California Department of Fish and Wildlife

Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery

CALL FOR PROJECTS & GRANT GUIDELINES

October 2026

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1. Overview

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is offering $2 million in grant funding to develop or enhance Mojave Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) recovery.

This funding supports projects that produce measurable, near-term progress toward Mojave Desert tortoise recovery in California, prioritizing actions with a strong evidence base and the ability to report outcomes within the grant period.

2. Program Background

The Mojave Desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) is California's state reptile and a keystone species of the Mojave Desert ecosystems, distinguished by its long lifespan and burrowing habits. The species is found across the Mojave Desert and portions of the Sonoran and Great Basin Deserts in southeastern California. Over the past several decades, the species has experienced significant population declines driven by habitat loss and fragmentation, disease, and predation. It was listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1990 and under the California Endangered Species Act in 1989, and was uplisted to endangered under the California Endangered Species Act in June 2025 after three decades without population recovery.

Senate Bill 111 amended the Budget Act of 2026 to provide the allocation of $2 million of General Fund to CDFW to support the recovery of Mojave Desert tortoise, consistent with the Department's authority under Fish and Game Code §2050 et seq. (CESA) and §1501.5.

3. Eligibility

3.1. Applicants

Eligible applicants include state and local government agencies; special districts; California Native American Tribes (Tribes), public entities, nonprofit organizations; and land trusts operating within the priority areas. Private or for-

profit entities are not eligible to apply directly, but can support a project as a subcontractor.

3.2. Projects

Eligible projects should be focused on:

- Managing habitat connectivity and linkage protection, including maintenance and installation of Mojave Desert tortoise fencing along roads within and near the Tortoise Conservation Area corridors to concentrate desert tortoise and increase adult survivorship and overall population densities. Installing, or improving culverts, underpasses or overpasses to allow for Mojave Desert tortoise movement.
- Cumulative-impact monitoring and data infrastructure, such as a centralized geospatial tracking system for surface disturbance, remediation effectiveness, and translocation outcomes across the species' range.
- Supporting on-the-ground efforts to improve habitat conditions for Mojave Desert tortoises in landscapes affected by adjacent development including, but not limited to, addressing surface hydrology disruptions, predator monitoring and control, habitat restoration and enhancement actions (including seeding with desert tortoise forage species), and non-native removal and control to benefit population recovery.
- Activities to support population augmentation of depleted Mojave Desert tortoise populations including establishment of facilities, head-starting and reintroduction, genetic testing, translocation logistics, health screening, post release monitoring.

4. Costs

Eligible costs are expenses incurred by the grantee during the agreement performance period, which may be reimbursed by CDFW. The costs may include, but are not limited to, the following strategic elements of the recovery:

- Habitat protection and restoration: on-the-ground implementation;

removal of invasive vegetation; native seeding, native seed bank expansion, restoration, restoration of degraded habitat; road-crossing or exclusionary infrastructure; equipment directly tied to restoration or protection work.

- Strategic population augmentation: Costs associated with setting up facilities or operations, predator management, head-starting and reintroduction, translocation logistics, health screening prior to release, and post-release monitoring.
- Adaptive management: monitoring and evaluation costs for assessing the effectiveness of management actions; development or refinement of management frameworks linking actions to expected population or habitat outcomes; and reporting and sharing of results to inform future management decisions.
- Partnerships: coordination costs for convening or participating in multi-agency or multi-stakeholder recovery efforts; costs of data-sharing or joint monitoring protocols developed with partner entities.

5. Priority Area (California only)

Project should be located within the range and recovery units of the Mojave Desert tortoise in California counties, including but not limited to the following counties: Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino.

6. Consultations

Applicants may consult with CDFW staff to discuss their projects before submitting a proposal. To request a consultation, email WatershedGrants@wildlife.ca.gov. Include the following information: project title, project location including county(ies), project type (planning, implementation, land acquisition), description, questions for CDFW, and dates/times you are available to meet.

7. Application Process

7.1. Application Deadline

The complete application and all supporting documentation must be submitted via CDFW's WebGrants System by December 3, 2026.

