

Wetland Habitat Restoration at Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Wildlife Refuge

Organization: San Luis Obispo Land Conservancy

Project Period: September 2019 – February 2024

Amount: \$24,412.65

Location: Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Wildlife Refuge (NWR), San Luis Obispo

Project Description: The purpose of this project is to restore coastal dune scrub and coastal dune wetland habitat in two crucial ponds of the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge. This project will restore 4.66 acres of native coastal scrub and wetland habitat by arresting the spread of European beach grass, veldtgrass, and other invasive species and eradicating them for recovery of federal endangered and state threatened La Graciosa thistle and federal threatened and state species of special concern California red-legged frog. Invasive plant species are currently considered the biggest threat to the specialized habitats within the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes Complex.

Project Progress: In 2021, La Graciosa thistle plants were planted at two locations within the Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge: 20 individuals at 3 Pond West, and 46 individuals at Myrtle Pond. All plants were installed with protective cages and were watered occasionally. The survival of planted thistle was very different between the two sites, all plants survived at Myrtle Pond whereas only 2 of the plants survived at 3 Pond West. A total of 110 individuals have been planted since the project start. Invasive species around plantings were managed using herbicide & hand removal, focusing on poison hemlock. The Land Conservancy will continue to monitor the plants through the winter of 2021.



La Graciosa thistle in 2-inch pots at the Land Conservancy of SLO greenhouse in February 2021 (left) and La Graciosa thistle in 1-gallon pots in May 2021 (right).



La Graciosa thistle planted within the fenced area of 3 Pond West (left) and La Graciosa thistle planted outside the fenced area near 3 Pond West (right) in June 2021



La Graciosa thistle planted east of Myrtle Pond (left) and La Graciosa thistle planted west of Myrtle Pond (right) in June 2021