

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
November 9, 2006

**PIGEON POINT HISTORIC LIGHT STATION STATE PARK ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

File No. 03-044  
Project Manager: Timothy Duff

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorize disbursement of up to \$305,000 to the State Department of Parks and Recreation for construction of access improvements at the Pigeon Point Historic Light Station State Park.

**LOCATION:** Pigeon Point, west of Highway One, approximately 20 miles south of Half Moon Bay, southern San Mateo County coast (Exhibit 1).

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Public Access

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**EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: Project Location
  - Exhibit 2: Site Map
  - Exhibit 3: Negative Declaration and Mitigation  
Monitoring Plan (board members only)
  - Exhibit 4: Schematic of Proposed Lighthouse Gateway/  
Parking Improvements
  - Exhibit 5: Photos of Project Site
  - Exhibit 6: Letters of Support
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**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 an amount not to exceed \$305,000 to the State Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) for construction of access improvements at the Pigeon Point Historic Light Station State Park located in San Mateo

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County, as shown on Exhibit 2 to the accompanying staff recommendation.

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds for construction, DPR shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:
  - a. Evidence that DPR has obtained all necessary permits and approvals, and all other funds necessary to complete the project.
  - b. A final work program, including final construction drawings, a final budget, schedule, and names of any contractors and subcontractors to be employed for these tasks.
  - c. A signing plan for the project acknowledging Conservancy participation, and the site's function as a segment of the California Coastal Trail.
2. The project shall be consistent with the Conservancy's "Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development."
3. DPR shall manage and maintain the public access improvements for a period of not less than 20 years.

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 objectives of Sections 31400, *et. seq.* of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code regarding coastal access.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring Program to be adopted by the County of San Mateo on October 25, 2006, under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 3 and finds that there is no substantial evidence that the project as mitigated will have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15382.
4. There is no evidence before the Conservancy that the proposed project will have a potentially adverse effect, either individually or cumulatively, on wildlife resources as defined under California Fish and Game Code Section 711.2.
5. The Conservancy has on the basis of substantial evidence rebutted the presumption of adverse effect contained in California Code of Regulations 753.5(d) regarding potential for adverse effect on wildlife resources as defined under California Fish and Game Code Section 711.2.
6. The proposed projects serve greater than local needs."

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

The project entails the construction of a new parking lot for up to 27 cars, and public access facilities including a new 2-unit bathroom, blufftop paths, and landscaping at the entrance

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leading to the Pigeon Point Historic Light Station State Park, San Mateo County's most scenic and popular coastal landmark (Exhibit 5a). Assisting DPR in the design and construction of public access improvements at Pigeon Point is recommended in the Coastal Conservancy's "Completing the California Coastal Trail" Report (January 2003).

Accessed from Highway One via Pigeon Point Road, the existing informal parking area at the Light Station is limited and adversely impacts the aesthetics of the lighthouse area. The proposed new parking area would replace the existing parking currently located directly in front of the Light Station and youth hostel complex, and would establish a much-needed gateway to the park (Exhibit 4). When completed, the parking lot would be more attractive and less visually obtrusive than the current haphazard parking arrangement, and would significantly enhance the aesthetics of the approach to the lighthouse complex and to the nearby blufftop and beach areas (Exhibit 5b).

DPR owns all of the blufftop and beach areas surrounding the lighthouse (as well as the lighthouse itself and the associated outbuildings and youth hostel), and would operate and maintain the proposed new public access facilities. These improvements would help to further establish the lighthouse as a hub for public access and recreation in the region, including access to the California Coastal Trail that is planned to extend north and south from the lighthouse to nearby State Park beaches at Bean Hollow, Gazos Creek and Ano Nuevo State Parks.

If funds are approved, the proposed parking lot will be surfaced with compacted base rock. This material will maximize rainwater percolation and minimize runoff, while providing a stable all-weather surface for parking with a rustic appearance consistent with the setting. Decomposed granite paths would connect the parking area to the other access facilities. Driveway aprons onto Pigeon Point Road would be paved with asphaltic concrete. The parking and pathways will meet all applicable handicap access standards.

