

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
December 11, 2003

**FIRST STREET PENINSULA PIER ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

File No. 03-140  
Project Manager: Ann Buell

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$150,000 to the City of Benicia to improve public access to the First Street Peninsula Pier on the Carquinez Strait in Benicia, Solano County.

**LOCATION:** City of Benicia, on the Carquinez Strait in Solano County (Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

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**EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: Project Location
  - Exhibit 2: Site Map
  - Exhibit 3: Photographs
  - Exhibit 4: Preliminary Plans
  - Exhibit 5: Letters of Support
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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31164 of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to the City of Benicia to pay for improvements to the 1.2-acre staging area of the First Street Peninsula Pier, including porous asphalt paving, striping, curbs, lighting, stormwater drainage, extension of a paved perimeter trail, two or more interpretive signs, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible parking spaces and restroom. Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds, the City of Benicia shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer a detailed work program, budget and schedule for project completion; and the names and qualifications of any contractors and subcontractors to be used."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The First Street Peninsula Pier Access Improvements project is consistent with Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164, regarding the Conservancy's mandate to address the resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area.
  2. The First Street Peninsula Pier Access Improvements project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.”
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**PROJECT SUMMARY:** Staff requests authorization to disburse up to \$150,000 to the City of Benicia to improve public access to the First Street Peninsula Pier on the Carquinez Strait in Benicia, Solano County (Exhibit 2). The proposed project will result in the paving of a 1.2-acre degraded gravel staging area that covers most of the First Street Peninsula and serves the fishing pier at its tip (Exhibit 3). Facility improvements will include ADA-accessible parking and restroom facilities, a stormwater drainage system, lighting, curbs, striping, a turnaround, a paved perimeter path, and interpretive signs (Exhibit 4). The proposed project will be implemented within the footprint of the current staging area.

The First Street Peninsula (Point Benicia Spit) Pier is close to the city’s commercial district and is a popular destination for fishing, strolling, and passive recreation. However, access to and use of the site is limited. Visitors must cross the large parking area to reach the pier itself, either by crossing the potholed gravel parking area or walking along a paved perimeter pathway that exists on one side of the peninsula only (Exhibit 3). Either option is difficult for those in wheelchairs or with limited mobility. There is currently only a portable restroom and there is no lighting except out on the pier itself. The absence of lighting limits safe use of the parking area and the pathway.

The City of Benicia proposes to pave the parking area with porous asphalt, and add 65 striped parking stalls (including three handicapped spaces), street lights, and an ADA-accessible restroom that will comply with guidelines determined by the Downtown Historic Conservation Plan (1990). The paved perimeter walk will be extended to encircle the peninsula and post and chain barriers added to define the edge of the parking area. The City further proposes to improve stormwater drainage at the site. Currently there is no system to catch, direct, clean, or otherwise control stormwater that runs from the parking area directly into the Carquinez Strait. Preliminary drawings and plans include a water/oil/trash separator, and grass swales on the Carquinez Strait side of the peninsula.

**Site Description:** The project site is on the Point Benicia Spit, now referred to as the First Street Peninsula. It is owned and managed by the City of Benicia and is adjacent to Benicia's historic downtown district. The peninsula extends out into the Carquinez Strait, mostly parallel to shore. The southern side of the peninsula fronts directly onto the Carquinez Strait and the northern side faces Benicia. There are marsh wetlands along the Carquinez Strait side of the peninsula and extending farther east. It is an open space area with beautiful views of the Carquinez Strait, adjacent hills, and the Benicia Bridge. The parking area for the First Street Peninsula Pier covers 1.2 acres. The pier itself is at the far end of the peninsula. The lot is currently covered with gravel with concrete slabs in a few locations, and cars and trucks are allowed to park anywhere. This pier is one of only two piers in Benicia and is a popular destination for fishing. With the com-

mercial and historic district next to the fishing pier area, this is a regional destination, drawing people from Solano, Contra Costa, and Napa Counties.

