
EXHIBIT 2

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
August 14, 2003

SANTA CRUZ: 26TH AVENUE STAIRWAY CONSTRUCTION

File No. 03-083
Project Manager: Joan Cardellino

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$300,000 to Santa Cruz County to reconstruct a beach access stairway at the foot of 26th Avenue, Santa Cruz County.

LOCATION: Live Oak neighborhood, Santa Cruz County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of up to three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) to Santa Cruz County (“County”) to construct a public beach access stairway at the foot of 26th Avenue, subject to the condition that no funds shall be disbursed until the County has submitted for the written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:

1. Evidence that all necessary permits, environmental clearances, and approvals have been obtained.
2. A final work plan, including budget and schedule.
3. A signing plan.
4. The names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed to carry out this project.
5. Evidence that the County has accepted all remaining Offers-to-Dedicate Public Access Easements within its jurisdiction.”

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 public access purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31400 *et seq.*

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2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
3. The proposed project will serve more than local needs."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends disbursement of up to \$300,000 to Santa Cruz County to reconstruct a beach access stairway at the foot of 26th Avenue. This project will replace a stairway that was destroyed in storms during the winter of 1997-98. The stairway provides access down a 33-foot-high bluff to approximately 1,500 linear feet of beach. Santa Cruz County beaches receive hundreds of thousands of visitors every year, and this particular stretch of beach is very popular with surfers. Access to it has been missed, and the stairway needs to be repaired so that visitors can reach the beach safely.

The stairway project includes complete reconstruction of the stairway structure, installation of two benches and a bike rack, redesign of an existing landscape planter to make it smaller, installation of five public parking spaces, and removal and replacement of rip rap on the beach at the foot of 26th Avenue.

Site Description: The stairway will be built down a 33-foot high bluff above a sandy beach stretching approximately 1,500 feet between Corcoran Lagoon and Moran Lake.

Project History: In April 1999 the Conservancy approved a grant of \$40,000 to rebuild this stairway. The grant agreement was never fully executed because the County encountered unanticipated issues from the Coastal Commission regarding the stairway design, including the design of the stairway piling supports and provision of parking and landscaping improvements. All of those issues have now been resolved, but the construction costs have increased accordingly. At its June 11, 2003 meeting the Commission approved the 26th Avenue stairway project.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$300,000
FEMA	51,053
Santa Cruz County cash and in-kind	<u>100,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$451,053

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund" (Proposition 40) and the Coastal Access Account, about \$150,000 from each source. The park bond funds may be used for purposes consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. As discussed below, the project is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21. Proposition 40 also requires the Conservancy to give priority to grant projects with matching funds, which this project has. The Coastal Access Account is to be used for coastal access projects, and may be used for operation and maintenance expenses as well.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is consistent with Public Resources Code Sections 31400 and 31400.1. Section 31400 states that “. . . the Coastal Conservancy [shall] have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. . . .” By helping Santa Cruz County rebuild the 26th Avenue stairway, the Conservancy is fulfilling this responsibility. According to §31400.1, the Conservancy may award grants to any public agency “. . . to develop, operate, or manage lands for public access purposes to and along the coast.” The Conservancy's grant to the County will help develop a public access stairway.

The proposed project is consistent with the Santa Cruz County Local Coastal Program as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies below.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective B** of the Strategic Plan, the proposed project will increase public access opportunities by reopening a beach to public use that has been inaccessible for much of the past five years.

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:** See letters of support in Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Santa Cruz County.
5. **Need:** The County is relying on funding assistance from the Conservancy to help pay for the cost of the stairway reconstruction.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Live Oak, an unincorporated area Santa Cruz County, receives thousands of visitors annually. The area is very popular with surfers and other recreational users, and provides access to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The 26th Avenue Stairway project is consistent with Santa Cruz County Local Coastal Plan Objectives 7.7b and 7.7c regarding shoreline and beach access in that the reconstruction of the stairway increases the public's ability to reach the beach, and it expands visual access to the coastline. The stairway project is identified in LCP policy 7.7.15 (Areas Designated for Primary Public Access) as a Primary Public Access, and it has the requisite bicycle parking, garbage collection, path improvements, and provisions for people with physical disabilities, consistent with that policy.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

This project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15302 regarding replacement of existing structures. Upon approval by the Conservancy, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.