In addition to constructing the parking and connecting pathways, the project would include restoration of the native coastal scrub landscape in areas currently occupied by non-native ice plant or denuded by uncontrolled parking to the west of the Light Station (Exhibit 5c-d). Curbs and barriers would be installed to prevent vehicle access into these areas and a decomposed granite-surfaced overlook area would be developed in conjunction with the blufftop restoration.

To improve management of surface/stormwater runoff, rainwater would be collected in a catch basin located at the northwest corner of the lot, conducted to a small settling basin, and directed through a culvert onto rocks above the beach. Due to the permeable base rock parking surface, the amount of runoff entering this drainage system is projected to be relatively small. A berm landscaped with native plants would help screen the parking from Pigeon Point Road and Highway One.

**Site Description:** The site is located west of Highway One approximately midway between Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz along the southern San Mateo County coast (Exhibit 1). The Pigeon Point area features some of the most spectacular and pristine scenic, historic, agricultural and coastal resources to be found anywhere on the California coast, and is situated within a 45 minute drive from the major metropolitan centers of San Jose and San Francisco. The project site

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is surrounded by sandy beaches, rocky shoreline and tidepool areas, and irrigated farmland, all of which is in public ownership or owned by the Peninsula Open Space Trust. The lighthouse anchors the site, and at 113 feet high is among the tallest of the state's lighthouses (along with the Point Arena lighthouse). The site also features a highly popular youth hostel and a visitor center offering interpretive facilities with support from a volunteer docent program.

**Project History:** For the past four years staff from the State Department of Parks and Recreation, Coastal Conservancy, San Mateo County, American Youth Hostels Inc, a nonprofit organization that operates the lighthouse hostel, and Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) have been planning for the development of public access improvements at the lighthouse area. To determine the best alternatives for parking to serve the Light Station, in 2003 the Coastal Conservancy funded preparation of the Pigeon Point Parking Alternative Study. The study assessed opportunities and constraints for developing new parking facilities to serve visitors to the Light Station and surrounding public lands. Based on input from the participating parties, the preferred parking alternatives identified in the study were at the subject site, directly across the road from the Light Station, and along the northern stretch of Pigeon Point Road. The study confirmed that the subject site should be developed first, as it has the lowest potential for archeological resources, has no impact on biological or agricultural resources, and has a very low visual impact given its location and the project design.

In 2004 and 2005, the State Department of Parks and Recreation and the Coastal Conservancy acquired from the Peninsula Open Space Trust fee and easement interests on all of the blufftop, beach and agricultural lands surrounding the Pigeon Point Light Station area. In late 2005, on behalf of DPR the Coastal Conservancy submitted plans and specifications, and permit application and environmental review documents to San Mateo County's Planning Department. During the summer and fall of 2006 DPR and Coastal Conservancy staff met on three separate occasions with members of San Mateo County's Agricultural Advisory Committee to solicit their input on the project. On October 25, 2006, the project was presented to the San Mateo County Planning Commission for approval of the project and the associated permits. On October 25, 2006 the County approved the project and all of the required permits necessary to construct the project.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$305,000
State Department of Parks and Recreation (in-kind)	<u>25,000</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$330,000</b>

The expected source of Conservancy funds for the proposed project is the FY 2004/05 budget appropriation from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40). This funding source may be used for the development of land and water resources in accordance with the provisions of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. (Public Resources Code Section 5096.650(b)). The

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proposed project serves to assist in the development of land-based public access to and along the coast. Proposition 40 also requires the Conservancy to give priority to grant projects with matching funds (Public Resources Code Section 5096.651), and this project is supported by matching funds.

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

The proposed project would be carried out pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31409), regarding the implementation of public coastal accessways. Public Resources Code Section 31400 directs the Conservancy to have a principal role in the implementation of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. To this end, Public Resources Code Section 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to "provide such assistance as is required to aid public agencies and nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division." Granting funds to the State Department of Parks and Recreation for the purpose of constructing public access improvements at the Pigeon Point Historic Light Station State Park, including a new parking lot, bathroom, and blufftop paths, is consistent with this section. Funding construction of the proposed project is also consistent with Section 31400.1 which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to a public agency for purposes of developing lands suitable for public accessways to and along the coast, when the subject accessways serve greater than local needs. The Pigeon Point Historic Light Station State Park serves the recreational needs of an estimated two million annual visitors, and developing these park lands with improved public access facilities would serve to improve public access to and along the San Mateo coast. Consistent with Sections 31408, the Conservancy has consulted with DPR and the Coastal Commission to coordinate development of this California Coastal Trail project.

