

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 11, 2003

SANTA MONICA BAY RESTORATION

File No. 00-117
Project Manager: Marc Beyeler

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$62,957 to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps to complete the Redondo Beach Bluffs Restoration Project, and up to \$444,000 to the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District to develop final design and feasibility plans for the Malibu Creek Recycled Water Line Extension, to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan approved by the Coastal Conservancy on August 2, 2001.

LOCATION: Along Santa Monica Bay and the Malibu Creek sub-watershed, Los Angeles County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: Regional Maps
 - Exhibit 2: Bay Watershed Council Resolution
 - Exhibit 3: Redondo Beach Bluff Pilot Restoration Site
 - Exhibit 4: Coastal Development Permit
 - Exhibit 5: Project Location and Site Map
 - Exhibit 6: Notice of Exemption
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the following actions to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan (the “Bay Plan”), approved by the Conservancy on August 2, 2001, as more specifically described in the accompanying staff recommendation:

- a. For the Redondo Beach Bluffs Restoration Pilot Project, disburse an amount not to exceed sixty-two thousand nine hundred fifty-seven dollars (\$62,957) to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps; and

- b. For the Malibu Creek Recycled Water Line Extension, disburse an amount not to exceed four hundred forty-four thousand dollars (\$444,000) to the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District.

These authorizations are subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds for any individual project, the grantee shall submit the following for review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:

1. A final work program, schedule and budget for the project;
2. All contractors to be employed for the project;
3. Evidence of all permits and approvals for the project; and
4. For only the Redondo Beach Bluffs Restoration Pilot Project, a program for the installation of sign(s).”

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 proposed project is consistent with the guidelines and criteria set forth under Chapter 6 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270) regarding the enhancement of coastal resources.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the guidelines and criteria set forth in the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted on January 24, 2001.
3. The project proposed for funding has been identified in the respective Local Coastal Plan as requiring action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems, consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31252.
4. The Los Angeles Conservation Corps is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize funding for two specific projects to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan (the Bay Plan). The two projects proposed for Conservancy action in this authorization are described below.

Redondo Beach Bluffs Restoration Pilot Project
Los Angeles Conservation Corps \$62,957

This project will re-vegetate a two-acre demonstration site to illustrate the feasibility of bluff restoration and establish a native plant nursery in the community that will involve at-risk youth. A master plan will be completed that identifies opportunities for restoration of the beach bluff habitat from Ballona Creek to the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The project is a cooperative effort between the Conservation Corps and the Los Angeles County Department of Beaches and Harbors. Previous Prop. 12 funding supported the development of the native plant nursery and initial demonstration planning. Funding for the full project was conditional on the issuance of a Coastal

Development Permit (CDP) by the California Coastal Commission. The project has now been granted the CDP (Exhibits 3 and 4).

Malibu Creek Recycled Water Line Extension

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District \$444,000

This project will involve the final engineering design and feasibility of the extension of a recycled water line which will reduce excess flows in Malibu Creek by diverting about 300 AF/yr of surplus recycled water, currently discharged to Malibu Creek, to a public golf course, where it will replace potable water used for irrigation (Exhibit 5). This will significantly reduce unnatural creek flows which inhibit the closure of Malibu Lagoon, enabling pathogens from other sources to contaminate the beach.

Site Description: The Santa Monica Bay watershed encompasses approximately 400 square miles subdivided into separate sub-watershed drainages. The Santa Monica Bay watershed is divided into two major topographic areas: the Los Angeles coastal plain and the Santa Monica Mountains. The Santa Monica Bay watershed is one of the nation's most highly urbanized regions.

Bordered on the north by the Santa Monica Mountains divide, on the east by Griffith Park, on the south by Point Fermin, and on the west by the eastern portion of Ventura County, the watershed encompasses residential areas, commercial and industrial areas and undeveloped open space lands, primarily within the Santa Monica Mountains. There are 28 separate drainage basins within the Santa Monica Bay watershed.

Project History: In recognition of the need to protect Santa Monica Bay and its sub-watersheds, in May, 1988, the State of California and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) nominated and included Santa Monica Bay in the National Estuary Program (NEP). Established under the Water Quality Act of 1987 and managed by the US EPA, the NEP includes more than two dozen significant estuaries and coastal water bodies nationwide.

As an NEP, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project (SMBRP) is charged with assessing the Bay's pollution problems, and with producing the Bay Restoration Plan to serve as the blueprint for the Bay's long-term recovery. In 1995, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan was approved by the State of California and the US EPA. The Bay Plan includes 250 actions, including specific actions focused on habitat conservation, enhancement and restoration, pollution prevention and treatment control, and assessment, education and monitoring.

