

Trump priorities, problems in Sacramento may lead to much larger budget shortfall

MORE BAD NEWS FOR COUNTY

BY JOSHUA STEWART

The \$100 million shortfall San Diego County Supervisor Dianne Jacob warned about last week might have been an understatement.

Trump administration priorities combined with financial problems in Sacramento likely will mean a considerably larger shortfall for the county, forcing the Board of Supervisors to decide how much to trim services and how much to dip into reserves.

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CHARLIE NEUMAN

STUDENTS RAISE TROUT IN CLASSROOM

Simon Breen, education manager of Escondido Creek Conservancy, inspects two-week-old trout with fourth-graders Ezekiel Acosta and Karla Gonzalez in Lana Brady's classroom at Conway Elementary in Escondido. Story, B9

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TROUT-RAISING PROJECT TEACHES KIDS ABOUT DATA, CONSERVATION

BY DEBORAH SULLIVAN BRENNAN

ESCONDIDO

Hundreds of fish are flourishing at Conway Elementary School in Escondido, where fourth-grade students are raising trout from eggs to fingerlings.

In three classrooms, chilled 50-gallon aquariums house the silvery, inch-long baby fish. The project "Trout in the Classroom," is an education program of the conservation group Trout Unlimited and is being sponsored by the Escondido Creek Conservancy at Conway, Quantum Academy and High Tech North County's elementary, middle and high schools.

Students in the program learn about the Escondido Creek watershed through the life cycle of the freshwater fish. It's part of the conservancy's effort to eventually repopulate the creek with native Southern steelhead, a type of ocean-going trout that have nearly vanished from San Diego.

"We do want steelhead in the creek," said Simon Breen, education manager for the conservancy. "There are a lot of obstacles. But this program is one step toward that

goal, by raising awareness."

The trout's journey from tank to lake is the center of the fourth-grade "expedition," a broad learning theme that draws together reading, writing, science and math. This year their expedition focuses on improving the local watershed.

Escondido Creek flows 26 miles from its headwaters above Lake Wohlford to the ocean at San Elijo Lagoon. For seven miles through the city of Escondido, it's contained within a concrete channel that was designed to control floodwater, but has also impaired water quality in the creek. The conservancy is working to restore the creek, and possibly remove the channel, in order to cool and clean the water flows.

Trout are acutely sensitive to water temperature and chemistry, so by learning about their development in the classroom, students learn what they would need to thrive in the creek. Students at Conway got their trout eggs from a hatchery at Mount Shasta, and watched them hatch two weeks ago.

When the fish grow to fingerlings, students will release them at Miramar Lake. Until then, they're excitedly watch-

ing the transition, checking daily for new developments.

"You can see the eyes and the fins, the way they grow, which is really a treat," said Ivan Ozenbaugh, 9.

They're also learning how to make scientific observations and take measurements; every day they check the water level, temperature and pH.

The project was funded with a \$10,000 grant from SDG&E, and Conway Elementary also secured a \$2,500 grant from the Escondido Education Foundation to equip classrooms for the trout, teacher Jim Blanchard said. As part of the project, students will present their project to city officials and write letters calling for creek cleanup and restoration.

The culmination of the project will be the release of fingerlings in about six weeks. In the meantime, students are looking forward to a field trip to Miramar Lake to bid farewell to their fish.

"They usually do a send-off, and read a poem or a letter," Breen said. "It's all very ceremonial."

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