The proposed project is consistent with the Local Coastal Program of San Mateo County, as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies below.

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

The project is consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan as follows:

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objectives B and C**, the project would include the placement of Coastal Trail signs on existing trails and construct and improve trails within public ownership.

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective D**, the project would increase coastal recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, and correct dangerous conditions by constructing new blufftop parking and accessway facilities and restoring degraded blufftop areas.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S**

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**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 has widespread support, including that of State Senator Joe Simitian and Assemblyman Gene Mullin. See Exhibit 6 for letters of support.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of San Mateo County.
5. **Need:** Without Conservancy funding, the existing informal and undersized parking and access facilities at the site would remain inadequate to serve the growing number of park visitors. Conservancy funding is needed to assist DPR in constructing the needed improvements.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project would serve residents from throughout San Mateo County as well as the millions of annual visitors to the San Francisco Bay Area and state who travel to and along the central coast along Highway One.

**Additional Criteria**

1. **Readiness:** Environmental review under CEQA has been completed and all required permits to construct the project are expected to be issued by the end of 2006. If Conservancy funds are authorized, the grantee would be ready to initiate the project by the summer of 2007.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:**

As a condition of approval, the project, as designed, will be consistent with Conservancy's Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development as follows:

**Standard No. 2      Correct Hazards**

The project will be designed and located to minimize unwarranted hazards to public safety, and will serve to reduce hazards associated with visitors walking on the site's eroding blufftop.

**Standard No. 8      Trails**

The parking and associated paths will include appropriate paving materials, adequate trail

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drainage system, trash receptacles, benches, barriers, and signs.

**Standard No. 9 Scenic Overlooks**

The project includes a scenic overlook to provide the public with panoramic views of the coast and will be accessible to those with physical disabilities.

**Standard No. 12 Support Facilities**

The new parking lot will include other support facilities such as directional and resource interpretation signs.

**Standard No. 13 Barrier-Free Access**

The parking lot and blufftop pathway and scenic overlook will be wheelchair-accessible.

**CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The San Mateo County Local Coastal Program (LCP) contains several policies that support the construction of public access improvements at Pigeon Point. The Shoreline Access Component of the LCP, Table 10.6, "Site Specific Recommendations for Shoreline Destinations" identifies the Pigeon Point Lighthouse area as a priority for the development of parking, trails, and blufftop viewpoints. In addition, Policy 10.35 calls for the establishment "of priorities for expenditure of public funds, including Coastal Conservancy funds, based on maximizing public recreational opportunities." The project area is considered to be San Mateo County's most popular and visible coastal landmark, and this project would serve to maximize public recreational opportunities there.

The proposed project would also implement several policies contained in the "Recreation/Visitor Serving Facilities Component" of the LCP. Policy 11.13a calls for the establishment of a Coastal Trail system connecting major shoreline facilities to inland parks and facilities and link existing and proposed recreation facilities along the coast. Consistent with this section, the proposed project would serve to improve linkages between the lighthouse and surrounding Coastal Trail segments located on adjacent beaches and bluffs. Finally, consistent with Policy 11.24.a(4), the project would serve to expand the recreational use of an existing publicly owned recreation area.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The County of San Mateo (County) is the lead agency for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") for this project. The County prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Mitigation Monitoring Program (MMP) for the project, plus several other potential future access projects serving the area, and on September 18, 2006 posted a Notice of Intent to Adopt the MND at the County Planning Department and the State Clearinghouse, and published notices in local newspapers. The County is expected to prepare

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responses to public comments received during the public comment period, and on November 8, 2006, to approve the project, adopt the MND and MMP and determine that, consistent with 14 California Code of Regulations Section 753.5(d), there is no evidence before it that the project would have any potential adverse impacts on fish and wildlife resources or the habitat upon which wildlife depends as defined under California Fish and Game Code 711.2. On November 9, 2006 the County is expected to file a Notice of Determination with the County Clerk of San Mateo County.