The Bay Plan includes several goals, including: (1) reducing pollutant loadings to and prevent degradation of the waters of Santa Monica Bay; (2) reducing human health risks associated with swimming in or harvesting seafood from the Bay; and (3) restoring, rehabilitating and protecting the marine ecosystem, living resources and biodiversity of the Bay and its watersheds. Specifically, the Bay Plan has identified the protection, restoration, and creation of wetlands within the Bay as a major goal of the project.

The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Proposition 12) earmarked \$25,000,000 to the Coastal Conservancy for restoration of Santa Monica Bay in accordance with the goals and priorities of the Bay Plan.

Proposition 12 requires the Bay Watershed Council, the stakeholder board of the Restoration Project, to determine project eligibility and grant priorities. Working with Conservancy staff, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project staff have solicited project proposals that would achieve

the goals of the Bay Restoration Plan and address its water quality and natural resource protection objectives. Both the projects recommended for funding in this authorization have been approved for funding by the Bay Watershed Council (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy:	
Redondo Beach Bluffs Restoration Pilot Project	\$ 62,957
Malibu Creek Recycled Water Line Extension	<u>444,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$506,957

The source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from Proposition 12, the "Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000," for projects to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan. The state budgets for FY 2000/01 and FY 01/02 include \$15,000,000 for implementing the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resource Code Sections 31251-31270.

Pursuant to §31251, the Conservancy may award grants to enhance coastal resources. The projects proposed for funding will enhance fish and wildlife habitat in coastal wetlands and coastal watersheds in Santa Monica Bay, and is consistent with this section.

Consistent with §31252, the project areas have been identified in the respective certified local coastal plan as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems or so identified in other local plans. See the "Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies" section below for details.

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

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objective A**, the proposed project will increase Coastal Resource Conservation by restoring and enhancing coastal wetland and stream corridor resources within the Malibu Creek watershed. The Malibu Creek project will enhance lagoon water quality and the health of aquatic resources in the lagoon.

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objective C**, the proposed Redondo Beach Bluffs project will remove invasive plants along the Santa Monica Bay watershed and allow for their replacement with native vegetation.

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:** These projects will be funded with monies appropriated to the Conservancy from Prop.12 for implementing the Santa Monica Bay Plan.
3. **Support from the public:** Implementation of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan has widespread public and agency support. The Santa Monica Bay Watershed Council includes members from private industry, the general public, community environmental organizations, as well as local, regional, state and federal agencies.
4. **Location:** The proposed projects are located within Santa Monica Bay and the Malibu Creek sub-watershed drainage.
5. **Need:** The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan identifies the significant natural coastal resources that require public action to conserve, enhance and restore natural resources of state-wide interest.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Santa Monica Bay has been identified by both the State of California and the US EPA as a coastal water body of national significance. The Santa Monica Bay watershed contains much of the remaining wetlands within Los Angeles County, a priority of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project.

Additional Criteria

13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** The Coastal Conservancy has been involved in resource protection, enhancement and restoration projects within the Santa Monica Bay watershed for more than a decade, including projects focused on the remaining coastal wetlands within the Bay. Implementation of these projects at this time will contribute to the fulfillment of long-standing Conservancy goals. The Coastal Conservancy has also been involved in enhancement and restoration planning for the Malibu Creek watershed for the past several years. Currently the Coastal Conservancy is providing staff and financial resources for the restoration of Malibu Lagoon.
15. **Cooperation:** The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project is a cooperative venture involving a broad range of interested and affected stakeholders including private industry, citizens, environmental groups, and local, regional, state and federal agencies.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The Malibu Creek Recycled Water Line project proposed for funding in this authorization is to be undertaken within the Santa Monica Mountains portion of the Santa Monica Bay watershed. This project is consistent with the Malibu Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (LUP). In "Section 4.2 Marine And Land Resource Protection," the LUP recognizes the importance of both sensitive marine and land resources, including the terrestrial riparian, wetland and associated upland habitats. The LUP includes several policies requiring the conservation, restoration and enhancement of these important coastal resources. The proposed project in the Malibu Creek watershed would enhance natural values within the Lagoon complex by diverting unnatural creek flows and improving lagoon health and the health of aquatic and nearshore marine resources.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed projects are categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15262, the Malibu Creek Recycled Water Line Extension Project is exempt because it involves only planning and feasibility analysis. Pursuant to §15304, the Redondo Beach Bluffs Pilot Project is exempt because it involves only minor alterations to the condition of land and vegetation and does not involve the removal of mature, healthy scenic trees (Exhibit 6). Staff will file Notices of Exemption upon approval.