

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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**For Immediate Release**

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Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Awards \$3.2 Million in State Funds to Los Angeles and Ventura County Fire Departments for Immediate Local Wildfire Prevention

LOS ANGELES (May 14, 2025) – The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy announced today that it has awarded \$3.2 million in State funds to Los Angeles County and Ventura County Fire Departments to implement wildfire prevention programs that will immediately improve local fire prevention and resiliency before fire season begins and address the growing severity of fire seasons in Southern California.

The grants, unanimously approved by the Conservancy and its Advisory Committee at its meeting on Monday night, include \$2.2 million to Los Angeles County Fire Department and \$1 million to Ventura County Fire Department. The grants include coordination with local cities, including Malibu, Calabasas, Agoura Hills, Westlake Village and Simi Valley, Moorpark, and Thousand Oaks to reduce fuels in densely vegetated parks, open space and wildland urban interfaces adjacent to communities in the Santa Monica Mountains Zone and Rim of the Valley Corridor. The grant projects will be supported by outreach and education from the Fire Departments.

The State Legislature enacted an early action measure authored by local Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel (AB-100) and signed into law by Governor Newsom in mid-April that allows the Conservancy to expend Proposition 4 bond funds for urgent wildfire prevention and resilience efforts now. Proposition 4 was approved by the voters in the November 2024 general election. The Conservancy, which has helped preserve more than 85,000 acres of local open space and habitat, was allocated \$31 million from Proposition 4 for watershed improvement, wildfire resilience, chaparral and forest restoration, and workforce development.

The grants to the fire departments were the first of many the Conservancy will award from these funds as soon as possible to proactively reduce the risk of wildfire, strengthen wildfire resilience, increase carbon sequestration, rally against the effects of climate change, and dedicate more resources to local community infrastructure.

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“In less than two weeks the Conservancy has granted funds and begun to put extensive preventative management strategies in place before the next fire season,” said Steve Veres, Chairperson of the Conservancy. “We will move quickly and fund the entities who will most effectively protect our communities now.”

Senator Ben Allen and Assemblymember Jaqui Irwin, who are Legislative Participants on the Conservancy and whose Districts were highly impacted by the January 2025 Palisades fire, championed the early action funding to the Conservancy.

“My community has seen firsthand the devastating effects of wildfires intensified by a changing climate, and we know we will have so much more work to do to minimize the risk of fire in the future,” said Senator Ben Allen, author of Proposition 4. “We have been working with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy with a sense of urgency to get these Prop 4 dollars to work as soon as possible to better protect vulnerable communities through fuel reduction efforts - a core priority for our wildfire management efforts.”

“California, and the 42nd Assembly District in particular, has experienced the devastating impacts of wind-driven wildfires as a result of climate change. As residents adapt to this new normal, we see entire communities having discussions about home-hardening as it relates to protecting their properties from fire,” said Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin. “Wildfire experts from both the Los Angeles and Ventura County Fire Departments continue to work hard to ensure the safety of residents living in these areas however, their safety will be greatly enhanced through additional wildfire mitigation and the much-needed fuel reduction plans funded by these grants.”

High intensity wildfires in the Santa Monica Mountains and Rim of the Valley Corridor Zone have become more and more common in recent years, driven primarily by weather—most famously the Santa Ana and sundowner winds. In January 2025, the devastating Palisades, Eaton, and Kenneth wildfires underscored an urgent need for wildfire and climate resilience efforts to address the growing severity of fire seasons in Southern California.

The Conservancy has been a leader in regional collaborative wildfire strategies and has been an anchor of the statewide Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program. The Conservancy is a long-time and active member of the Santa Monica Mountains Fire Safe

Alliance, an umbrella group of government agencies and other affected groups convened by Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsay Horvath to address environmental and community safety problems related to wildfire in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy is a State Agency established by the Legislature in 1980. Since that time, it has helped preserve more than 85,000 acres of parkland in both wilderness and urban settings. The Conservancy's mission is to strategically buy back, preserve, protect, restore, and enhance treasured pieces of Southern California to form and interlinking system of urban, rural, and river parks, open space, trails, and wildlife habitat that are easily accessible to the general public.

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