CEQA requires consideration of potential environmental effects of agency actions and approvals, unless exempt. With respect to the project that Coastal Conservancy would fund, the MND identified potentially significant effects in the areas of Land Suitability and Geology, Physical Resources, Air Quality, Water Quality and Noise, Aesthetic, Cultural and Historic Resources, and Land Use and General Plans. Mitigation measures have been incorporated to reduce these potential effects to a level of insignificance, as summarized below (See also Exhibit 3 for a more detailed discussion of the required mitigation measures, mitigation monitoring and reporting).

**Land Suitability and Geology**

The components of the project as a whole would involve disturbance of more than one acre of land. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant (DPR) shall submit an erosion control plan which demonstrates how the parking area, restroom site, and connecting trails will be graded and drainage will be controlled to avoid erosion and siltation. The project would not involve structures other than the new restroom, a small one-story building, which would be designed and built in conformance with the seismic requirements of the Uniform Building Code, and the requirements and recommendations of the Structural Engineers of California, the County Geologist, and the soil and foundation investigation report submitted for the project site.

**Physical Resources**

While there are no substantial conflicts between the existing informal parking and the current crops being cultivated, possible future changes to crops, chemicals, and/or regulations could generate conflicts between parking at the proposed project site and agricultural spraying. The applicant shall post signs at the parking area and at other appropriate locations that inform facility users of the adjacent agricultural operations. Signs will warn users that pesticides may be used on the properties, users may get wet from agricultural irrigation, and there may be periodic closures to accommodate specific agricultural operations. The applicant shall enter into an agreement with the owners of the agricultural lands that will specify when and how the parking area will be closed to allow for pesticide applications and other agricultural operations. Parking may be prohibited during periods of pesticide application, if needed. The applicant shall be responsible for posting any parking prohibitions or closure.

**Air Quality, Water Quality, Sonic**

**Air Quality**

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Small amounts of hazardous materials (oil, gasoline, etc.) may be temporarily located onsite during the new project construction activities. This routine occurrence would be subject to existing local, state, and federal regulations and controls, and thus would not be expected to create a significant hazard to the public or the environment. The applicant shall submit a dust control plan to the San Mateo County Planning Division for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit associated with any phase of this proposed project. The approved plan shall be implemented for the duration of any grading and construction activities that generate dust and other airborne particles

**Water Quality**

Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the applicant shall submit an erosion control plan which demonstrates how the parking areas, cul-de-sac, restroom site, and connecting trails will be graded and drainage will be controlled. The plan shall also show how sediment and other pollutants will be contained on-site if rain should occur during construction. The approved erosion and drainage control plan shall be implemented prior to the commencement of construction, and shall conform to the requirements of the San Mateo Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program “General Construction and Site Supervision Guidelines.” Any repair to the existing septic system leach lines as a result of the construction of Parking Area A, shall be replaced with schedule 40 or 80 PVC pipe. If determined to be infeasible, new septic leach lines would be constructed in the vicinity of the older drain lines.

**Sonic**

The applicant and construction contractor(s) shall comply with and monitor all noise abatement measures during project construction as required by conditions of the permit, MND and MMP.

**Aesthetic, Cultural, Historic Resources**

Initial grading for all phases of this project shall be monitored by a qualified archaeologist. Archaeological monitoring shall be conducted under a written Archaeological Monitoring Agreement and shall be submitted to the San Mateo County Planning Department for review and approval. Such an Agreement shall provide for, at a minimum, the provisions identified in the MMP. The applicant and construction contractors shall be prepared to respond appropriately if heretofore undetected archaeological resources are encountered anywhere in the project area, and shall be prepared to carry out the requirements of California State law with regards to the discovery of human remains during construction, whether historic or prehistoric.

**Land Use and General Plans**

The proposed parking area would be within 500 feet of the Pigeon Point Historic Light Station State Park; however, all potential construction-related impacts would be temporary and reduced to a less than significant level by the mitigation measures identified in the MND and MMP.

**Conclusion**

After reviewing the MND and MMP, staff concurs that the project, as mitigated, will not have a significant effect on the environment, and recommends that the Conservancy make such a finding.

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The County is also expected to determine, consistent with 14 California Code of Regulations Section 753.5(d), that the project would not have an adverse effect on wildlife resources as defined under California Fish and Game Code Section 711.2. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Determination.