**Project History:** In 1984, the City of Benicia was awarded a \$42,000 grant from the Coastal Conservancy to prepare an Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan (Plan) to guide the planning and development of public waterfront and public access improvements and to improve links between commercial uses and the waterfront. The Conservancy later granted \$400,000 to the City of Benicia to implement the First Street Promenade project recommended by the Plan (1991). This promenade is wide, attractive, and well-lit, and leads visitors from the commercial and historic district down to the Carquinez Strait and the First Street Peninsula. The current request for funds would build upon prior Conservancy funding both by further implementing the Plan itself and by extending public access improvements from First Street and its promenade all the way out to the First Street Peninsula Pier.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$150,000
City of Benicia	69,500
Wildlife Conservation Board	252,000
Coastal Impact Assistance Program (Solano Co.)	<u>88,500</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$560,000</b>

Conservancy funding for the proposed authorization is expected to come from the Conservancy's FY 02/03 "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002" (Proposition 40) appropriation for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. This authorization is consistent with the funding source and with the Conservancy's enabling legislation in Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Chapter 4.5, because the project will develop resources in support of publicly accessible outdoor recreation and protect land and water resources through the development of a stormwater drainage system at the site. In addition, as required by Proposition 40, this proposed project is supported by matching funding from the City of Benicia and other contributors.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

This project is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164, to address resource goals in the San Francisco Bay Area. In particular, the Conservancy may grant awards to improve public access to and around the bay, coast, and urban open spaces through the provision and preservation of trail systems and related facilities such as staging areas (§31162(a)); enhance scenic open-space areas of regional importance (§31162(b)); assist in the implementation of the adopted plans of local governments; and enhance open-space projects that are accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes. This project will include ADA-accessible parking, trails, and restroom facilities, improved safety through lighting, interpretive signs, a stormwater drainage system to better protect the waters of the Carquinez Strait, and a more attractive environment befitting the project's location directly on the Carquinez Strait and adjacent to the commercial and historic district of the City of Benicia, our first state capital. Furthermore, the project is consistent with the open space priorities in the Benicia Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan (1997), the City of Benicia General Plan (1999), the Benicia Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan

(1991), and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission Special Area Plan for the Benicia Waterfront (1977).

The proposed project satisfies the criteria for Bay Program priority set forth in §31163(d) in the following respects: 1) It is supported by adopted local and regional plans, as stated above; 2) It will serve a regional constituency; 3) It can be implemented in a timely way because matching funds are already committed; and 4) It includes matching funds that could be lost if the project is not carried out in the immediate future.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S  
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective A** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project will increase accessibility of public lands through various improvements to the 1.2-acre staging area and pedestrian walkway at the First Street Peninsula public pier.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective D** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project will greatly increase wheelchair accessibility to the First Street Peninsula Pier by paving the parking lot, adding ADA-accessible parking spaces and restroom facilities, and extending the paved perimeter walkway so that both sides of the peninsula may be accessed by those in wheelchairs.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S  
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

**Required Criteria**

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support of the public:** This project is supported by Congressman George Miller; State Senator Wesley Chesbro; Assemblymember Wolk; Benicia City Council; Benicia Parks, Recreation, and Cemeteries Commission; and Benicia Main Street.
4. **Location:** This project is located on the north side of the Carquinez Strait, within the geographic scope of the San Francisco Bay Plan (Special Area Plan for the Benicia Waterfront), and within the nine-county San Francisco Bay area (Solano County).
5. **Need:** The City of Benicia needs Conservancy funding to close the gap on the costs of this proposed project. Conservancy funding will comprise 27 percent of total construction costs.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** There are only two fishing piers in Benicia and few alternative piers elsewhere along the Carquinez Strait. Increased public access to the First Street Peninsula Pier will benefit regional visitors who are drawn to the site for fishing and/or to enjoy the open space, views, and adjacent historic and cultural amenities in Benicia.

**Additional Criteria**

8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** This project will provide increased public accessibility to the site in several ways: making the site wheelchair-accessible, providing ADA-accessible restrooms, and providing lighting for safety at night. Additionally, the stormwater drainage system should decrease the quantity of polluted runoff flowing directly into the Carquinez Strait from the parking area.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
12. **Readiness:** Preliminary drawings are complete and all matching funds are secured.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See the “Project History” section above.

**CONSISTENCY WITH SAN FRANCISCO BAY PLAN:**

This project is located within the San Francisco Bay Plan's Special Area Plan for the Benicia Waterfront. Bay Plan policy (as amended October 17, 2002) emphasizes that "facilities within designated waterfront parks that provide optimal conditions for specific water-oriented recreational uses should be preserved and, where appropriate, enhanced for those uses, consistent with natural and cultural resource preservation." (Policy 4-a, General) Also, "Interpretive information describing natural, historical and cultural resources should be provided in waterfront parks where feasible." (Policy 5-a, Waterfront Parks)

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

This project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 Cal. Code of Regulation Section 15302 in that it involves replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced.