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2023

Leading Climate & Environmental Action in the San Diego Region

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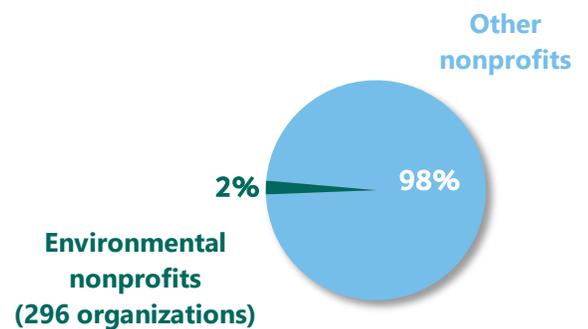
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Leading Climate & Environmental Action in the San Diego Region

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

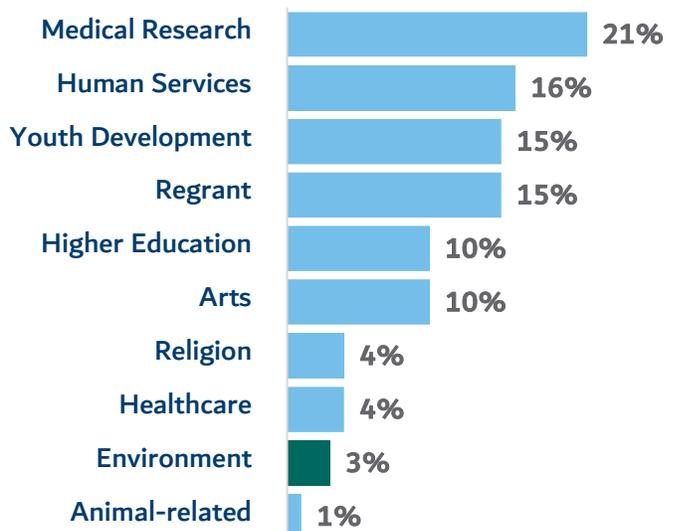
San Diegans are increasingly concerned about environmental issues impacting our quality of life, including climate change. In 2018, 3% of foundation grants were awarded to environmental organizations.¹

Top Concerns of San Diego Residents, 2022²

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

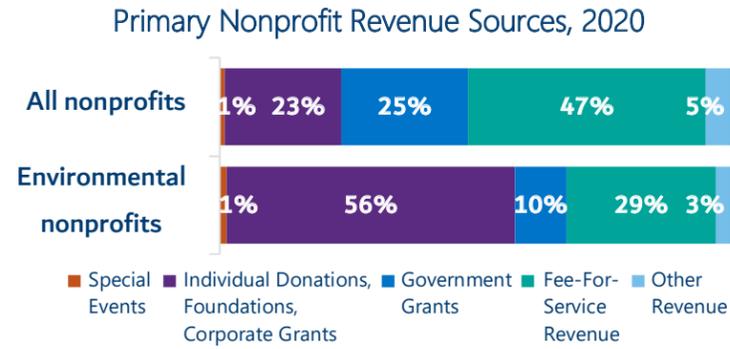
*environmentally-related concerns

Foundation Grants Awarded to San Diego Nonprofits by Subsector, 2018



GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL NONPROFITS IS DISPROPORTIONATELY SMALL

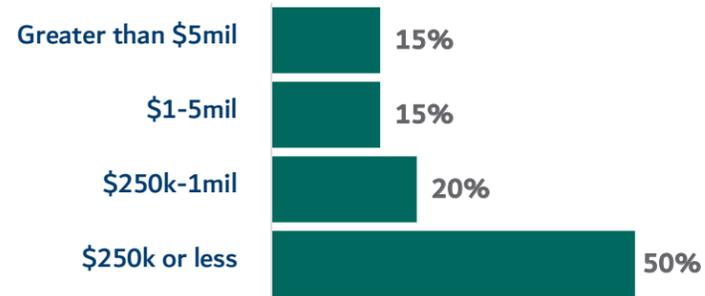
On average, environmental nonprofits rely more on philanthropy (individual donations, foundations, and corporate grants) and less on government and fee-for-service revenue compared to the nonprofit sector as a whole.



