

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

October 5, 2006

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA CONSERVANCY PROGRAM: PARTNERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

File No. 06-039

Project Manager: Ann Buell

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$320,000 to Greenbelt Alliance to produce a plan for the protection of open space priority land in the San Francisco Bay Area and to further the natural resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

LOCATION: All nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area (San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano, Napa, Sonoma, Marin) (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location

Exhibit 2: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed three hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$320,000) to Greenbelt Alliance, acting through the Bay Area Open Space Council, to produce a plan for the protection of open space priority land in the San Francisco Bay Area and to further the natural resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. Prior to disbursement of any Conservancy funds, Greenbelt Alliance shall submit for review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a detailed work program, timeline, and budget, and the names and qualifications of any intended contractors.”

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 purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165) regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
3. Greenbelt Alliance is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization to disburse up to \$320,000 to Greenbelt Alliance, acting through the Bay Area Open Space Council (Council), to produce a plan for the protection of open space priority land in the San Francisco Bay Area and to further the natural resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The Council will work with a broad array of regional conservation and land management agencies, cities, counties, and non-profit organizations to accomplish these objectives. It will expand and improve its capacity for regional data-sharing through technical upgrades to its website and more frequent updates to key land protection data sets that form the basis of much of the land protection planning in the Bay Area.

The Council and Greenbelt Alliance have established a task force to guide the planning process with members representing diverse perspectives on land use and land protection methods. Called the Green Vision Group, they will use the San Francisco Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals project and the *Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals* report (1999) as the scientific foundation for their plan. Scenic, agricultural, historic and recreational lands will be integrated into the plan. This collaborative process will include data collection from all nine Bay Area Counties, the creation of a base map, identification of key conservation areas and regional priorities, assessment of funding needs, preparation of a plan discussing the conservation priorities identified, and release of the regional open space vision to the public.

With a long-term goal of protecting an additional one million acres, the Council is interested in establishing new performance measures that will complement the traditional approach of measuring success by the number of acres protected. The Council proposes assessing the values that lie beneath public and private support for land protection efforts in the San Francisco Bay Area (economic sustainability and quality of life, for example) with the help of the Center for Whole Communities to formulate new, additional measures of success. This effort may be as important a step in planning for the protection of the next million acres as the more traditional approaches outlined by the Green Vision Group because it will take into consideration the social and cultural realities and development pressures of our region as they relate to implementing the Green Vision plan. It should result in the increased capacity of conservation organizations to collaborate with new and different partners in the accomplishment of mutual goals and to monitor their progress toward those goals. The results of this work will be shared with the members of the Council, who represent more than 50 non-profit conservation organizations and land management agencies around the region, and with the region as a whole through the Council’s website.

In support of the Green Vision Group's creation of an implementation plan for the protection of additional acres and in support of the entire San Francisco Bay Area region's conservation community, the Council also proposes to make substantial upgrades to its data sharing capabilities, to update its directory of land protection organizations and agencies in the Bay Area, and update and release the Bay Area Protected Lands database every six months. These improvements would include dynamically linking the Council web site with those of its members. This form of linkage will create a resource library of land protection information and guidance, with customized collections of news articles on land conservation and resource management topics. Under this grant, Council staff would continue its involvement in a regional effort to establish metadata standards that will accelerate information sharing on a regional basis. This metadata effort is part of a group called CalEDLN (California Environmental Digital Library Network) and is being led by the Sonoma Ecology Center, UC Davis Information Center for the Environment, and the California Resources Agency. Other project partners include the San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, San Francisco Estuary Institute, and the Institute for Fisheries Resources.

Finally, the Council will continue to build regional partnerships and provide practical support for project implementation through the workshops and information exchange meetings that it facilitates, including bi-monthly meetings, annual reports on the accomplishments of the Bay Program, and its annual conference. The Council has shown it has the ability to carry out all of the proposed work through successful completion of past Conservancy grants (see "Project History" below) and has the support of legislators and leading conservation organizations around the region (Exhibit 2).

