprofits have helped to achieve many landmark successes.

### 2000 CO<sup>2</sup> Reduction

As a result of an invitation by the United Nations and the nonprofit, ICLEI, to participate with a select group of cities in the development of the International Framework Convention on Climate Change, the City of Chula Vista adopts the first CO<sup>2</sup> Reduction Plan for the region.

1980

1990

2000

1982

### Environmental Justice

Environmental Health Coalition successfully advocates for California's first county-wide Community Right to Know Act in California, giving residents the right to know about toxic substances in their communities.

1997

### Land Conservation

Working in partnership with a growing coalition of conservation organizations, the County of San Diego approves the first San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program, helping to launch one of the most ambitious regional conservation efforts in the country.

2008

### GHG Emission Studies

After catastrophic wildfires in 2003 and 2007, San Diego Foundation partnered with the Energy Policy Initiatives Center at USD and Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UCSD to release the first studies in California that inventory local greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and assess projected local impacts from climate change.

# NONPROFITS PROTECT THE SAN DIEGO REGION IN MANY IMPORTANT WAYS

The work of each of the 296 active nonprofits was classified into 16 different focus areas. These categories are not mutually exclusive:

- 67% work directly on climate change as an issue, mostly supporting **climate mitigation** (i.e., carbon pollution reduction) and **resilience** (i.e., ability to prepare, respond, and adapt).
- 51% raise awareness through environmental **education**
- 41% have a programmatic focus in **advocacy** and/or **policy** change
- 25% focus on **intersectional** work that crosses social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Focus Areas of San Diego Environment Nonprofits\*



\*size of the font correlates with the number of nonprofits working in the focus area

d water, and promoting effective regional action on climate change. Working together with academia, business,

2011

## The Collaborative

Philanthropy, business, government, and nonprofits come together to form the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative, one of the first such collaboratives in the state.

2013

## Clean Water

Clean water advocates successfully push for a new requirement that cities and agencies across the San Diego region to work together to reduce stormwater pollution and protect water quality.

2018

## Clean Air

In response to community-based organizing and advocacy efforts, the City of San Diego bans heavy-duty trucks from residential areas of Barrio Logan, which have been disproportionately impacted by air and noise pollution from commercial trucks near Port operations.

2022

## Climate Action Plans

With community organizing and advocacy, 18 of 19 localities in the San Diego region have adopted or updated Climate Action Plans, and many are working to develop Climate Resilience Plans.

2010

2020

2019

## Community Power

With community organizing and advocacy, San Diego, Chula Vista, Encinitas, La Mesa, and Imperial Beach launch the community-owned San Diego Community Power (SDCP) to provide affordable clean energy for local residents. In 2021, the County of San Diego and National City vote to join SDPC.

2012

## Marine Conservation

A coalition of ocean conservation groups successfully advocate for the creation of a statewide network of marine protected areas, including seven along the San Diego County coastline.

# THE SAN DIEGO REGION FACES MULTIPLE THREATS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The San Diego region's cherished beaches, mountains, and deserts are home to a unique array of plants and animals, making San Diego the most biologically diverse county in the continental United States. However, climate change poses major challenges to our environment, economy, and quality of life. By protecting our region's air, land, and water resources, we can ensure that all generations can continue to thrive and enjoy nature's benefits.



**Sea level rise** can cause coastal erosion, displacing coastal communities and infrastructure.



**Extreme heat** can cause severe health threats to vulnerable populations and local wildlife.



**Drought** can cause lasting damage to local ecosystems, which sustain water systems and our wellbeing.



**Frequent wildfires** can worsen air quality and health risks, especially for vulnerable populations.



**Extreme precipitation** can increase polluted run-off and disrupt water distribution and agriculture.

## ENVIRONMENTAL NONPROFITS NEED CAPACITY TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

A survey of environmental nonprofit leaders reported the following critical needs<sup>4</sup> for support:



**8 out of 10** organizations need dedicated, qualified staff to support communications, evaluation, and advocacy.



**9 out of 10** organizations need support in leveraging government funding, which will ensure dollars are invested in San Diego communities.



**8 out of 10** organizations need communications support to disseminate their work and advocate for the environment and climate action.



**8 out of 10** organizations need technical support for measuring their program outcomes.

### Data Sources and Methods

<sup>1</sup>**Candid (candid.org)** - Data on foundations, their grantmaking activities, major giving categories, and geographic scope comes from 2018 and was generated by Candid (formerly GuideStar and Foundation Center). Includes grant dollars awarded to San Diego County nonprofits from foundations located within and outside of San Diego County.

<sup>2</sup>**The Nonprofit Institute and Luth Research - 2022 State of Nonprofits Quarterly Index** – The Nonprofit Institute partners with Luth Research in the administration of a quarterly survey to gauge the concerns of San Diegans.

<sup>3</sup>**DataLake Nonprofit Research (datalake.net)** - Data on nonprofit revenue and foundation assets come from 2019 and 2020 IRS Form 990, 990PF, 990-EZ, and 990-N electronic (e-file) returns and exempt organization registration data archives. Data were compiled and analyzed by DataLake, LLC. The budget size data includes 252 out of 296 nonprofits where financial data was available

<sup>4</sup>**The Nonprofit Institute - 2021 and 2022 Annual Nonprofit Leader Survey** – This annual survey of 200-250 nonprofit leaders collected information on nonprofits' demand for services, financial outlook, organizational capacity, leadership, and sector trends. This survey was administered online in June-July 2022 and is a convenience sample of the San Diego nonprofit sector. There were additional questions for the 30 environmental nonprofits that responded to the survey.