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 \$250,000.³ 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

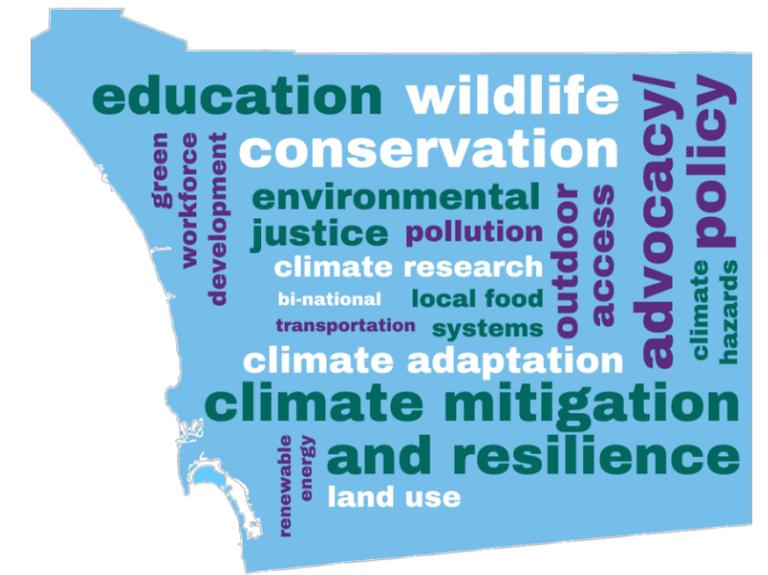
Nonprofit organizations have played a vital role in protecting and connecting natural areas, fighting for clean air and water, and promoting effective regional action on climate change. Working together with academia, business, government, and philanthropy, nonprofits have helped to achieve many landmark successes.

NONPROFITS PROTECT THE SAN DIEGO REGION IN MANY IMPORTANT WAYS

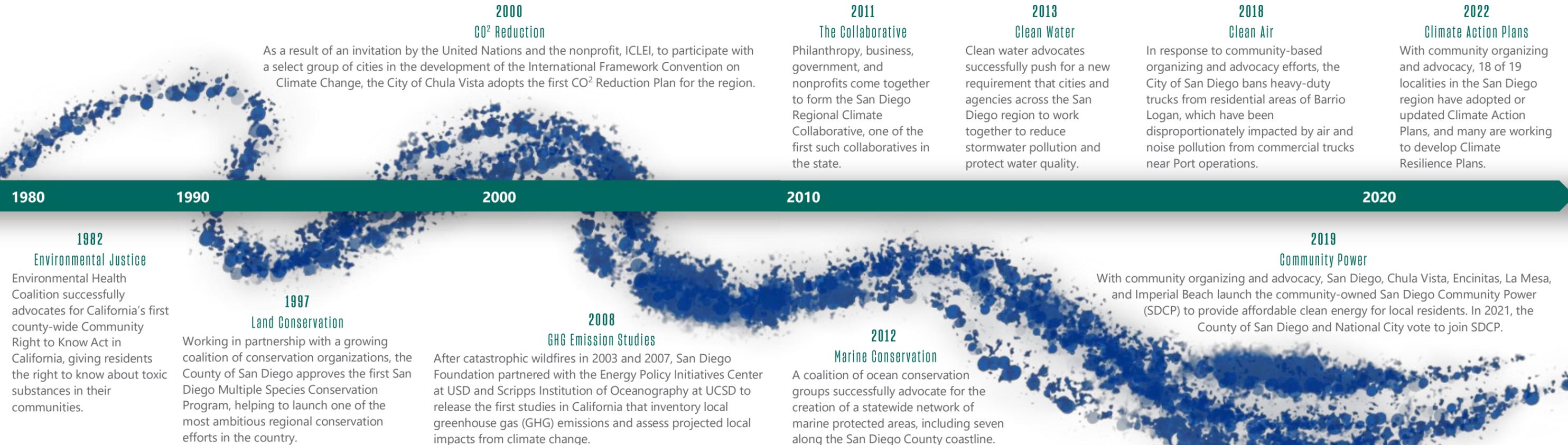
The work of each of the 296 active nonprofits was classified into 16 different focus areas. These categories are not mutually exclusive:

- 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



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 needs⁴ 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

¹**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.

²**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.

³**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

⁴**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.

Cite As

Tinkler, T., Hanabusa, E., Young, E., Berry, D., Meschen, C., (2023). *Leading Climate & Environmental Action in the San Diego Region*. San Diego, CA: The Nonprofit Institute, University of San Diego.

