

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
January 18, 2007

**LAKE BERRYESSA SHORELINE TRAIL DESIGN, PHASE II**

File No. 06-101  
Project Manager: Betsy Wilson

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$150,000 to Berryessa Trails and Conservation to design approximately 135 miles of the proposed Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in the Lake District of eastern Napa County.

**LOCATION:** Shoreline of Lake Berryessa in eastern Napa County (Exhibit 1)

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

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: Project Location

Exhibit 2: Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail Map

Exhibit 3: Site Photographs

Exhibit 4: 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 Berryessa Trails and Conservation to design approximately 135 miles of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in the Lake District of eastern Napa County, subject to the condition that no Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing a final work plan, including a budget and schedule, and any contractors proposed 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 proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the California Public Code (Sections 31160-31164) regarding the Conservancy's mandate to address the resource and recreation goals of the San Francisco Bay area.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
3. Berryessa Trails and Conservation is a nonprofit organization existing under provisions of U.S. Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code."

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**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

This authorization would provide up to \$150,000 to Berryessa Trails and Conservation ("BT&C") to design approximately 135 miles of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in the Lake District of eastern Napa County (Exhibit 1). The project will produce trail designs, on-the-ground alignments, and construction cost estimates for the remaining segments of the Shoreline Trail that still need to be designed. In addition, other related trail planning would be included, such as seeking public access easements across private land that would enhance the trail or negotiating trail linkages with adjacent public land owning agencies.

The 28,000-acre Lake Berryessa Recreation area, consisting of a 19,000-acre lake and 9,000 acres around the entire shoreline, is federally-owned, public land administered by the Bureau of Reclamation ("BOR"). The Lake Berryessa Recreation area averages 1.4 million visitors a year, primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area. For nearly 50 years, use of Lake Berryessa has been dominated by motorboats, jet skis, and private vacation sites. However, all seven of the existing recreation concession contracts are due to expire in or prior to 2008-09. To prepare for the expiring concession contracts, the BOR released a new management plan and Record of Decision for the Lake in June 2006 which significantly alters the current mix of recreational services to reflect contemporary public needs and use patterns. Recreation opportunities will be diversified with trails to serve hikers, bikers, and equestrian, kayak launch areas, some no-motor zones, and new remote campsites. All private vacation trailers will be removed.

Included in the BOR's Record of Decision is a 150-mile shoreline trail all the way around the Lake. The Record of Decision states that the BOR would like to develop the shoreline trail in partnership with other agencies and private organizations using minimal federal appropriations. To help facilitate the development of the proposed Shoreline Trail, BT&C is proposing to prepare designs for the approximately 135 miles of trail that remains to be designed; the design of approximately 20 miles of the Shoreline Trail has already been funded by the Conservancy and other organizations. BT&C has divided the Shoreline Trail into approximately twenty-four segments and will proceed to develop trail designs for these segments pursuant to priorities established with the BOR.

BT&C is ready to proceed with the trail design project as soon as funding is obtained. It is anticipated that the trail design work for all twenty-four segments of the Shoreline Trail will be completed in two years. Although not included as a part of this grant, BT&C also intends to work cooperatively with the BOR and the Army Corps of Engineers to complete the necessary

environmental review and permitting requirements for the trail work. As designs and permitting for each segment are completed, BT&C will proceed with construction as feasible, while the design work on the remainder of the trail continues.

While this project only funds the design phase of the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail, BT&C is already working on lining up construction funds to build various trail segments once they are designed. In particular, BT&C is pursuing River Parkways funds from the Resources Agency, federal Recreational Trails Program funds from the State Department of Parks and Recreation, and private funds from the Napa Valley Community Foundation. In addition, the BOR will likely hire California Department of Forestry (“CDF”) crews to construct some segments of the Shoreline Trail. BT&C also intends to request additional grant funds from the Conservancy at a future date to fund the construction of some of the trail segments as designed.

Currently, the Lake District of eastern Napa County severely lacks trails, with only four formal, signed trails in the 80,000 acres of public land in the Lake District. The Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail will be a flagship trail in the regional trail system that the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership is currently planning. The Shoreline Trail will link to trails on other public land in the area and the region. Numerous individuals and organizations representing hikers, bikers, and equestrians wrote in during BOR’s public comment period on the Lake management plan to support the development of a shoreline trail around the Lake.