7.2. How To Apply

Applications must be submitted electronically through CDFW WebGrants at: https://watershedgrants.wildlife.ca.gov. Applicants must register or log in to WebGrants, select "Mojave Desert Tortoise Recovery" under Funding Opportunities, and complete the required application forms.

For assistance with WebGrants, contact: CDFW WebGrants Help Desk at CDFWWebgrants@wildlife.ca.gov.

7.3. Application Workshop

CDFW will host an online webinar grant workshop to discuss the grant program, application process, and answer questions, on ~~November 4, 2026~~ **November 9, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.** Webinar details will be posted on the CDFW Public Notices and Meetings page.

7.4. Contacts

For questions regarding CDFW WebGrants, please contact the CDFW WebGrants Help Desk by email at CDFWWebgrants@wildlife.ca.gov.

7.5. Schedule and Timing

Activity	**Dates** (Subject to Change)
Consultations	Open
Application Opens	October 21, 2026
Application Workshop	November 4, 2026
Application Deadline	December 3, 2026
Awards Announcement	Spring 2027
Grants Commence	Spring/Summer 2027
Complete all grant funded project work and submit deliverables/final invoice	March 15, 2029

8. Proposal Review and Selection Process

CDFW will evaluate submitted proposals using a multi-step process, including the review processes described below. Each program may have variations in the review process and criteria; applicants should review the specific review feedback from CDFW.

8.1. Technical Review

CDFW technical reviewers will evaluate and score all eligible and complete applications. Technical reviewers will consider criteria including overall approach and feasibility of project tasks, readiness (including environmental compliance and permitting), budget, regional-scale tortoise recovery efforts, and ability to complete the project within the funding term.

8.2. Executive Review or Selection Panel

CDFW may convene an Executive Review or Selection Panel (Panel) to review the scores and comments from the review process. The Panel may establish subcommittees, organized around funding priorities, to provide a preliminary ranking for their deliberations. The Panel will review and finalize the funding recommendations for CDFW Director approval. When developing the funding recommendation, the Panel will consider criteria such as:

1. Technical review scores and comments;
2. Regional priority input from CDFW Regional Managers; and
3. Project readiness.

The Panel may recommend modifications, including reducing requested grant amounts to meet current and any potential future program priorities, funding targets, and available funding limitations.

8.3. Director Review and Action

For certain programs, the Panel's final recommendations will be presented to the CDFW Director for final approval. The Director will consider the comments and recommendations from all levels of the review process and make the final funding decision. Following approval by the Director, the selected grant recipients will receive a commitment letter officially notifying them of their selection and grant amount.

9. Grant Agreement Requirements

9.1. Cost Share or Match

Cost share is not required to be eligible for funding but is encouraged and will benefit project review and selection. Proposals that include cost share contributions, whether in the form of cash or in-kind services, should clearly specify both the source and dollar amount of the cost share. If a proposal receives funding, the claimed cost share cannot serve as matching funds elsewhere. Cost share may be monetary contributions or non-monetary resources (in-kind contributions) provided by the applicant or their partners involved in project implementation. In-kind contributions must directly benefit the project to qualify as cost share. To remain eligible, cost share must be used during the grant's term.

9.2. Indirect Costs

Indirect costs (administrative overhead) are those that cannot be directly assigned to a particular grant activity but are necessary for the operation of the

organization and the performance of the grant project. Indirect costs include operating and maintaining facilities, accounting services, and administrative salaries.

The applicant's indirect cost calculations are limited to actual costs and cannot exceed 20 percent of the direct costs. Direct costs may include up to $25,000 of each subcontract but shall not include equipment costs as defined in the CDFW General Grant Provisions (PDF). Applicants must itemize indirect costs and may not roll up the indirect costs into direct costs. CDFW may accept a federal Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement for Tribes and nonprofit organizations only.

