

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 24, 2007

**COLORADO LAGOON PHASE II  
DESIGN DEVELOPMENT/TECHNICAL STUDIES**

File No. 07-032

Project Manager: Christopher Kroll

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$500,000 to the City of Long Beach to complete design development and environmental documentation of restoration alternatives identified in the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Feasibility Study, and to conduct necessary technical studies related to the restoration of Colorado Lagoon in Long Beach.

**LOCATION:** City of Long Beach, Los Angeles County, in the San Gabriel River watershed (Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Resource Enhancement

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [December 4, 2002 Staff Recommendation](#)

Exhibit 3: [Letters of Support](#)

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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 disbursement of an amount not to exceed five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to the City of Long Beach to complete design development and environmental documentation of restoration alternatives identified in the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Feasibility Study and to conduct necessary technical studies related to the restoration of Colorado Lagoon. Prior to disbursement of any Conservancy funds, the City of Long Beach shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a final work program, including schedule and budget, for the

project; and the names and qualifications of all contractors to be used for the project.”

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 in Chapter 6 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270 as amended) regarding the enhancement of coastal resources.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
3. Consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31252, the project area is identified in the City of Long Beach’s certified Local Coastal Program as an area requiring study and planning to coordinate improvement and management of water quality, ecology, and recreational uses of Colorado Lagoon.”

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**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff is recommending that the Conservancy provide a grant of \$500,000 to the City of Long Beach (City) to complete design development and environmental review of restoration alternatives identified in the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Feasibility Study. The project will include: 1) design development and environmental documentation of restoration alternatives identified in the Colorado Lagoon Restoration Feasibility Study; 2) source contaminant identification and development of a water quality monitoring program; and 3) project management assistance to the City. The Colorado Lagoon Restoration Feasibility Study (RFS) was funded by the Conservancy and completed in February 2005.

The major goals of the RFS were to identify measures to improve the fish and wildlife habitat in and around the lagoon and to improve the quality of the water flowing into and out of the lagoon. The five main objectives addressed by the study were:

- Redirect, reduce or filter storm and dry weather runoff to minimize contamination of water and sediment in the lagoon;
- Identify sources of pollutants and recommend controls within the watershed;
- Evaluate need to remove contaminated sediments;
- Restore and maintain estuarine habitat; and

COLORADO LAGOON PHASE II: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT/TECHNICAL STUDIES

- Improve lagoon circulation and the tidal connection with Marine Stadium and Alamitos Bay

Since 2005, the City has received grants from the State Water Resources Control Board, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps), and the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers & Mountains Conservancy (Rivers and Mountains Conservancy) to begin to implement the recommendations of the RFS. These grants will help the City to address the objectives identified above. A Clean Beaches Initiative grant from the State Water Resources Control Board will: 1) construct low flow diversion structures to divert dry weather urban runoff to the sanitary sewer system; 2) clean out the culvert which connects the lagoon to Alamitos Bay; and 3) construct bioswales on the adjoining golf course. The Army Corps will dredge the west arm of the lagoon to remove contaminated sediment and re-contour the steep banks along the eastern shore, western shore of the north arm, and along the west arm to create mudflat intertidal habitat. The Rivers and Mountains Conservancy grant will fund revegetation of the lagoon banks with upland and wetland vegetation.

The City has requested funding from the Conservancy for three major project areas not addressed in the other grants. The design and environmental documentation of several important improvements recommended in the RFS are not addressed in other grants. These include: creation of the sandy intertidal habitat along the southern side of the west arm; relocating and narrowing the entrance road and parking lot to create an upland zone along the west side of the eastern arm; creation of a bird nesting island; development of a nature trail around the lagoon with interpretive signs, and other amenities; development of trash and exotic bird management plans; and development of a sand management strategy that will minimize siltation of the lagoon. The City needs additional funding to complete environmental documentation of all alternatives identified in the RFS. The City has estimated the cost of the design and environmental work to be \$160,000 of which approximately \$40,000 is needed to complete the environmental analysis.

In addition, the issue of contaminated sediment flowing into the lagoon has not yet been addressed. These contaminants must be traced to their sources and those sources abated or new contaminants will continue to replace those removed by the Army Corps dredging project. On-going water quality monitoring is necessary to ensure that the sources of contamination have been eliminated. The tracing of the historic sources is estimated to cost \$125,000 while post construction monitoring for two years will cost \$100,000 for a total of \$225,000.

And, finally, the City has requested funding for a project manager to oversee this large (over \$10 million) multifaceted project. The City has been successful already in securing approximately \$5,000,000 for the project but the scope of the project is large and complex enough that City staff need outside assistance to continue to move the project forward in a timely manner. Substantial project

management effort is needed to track and coordinate permits, existing grants, conditions, consultants and contractors. Additional funding also needs to be secured to complete the project. The project schedule has important regulatory permit deadlines later this year requiring fulltime project management now. The City is requesting funding to secure the services of a consultant to act as day-to-day project manager. The City has estimated the cost to be \$180,000 for the three year period necessary to oversee the construction of the funded projects (CBI, Army Corps, RMC and SCC), the design and environmental review of the additional project elements and the upstream contaminants study. The City is requesting that a Conservancy grant would fund \$115,000 of the \$180,000 cost of a project manager and the City will secure additional funding for the balance.

**Site Description:** Colorado Lagoon is a 15-acre, V-shaped tidal lagoon in the City of Long Beach and is connected to Alamitos Bay and the Pacific Ocean through a tidal box culvert to Marine Stadium (Exhibit 1). Recreation Park borders the north side of the lagoon and has a nine-hole and eighteen-hole golf course, a baseball and softball field, casting pond, picnic area, dog park, lawn bowling and play ground. Residences and three public schools surround the other three sides of the lagoon. A preschool program for three- to five-year-olds is located near the beach of the lagoon and children ages seven years and older participate in a model sailboat club during the summer. Swimming, fishing, picnicking, and wildlife viewing are popular recreational activities.

Colorado Lagoon supports an estuarine ecosystem. Southern tar plant, a special status species, and eelgrass colonies exist in shallow areas of the lagoon and Marine Stadium. A variety of fish species find spawning and rearing habitat such as juvenile halibut, topsmelt, perch, white sea bass, bottom dwelling gobies and stingrays. Additionally, juvenile clams have been found in the lagoon. The California brown pelican and California Least Tern, special status species, as well as many other species of waterfowl, gulls, and shorebirds visit and dwell in the tidal habitats.

Since the lagoon is a natural low point in the watershed, it accumulates pollutants deposited over the entire watershed that are washed into the storm drains by storm flows and dry weather runoff. In addition to tidal influence, the lagoon receives the majority of its inflow from five reinforced concrete pipes draining storm water and dry weather runoff from the watershed.

Colorado Lagoon's watershed is 1,172 acres comprised primarily of suburban residential development with some parklands, two golf courses and a small amount of commercial and institutional land use. Urban runoff generally contains many pollutants such as heavy metals, pesticides, petroleum hydrocarbons, nutrients, and bacteria. In fact, the lagoon is listed in the 1998 California Section 303(d) list of the Clean Water Act as an impaired water body for lead, zinc, sediment, toxicity, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, PAHs, and PCBs. Beach warnings due to elevated bacteria are frequently posted. In the estuarine environment of the lagoon, many pollutants readily precipitate out of the water column and settle in the sediment on the lagoon floor.

**Project History:** The Colorado Lagoon was once part of the historic Alamitos Bay which also included the Los Cerritos Wetlands. In 1923, the Channel Club dredged a mudflat to form the Colorado Lagoon. The 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Committee chose the lagoon for rowing events. In 1968, the City of Long Beach remodeled Marine Stadium for the Olympic Rowing and Canoeing Team Trials. At that time, the north end of the Olympic rowing course was filled as part of construction for the then proposed Pacific Coast Freeway thereby further separating Colorado Lagoon from Marine Stadium and extending the existing connecting culvert.

The ecological health of the lagoon has been deteriorating for many decades. People have always swum and fished in the lagoon but there has always been concern about the poor water quality. In 1999, a group of residents formed the Friends of Colorado Lagoon (FOCL) specifically to advocate for restoration of the lagoon.