Site Description: The nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

Project History: The Council has played a unique role in the history of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program (Bay Program), beginning with the organization of a coalition of public agencies, nonprofit land conservation organizations, and environmental, business and agricultural interests that won passage of SB104 establishing the Bay Program in 1997. Since that time, the Council has served its members and the general public as a leader in land conservation planning and implementation, and has helped the Bay Program stay updated on challenges and opportunities around the Bay Area.

The Conservancy has helped to support Greenbelt Alliance and the Council through several previous grants. When combined those grants total almost \$1 million and have been matched by about \$1.5 million. The annual reports about the accomplishments of the Bay Program are among the most widely distributed and used publications of the Council. Its annual conference and bimonthly meetings are very well attended and are excellent opportunities to exchange information with others in the land protection community. These meetings and reports will continue to be produced under this grant.

The increasing pressure of development on the remaining biodiversity of our regional open space necessitates new and highly collaborative approaches such as those presented in the Council's proposal. The work of the Green Vision Group, the workshops, and database technological upgrades are all new and important elements to the Council's work and have been ranked as a high priority for funding by Conservancy staff because of the need to form new and highly collaborative partnerships.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$320,000
Other sources	<u>155,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$475,000

The Conservancy’s contribution of \$320,000 is expected to come from the Conservancy’s FY 2004/2005 appropriation from the “California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002” (Proposition 40) for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. This proposed authorization is consistent with the funding source because this project would carry out Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Matching funds come from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (\$50,000), the Packard Foundation (\$30,000), the San Francisco Foundation (\$15,000) and Council membership fees (\$60,000). Other funds have been requested, including \$100,000 from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Foundation, and an additional \$15,000 from the San Francisco Foundation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is undertaken in accordance with Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Section 31163(a) directs the Conservancy to cooperate with local and regional government bodies, non-profit organizations, and other interested parties in identifying and adopting long-term resource and recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Section 31163(b) directs the Conservancy to participate in and support interagency actions and public/private partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area for the purpose of implementing subdivision (a), and providing for broad-based local involvement in, and support for, the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The Open Space Council greatly enhances the ability of Bay Program staff to cooperate and participate in regional planning through the meetings, conferences, committees, and workshops it organizes for both its membership of more than 50 conservation organizations and agencies and for the interested public at large.

This project is appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in Section 31163(c) in that (1) it is supported by a multitude of local and regional plans that call for coordinated action to protect open space and recreational opportunities for local and regional use; (2) it serves a regional constituency – the nine-county Bay Area; (3) it can be implemented in a timely way because many projects and all staff are already in place; and (4) it is anticipated to include matching funds.

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

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective A** of the Conservancy’s Strategic Plan, the proposed project will ensure efficiency and coordination among agencies and organizations in the development of project priorities and an effective database for the San Francisco Bay Area.

**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:** The Bay Area Open Space Council, supported by Greenbelt Alliance, comprises more than 50 public agencies and nonprofit land conservation organizations. Letters of support are included in Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** The proposed project focuses on the entire nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.
5. **Need:** Without the Conservancy's financial support, it would be difficult for the Council to keep in place the regional networks and relationships which make it possible to respond effectively to issues as they arise and to support the purposes of the Bay Program.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project has a regional scope, including all nine Bay Program counties.

Additional Criteria

7. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
8. **Readiness:** The Open Space Council/Greenbelt Alliance is well positioned to conduct the project in a timely manner, as it has successfully carried out projects that further the purposes of the Conservancy and the Bay Program since 1991 and has earned the respect of its member constituents and funding agencies and organizations.
9. **Cooperation:** The Open Space Council/Greenbelt Alliance builds cooperation among regional agencies as a primary focus of its work and does so with its 50-strong membership of agencies and organizations.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: Under California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 15262, feasibility and planning activities are statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review.