9.3. Advance Payment

Assembly Bill 590 and Assembly Bill 3017 authorize CDFW to allow advance payments to qualified nonprofit grantees and federally recognized Tribes, not to exceed 25 percent of the total award, upon determination that an advance payment is essential for the effective implementation of a grant funded project. To be considered for an advance payment, nonprofit grantees must satisfy the following requirements under California Government Code §11019.3(c)(2):

1. Grantee must submit documentation supporting the need for advance payment (e.g., invoices indicating the nonprofit does not have sufficient cash or credit to make payments before state reimbursement, contracts, estimates, payroll records, financial records, etc.).
2. Grantee must demonstrate good standing as a nonprofit under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. *Tribes are exempt from this requirement.*
3. Grantee must submit an itemized budget for the eligible costs to be funded by an advance payment, a spending timeline, and a workplan for spending the advance.
4. Current proof of liability insurance that meets the requirements of the CDFW General Grant Provisions (PDF).

5. Financial statements demonstrating the grantee has a federally insured account that has the ability to track interest earned and withdrawals.

Upon receipt of an advance payment, grantees must meet additional requirements, including:

1. Deposit funds into a federally insured account of the recipient entity that provides the ability to track interest earned and withdrawals. A financial statement shall also accompany each progress report and drawdown documentation while the advance is being spent down.
2. Establish procedures to minimize the amount of time that elapses between the transfer of funds and the expenditure of those funds.
3. Provide progress reports on the expenditure of advance funds, including a summary of work completed, proof of expenditure.
4. Return any unused funding provided as advance payment but not expended within the grant term to CDFW.

Eligible grantees can request advance payment for executed agreements. If advance payment is approved, the agreement will be amended.

9.4. Labor Code Requirements: Prevailing Wage

The grant terms and conditions for projects that are selected for funding will require that grantees comply with the California Labor Code for their projects. Projects funded in whole or in part with CDFW grant funds may be public works projects under the Labor Code (see section 1720 et seq.). Fish and Game Code section 1501.5 excludes some CDFW-funded projects from being public works projects under the Labor Code. Labor Code compliance may require the payment of prevailing wage. Grantees are responsible for Labor Code compliance, and CDFW cannot provide advice about Labor Code compliance. Before submitting applications, applicants should seek legal counsel regarding Labor Code compliance for their projects and budget accordingly. More information is available at the Department of Industrial Relations.

9.5. Environmental Compliance and Permitting

Projects must comply with all applicable state, tribal, and federal environmental laws and regulations. Applicants are responsible for obtaining all permits necessary to complete project work. Projects that involve the collection of fish, wildlife, or endangered or rare plants must have a valid collection permit.

9.6. Confidentiality

Once the applicant has submitted a proposal to CDFW, any privacy rights as well as other confidentiality protections afforded by law with respect to the application package will be waived. Submitted proposals are public records under the California Government Code sections 6250-6276.48.

9.7. Land Tenure/Site Access

Applicants for projects that involve access to private property must demonstrate landowner permission to access the site for the term of the agreement.

9.8. Recognition of Funding Source

The grantee must include signage, to the extent practicable, informing the public that the project received funds through the CDFW Mojave Desert Tortoise Grant. Project signs should include the items below. CDFW also strongly encourages that signage includes multiple languages.

1. Project name as it appears in the project agreement;
2. Acknowledgment of project partners including CDFW (logo is preferred).

Recognition of funding under this program extends to publications, websites, and other media-related and public outreach products.

9.9. Project Approval and Grant Agreement

Development of grant agreements will begin following announcement of

awards. Successful applicants will work with an assigned CDFW Grant Manager to develop the grant agreement. The applicant must agree to the CDFW General Grant Provisions (PDF) which will be provided at the time of the award. Awarded applicants must complete, sign, and return these additional forms:

1. Payee Data Record form (STD. 204);
2. Federal Taxpayer ID Number (for non-profit organizations);
3. Drug-Free Workplace Certification (STD. 21);
4. Authorizing Resolution (if applicable); and
5. A Limited Waiver of Sovereign Immunity for grant agreements with California Native American Tribes.

For a grant to be executed, it must be signed by an authorized representative of the grant recipient and CDFW. Work performed prior to an executed agreement will not be reimbursed.