BT&C’s mission is to protect the environment through facilitating access to nature, environmental education, and conservation projects. BT&C carries out its mission by supporting the development of public trails and other nature-based recreational facilities, providing informational materials and educational programs, and engaging in conservation work to protect, restore, and enhance the natural environment. BT&C is a member of the Trails and Recreation Committee for the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership and a co-sponsor of the Trail Coalition of Napa County. The Conservancy provided a grant to BT&C in October 2006 to prepare trail designs for the North End Trail and the Smittle Creek and Oak Shores Park, two short but major segments of the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail; the design work for this project will begin in February 2007.

**Site Description:** The Lake District area of eastern Napa County is within the Putah Creek Watershed. It is primarily a natural area, with some vineyards, grazing land, and more than 80,000 acres of public land, including a 20,000 acre lake. Lake Berryessa is a reservoir located in the middle of the Lake District (Exhibit 1), and surrounded by wilderness quality ridges and hill tops to the east and west. At capacity, Lake Berryessa stores 1.6 million acre feet of water and is one of the largest bodies of fresh water in California. The Lake is 23 miles long, 3 miles wide, with 165 miles of shoreline.

The project will produce designs for approximately 135 miles of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail (Exhibit 2). See Exhibit 3 for Site Photographs.

**Project History:** Previous Conservancy projects have supported the development of trails in the eastern Napa County area, an area with significant natural areas within close proximity to San Francisco Bay Area residents. As mentioned above, the Conservancy provided a grant to BT&C in October 2006 to design two regionally significant segments of the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail, totaling approximately 5-7 miles. In addition, the Conservancy recently assisted the University of California in acquiring 59 acres for inclusion in the UC Davis Stebbins Cold Canyon Reserve, a 576-acre natural reserve area above the southeast shores of Lake Berryessa.

Acquisition of the property by the University provided for continued public access on the Stebbins/Blue Ridge Loop Trail and allows the UC Davis Natural Reserve System to restore the existing, eroded trail.

Lake Berryessa is located within Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area (BRBNA), consisting of nearly 800,000 acres spread over portions of five counties, half of which is public land. The BRBNA is the subject of a voluntary conservation partnership, the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership, dedicated to conserving the natural, recreational and agricultural lands within the BRBNA. Trails planned in the Lake District of eastern Napa County form the core of the regional trail system being planned in the BRBNA, starting with the BOR's proposal for a 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail. BT&C is an active member of the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$150,000
Berryessa Trails and Conservation (in-kind)	5,000
CA Trails and Greenways Foundation	2,000
Outdoor Writers Association of California	<u>500</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$157,500</b>

The expected source of the proposed grant is a FY 04/05 appropriation made to the Conservancy pursuant to the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40), which allocates bond funds to the Conservancy to protect and restore land and water resources in accordance with the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Public Resources Code Section 5091.650(b)(8)). The proposed project will accomplish these purposes by planning for the development of land-based public access for recreational purposes.

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

The 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.

The property is located in Napa County, one of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties in which the Conservancy is authorized to undertake projects and award grants to address resource and recreational goals for the region (Sections 31160-31161).

Pursuant to Section 31162(a), the Conservancy may award grants to improve public access through completion and operation of regional bay, coast, and ridge trail systems while preserving local natural resource areas. The proposed project will design approximately 135 miles of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in eastern Napa County. The Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail will be a flagship trail in the BRBNA regional trail system being planned and will provide Bay Area residents with additional trail experiences.

Section 31163 provides criteria for eligible projects under the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. Projects should have local support, serve a regional constituency, be timely, include matching funds, and take advantage of otherwise fleeting opportunities to benefit the region. The proposed project is consistent with Section 31163(c) in the following respects:

- (1) Supported by local and regional plans: The project is supported by the *Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Framework* which has a primary trails and recreation goal to promote nature-based recreation in the BRBNA and identifies the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail as a high recreation priority. The trail is included in the BOR's Record of Decision on the Future Recreation Use and Operation of Lake Berryessa, June 2006.
- (2) Serves a regional constituency: The project serves a regional constituency, in that the project will help provide public access for the benefit of the population of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Lake Berryessa Recreation area averages 1.4 million visitors a year, primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area.
- (3) Timely implementation: The project can be implemented in a timely way since BT&C has extensive experience working with consultants and the BOR and has already flagged portions of the trail.
- (4) Opportunity for benefits provide by project: The project provides benefits that would be lost if the project is not quickly implemented. It is important to design and develop useable trail segments to identify the areas of the shoreline that are needed to accommodate the Shoreline Trail and to prevent conflicting uses. Also, as potential concessionaires prepare to bid for new concession contracts beginning in 2008-09, it is important that they view their potential market to include not only motor boats and water ski interests, but also those who come to hike, bike, and ride horses on the Shoreline Trail.
- (5) Use of matching funds: BT&C is providing staff time to manage a contract with a trail designer, oversee the project, and coordinate with other agencies. BT&C has already expended over 160 hours of volunteer time to improve various trail segments around the Lake. In addition, it is anticipated that BT&C will be able to leverage additional funds to construct the trails designed by this project.

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

Consistent with **Goal #11, Objective B** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, which seeks to develop 100 miles of regionally significant public access trails and corridors, this project will complete design work to create and improve approximately 135 miles of the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail.

**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:** There is a great deal of local support for the project from trail users and members of the local community. The State Senator Patricia Wiggins, Napa County Parks and Open Space District, the Bureau of Reclamation, Napa County Supervisor Dian Dillon, the Napa Sierra Club, the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership, and Tuleyome all support the trail. In addition, numerous individuals and organizations representing hikers, bikers, and equestrians wrote in to support the development of a shoreline trail around the Lake during the public comment period on BOR's management plan for the Lake. Letters of support are attached as Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is in Napa County, within the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
5. **Need:** The BOR's Record of Decision for future use and operation of the Lake indicates that the BOR would like to develop the shoreline trail in partnership with other agencies and private organization using minimal federal appropriations. Furthermore, previous plans in 1959, 1973, and 1993 to develop a Shoreline Trail were not implemented, partly due to lack of funding. Conservancy funding is needed to enable BT&C to implement this trail design project as no other source of funding for the design phase is currently available.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail will be a flagship trail in the regional trail system that the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership is planning. The Shoreline Trail will provide links to trails on other public land in the area and the region. In addition, the project will help provide public access for the benefit of the population of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Lake Berryessa Recreation area averages 1.4 million visitors a year, primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as the Davis and Sacramento region.

### **Additional Criteria**

7. **Urgency:** It is important that progress be made to design and develop useable segments of the Shoreline Trail as soon as possible to identify the areas that are needed for the trail and to prevent conflicting uses. Potential concessionaires will be preparing bids soon with the selected concessionaires taking over as the current concession contracts expire in 2008-09. It is important that the concessionaires view their potential market as including not only motor boat and water ski interest, but those who come to hike, bike and ride horses on the Shoreline Trail, as well as other trails in the area.
8. **Leverage:** BT&C is providing staff time to manage the project and has already committed substantial volunteer time to restoring trails along the Lake Berryessa shoreline. In addition, it is anticipated that the project will leverage construction funds as BT&C is pursuing numerous funding sources to finance the construction of the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail, including River Parkways funds from the Resources Agency, federal Recreational Trails Program funds from the State Department of Parks and Recreation, and private funds from

the Napa Valley Community Foundation. Also, the BOR will likely hire CDF crews to construct the some segments of the Shoreline Trail.

9. **Readiness:** If approved, BT&C is ready to proceed with the trail design project immediately. It is anticipated that the trail design work for all twenty-four segments of the Shoreline Trail will be completed in two years. As designs and permitting for each segment are completed, BT&C will proceed with construction as feasible, while the design work on the remainder of the trail continues.
10. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.”
11. **Cooperation:** The project involves cooperation between BT&C and the BOR. The BOR has specifically requested assistance from other agencies and private organization to develop the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail. In addition, the project will support the efforts of the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership to plan and develop a regional trail system in the area.

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

This project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15262 (“Feasibility and Planning Studies”) because it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions and will not have a legally binding effect on whether the Shoreline Trail is constructed.

Part of the project consists of basic data collection and resource evaluation activities, including those necessary for planning the trail alignment. These information-collecting activities will be designed and implemented in a manner that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and are thus categorically exempt from CEQA review, under CCR Section 15306 (“Information Collection”).

Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for the project.