In January 2001, FOCL and the City both submitted proposals to the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project (WRP) for funding for a restoration plan for the lagoon. Both proposals described the need for a study of the lagoon that would address the lagoon's poor water quality and declining habitat value. In June 2001, the WRP Board of Governors added the project to the work plan.

The Conservancy approved a grant to the City of Long Beach in December 2002 to prepare a multi-objective restoration feasibility study. The study was completed in February 2005. Since then the City has been successful in securing grants to begin to implement the recommendations of the study.

For many years, the City of Long Beach and County of Los Angeles have been laying the groundwork to address flooding and water quality issues in the Colorado Lagoon watershed. Los Angeles County Department of Public Works has recently completed an environmental impact report to replace an existing County storm drain that drains into Colorado Lagoon. The storm drain, referred to as the Termino Avenue Drain, is being replaced in order to alleviate flooding that occurs upstream of the lagoon. This project may include diversion of all Termino Avenue Drain flows and approximately 25% of Project 452, the other main drain flowing into the lagoon, flows away from Colorado Lagoon. This alternative would include dry weather diversion to the sanitary sewer. The County expects to begin construction in April 2008.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$ 500,000</b>
State Water Resources Control Board	3,823,868
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	906,000
Rivers & Mountains Conservancy	<u>100,000</u>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$5,329,868</b>

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 50). Proposition 50 authorizes the use of these funds for the purpose of protecting coastal watersheds through projects undertaken pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Division 21 of the Public Resources Code) to acquire, restore or protect water and land resources (Water Code Section 79570). The proposed project will result in protection and restoration of the land and water resources of Colorado Lagoon which is located in a coastal watershed. The project is also consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, as discussed below.

Proposition 50 also requires that any watershed protection activities financed with Proposition 50 funds must be consistent with "the applicable adopted local watershed management plan and the applicable regional water quality control plan adopted by the regional water quality control board" (Water Code Section 79507) and, for projects in the San Gabriel and Los Angeles river watersheds, the project must be consistent with the San Gabriel and Los Angeles River Watershed and Open Space Plan (Water Code Section 79508).

Colorado Lagoon has been designated as an "impaired water body" consistent with Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. The proposed project will address some or all of the urban runoff issues which have led to the pollution of the lagoon and is consistent with the Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region (Basin Plan for Coastal Watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties) adopted on June 13, 1994 by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Board in that it will result in improvement in the currently impacted beneficial uses: contact and noncontact water recreation, marine habitat, and habitat for rare and endangered species. It will also aid in the attainment of regional objectives for inland surface waters identified in the Basin Plan, particularly those objectives identified for coliform bacteria and toxic pollutants.

The proposed project, in that it will result in environmental restoration of Colorado Lagoon, is consistent with the San Gabriel and Los Angeles Rivers Watershed and Open Space Plan (Common Ground) adopted by the San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy in October 2001.

Specifically the project is consistent with the following Guiding Principles of the plan: 1) accommodate active and passive recreational uses; 2) incorporate passive and low-impact recreational facilities in habitat areas; 3) protect existing high-quality habitat and ecologically significant areas; 4) restore and enhance aquatic and terrestrial riparian and upland habitat; 5) reduce the volume and velocity of storm water runoff where feasible; and 6) reduce dry weather urban runoff discharge into waterways and the ocean.

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

The project remains consistent with the findings and discussion in the December 4, 2002 staff report (Exhibit 2) Additionally, the project is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31111 (enacted in 2002), which expressly authorizes the Conservancy to fund plans and feasibility studies.

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

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective A**, the proposed authorization will lead to restoration and enhancement of a significant coastal habitat.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective A**, the proposed authorization will lead to the improvement of habitat in a coastal watershed.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective B**, the proposed authorization will lead to improved water quality to benefit coastal resources.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The project remains consistent with the discussion in the December 4, 2002 staff report (Exhibit 2).

**CONSISTENCY WITH THE COASTAL ACT:**

The project remains consistent with the discussion in the December 4, 2002 staff report (Exhibit 2).

**CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The project remains consistent with the discussion in the December 4, 2002 staff report (Exhibit 2).

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of CEQA under 14 California Code of regulations Section 15262 in that it involves planning studies only. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the proposed authorization.