10. Responsibility of the Grantee

The grantee must be responsive during grant agreement development and will be responsible for carrying out the work agreed to and for managing finances, including but not limited to invoicing, payments to subcontractors, accounting and financial auditing, and other project management duties including reporting requirements. Grantee must support all eligible costs with appropriate documentation. See Appendix A for additional state auditing requirements.

Grantees shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, rules, regulations, and/or ordinances. As may be necessary, the grantee shall be responsible for obtaining the services of appropriately licensed professionals to complete project design plans.

10.1. Invoicing and Payments

CDFW will structure all grant agreements, except for acquisition grants, to provide for payment in arrears of work being performed. CDFW will not disburse funds until there is an executed grant agreement between CDFW and the

grantee. Payments will be made on a reimbursement basis (i.e., the grantee pays for services, products or supplies, submits an invoice that must be approved by the CDFW Grant Manager, and is then reimbursed by CDFW). Funds for construction will not be disbursed until all the required environmental compliance, permitting, and design documents have been received and accepted by CDFW. Grantee must support all expense claims for reimbursement with appropriate documentation including indirect costs. State auditing requirements are described in Appendix A.

10.2. Reporting Project Progress

Grantees shall submit progress reports as outlined in the executed grant agreement to the CDFW grant manager for the duration of the grant. CDFW may also require annual reports and task-specific reports as project deliverables.

10.3. Standard Conditions

Successful applicants must agree to the appropriate terms and conditions for their entity type. General Grant Provisions include information regarding audits, amendments, liability insurance, and rights in data. All awarded entities must agree to the CDFW General Grant Provisions (PDF) for Public or Non-public entities. Awarded applicants from the University of California and California State University must agree to University Terms & Conditions - Exhibit "C" for University of California and California State University Agreements (UTC-220 Exhibit C) (PDF).

APPENDIX A – STATE AUDITING REQUIREMENTS

The list below details the documents or records that State Auditors may need to review in the event of a grant agreement being audited. Grant recipients should ensure that such records are maintained for each State funded project.

State Audit Document Requirements

Internal Controls:

1. Organization chart (e.g. Grant recipient's overall organization chart and organization chart for the State funded project).
2. Written internal procedures and flowcharts for the following:
    a. Receipts and deposits.
    b. Disbursements.
    c. State reimbursement requests.
    d. State funding expenditure tracking.
    e. Guidelines, policies, and procedures on State funded project.
3. Audit reports of the Grant recipient's internal control structure and financial statements within the last two years.
4. Prior audit reports on State funded projects.

State Funding:

1. Original grant agreement, any amendment(s) and budget modification documents.
2. A list of all bond-funded grants, loans, or subventions received from the State.
3. A list of all other funding sources for each project.

Agreements:

1. All subcontractor and consultant contracts and related documents, if applicable.
2. Agreements between the grant recipient, member agencies, and project partners as related to the State funded project.

Invoices:

1. Invoices from vendors and subcontractors for expenditures submitted to the State for payments under the grant agreement.
2. Documentation linking subcontractor invoices to State reimbursement requests and related grant agreement budget line items.
3. Reimbursement requests submitted to the State for the grant agreement.

Cash Documents:

1. Receipts (copies of warrants) showing payments received from the State.
2. Deposit slips or bank statements showing deposit of the payments received from the State.
3. Cancelled checks or disbursement documents showing payments made to vendors, subcontractors, consultants, or agents under the grant agreement.

Accounting Records:

1. Ledgers showing receipts and cash disbursement entries for State funding.
2. Ledgers showing receipts and cash disbursement entries of other funding sources.

3. Bridging documents that tie the general ledger to reimbursement requests submitted to the State for the grant agreement.

Administration Costs:

1. Supporting documents showing the calculation of administration costs.

Personnel:

1. List of all contractors and grant recipient staff that worked on the State funded project.
2. Payroll records including timesheets for contractor staff and the grant recipient's staff.

Project Files:

1. All supporting documentation maintained in the files.
2. All grant agreement related correspondence.