

Exhibit 2: December 4, 2002 Staff Recommendation

COLORADO LAGOON FEASIBILITY STUDY

Agenda Item 7.

December 4, 2002

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Project Summary
December 4, 2002

COLORADO LAGOON FEASIBILITY STUDY

File No. 02-124
Project Manager: Christopher Kroll

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$200,000 to the City of Long Beach for preparation of a multi-objective feasibility study for Colorado Lagoon.

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

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

ESTIMATED COST: Coastal Conservancy	\$200,000
Total Project:	\$200,000

Additional Colorado Lagoon Projects:

Los Angeles County (estimated for 2005)	\$12,000,000
City of Long Beach (Prop. 13)	<u>500,000</u>
Total All Projects:	\$12,700,000

The Los Angeles County project will address flooding upstream of Colorado Lagoon by replacing an existing County-owned storm drain that drains into the lagoon. The City of Long Beach has received a grant to divert dry weather runoff from City-owned storm drains that drain into the lagoon.

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40).

PROJECT SUMMARY: The proposed feasibility study would assist the City of Long Beach in restoring the estuarine ecosystem of Colorado Lagoon, improving water quality and sediment quality, managing storm water, and supporting environmental education, safe public recreation, and coastal access. The tidal lagoon has be-

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come degraded due to restricted tidal influence and the accumulation of pollutants from storm water and dry weather runoff delivered by several storm drains.

The concentrated pollutants (*e.g.*, lead, zinc, bacteria, pesticides, sediment) render recreational activities such as swimming, fishing, clamming, and model boat gatherings unsafe for the public. In 2001, the lagoon had 18 “advisory postings” when bacterial levels exceeded State water quality standards for total coliform, fecal coliform, and enterococcus. The contamination also degrades the estuarine ecosystem of Colorado Lagoon and Alamitos Bay.

Since estuarine habitat has been virtually lost in southern California, Colorado Lagoon is considered a critical coastal resource. The Southern California Wetland Recovery Project considers restoration of the lagoon a priority and placed the feasibility study on its work plan.

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File No. 02-124
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STAFF

RECOMMENDATION: 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 disbursement of an amount not to exceed two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to the City of Long Beach for preparation of a feasibility study for Colorado Lagoon, subject to the condition that, prior to the disbursement of any funds, the City shall submit for the review and written approval of the Conservancy’s Executive Officer:

1. A work program, including scope of work, budget and schedule, and
2. The names of any contractors it intends to use to prepare the plan.”

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 guidelines and criteria in the Coastal Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted on January 24, 2001.”
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STAFF DISCUSSION:

Project Description: The principal goals of the Colorado Lagoon Feasibility Study are 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. City and Conservancy staff have identified specific objectives, including the following:

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

The City would engage and direct the work of consultants to prepare the feasibility study and would convene a technical advisory committee of City staff, technical experts, and resource agency representatives. The feasibility study would report on the pertinent existing conditions (flora, fauna, water quality, regulatory, etc.), refined goals and objectives, opportunities for and constraints upon meeting the objectives, specific enhancement measures that address the project objectives, and cost estimates for implementation of the enhancement measures.

Project Financing:	Coastal Conservancy	\$200,000
	Total Project:	\$200,000

Additional Colorado Lagoon Projects:

Los Angeles County (estimated for 2005)	\$12,000,000
City of Long Beach (Prop. 13)	<u>500,000</u>
Total All Projects:	\$12,700,000

The Los Angeles County project will address flooding upstream of Colorado Lagoon by replacing an existing County-owned storm drain that drains into the lagoon. The City of Long Beach has received a grant to divert dry weather runoff from City-owned storm drains that drain into the lagoon.

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Clean Water,

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Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40).

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 18-hole golf course, a baseball and softball field, casting pond, picnic area, dog park, lawn bowling, and playground. 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.

According to the Long Beach Storm Water Management Plan, the 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

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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 swam 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.

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 is preparing 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 a dry weather diversion to the sanitary sewer and a low-flow bypass to Marine Stadium. In addition, the State Water Resources Control Board has approved a grant to the City through the Clean Beaches Initiative of the Costa-Machado Water Act of 2000 (Proposition 13) to plan and construct diversions of dry weather runoff from the City storm drains (that also drain into Colorado Lagoon) to the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation's wastewater treatment plant. The City also plans to use a portion of a state appropriation to fund the installation of pollution traps in the City's storm

drains which drain into Colorado Lagoon. The grant will be used for several projects in the City but a significant portion of the funds will be for Colorado Lagoon.

While these projects address immediate problems and will go a long way toward reducing water quality problems, additional solutions to pollution, habitat restoration, and recreational improvements are needed. A feasibility study funded by the Conservancy will help the City of Long Beach integrate and improve the multiple uses of Colorado Lagoon such as habitat, recreation, and storm water management.

PROJECT SUPPORT: The proposed project has strong community support. Letters of support are attached as Exhibit 2.

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

Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251 *et seq.*) provides for the Coastal Conservancy's participation in a program of coastal resource enhancement. The proposed authorization will assist the Conservancy in meeting its purposes and objectives in Sections 31251 *et seq.* by facilitating the study and possible enhancement of marine habitat that has experienced excessive loss in southern California.

Pursuant to Section 31251, the Conservancy may award grants to local agencies to enhance coastal resources, and Section 31252 requires that a local coastal program indicate the areas proposed for enhancement need public action. The City of Long Beach is a local agency, the lagoon is in the coastal zone, and the City's Local Coastal Program clearly indicates that the City needs to coordinate improvement and management of the complex and integrated uses of the Colorado Lagoon.

Consistent with Section 31253, the amount of proposed Conservancy funding for this project was determined by the total amount of funding available for coastal resource enhancement projects, the fiscal resources of project partners and the urgency of the project relative to other eligible coastal resource enhancement projects. The City has secured funding for immediate projects to address bacterial pollution and flooding in Colorado Lagoon; however, these sources do not allow funds to be used for planning. In addition, City budget deficits preclude a City-funded study for several years. Without funding from the Coastal Conservancy, the City would not be able to undertake a watershed-wide feasibility study to coordinate so-

lutions to the water and sediment quality and flooding problems with restoration of habitat and support of recreation.

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

Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes: As indicated above, the proposed project is consistent with Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251 *et seq.*), which provides for the Coastal Conservancy's participation in a program of coastal resource enhancement.

Consistency with purposes of the funding source: Preparation of the proposed feasibility study is consistent with the funding source, the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Fund (Proposition 40).

Support from the public: The proposed project has community support, as demonstrated by the letters of support that are attached to this staff recommendation as Exhibit 2.

Location: Colorado Lagoon is a 15-acre, V-shaped tidal lagoon connected to Alamitos Bay and the Pacific Ocean through a tide gate to Marine Stadium (Exhibit 1). The proposed project is intended to lead to improving the marine ecosystem by recommending integrated management of the storm water inputs, the tidal circulation, recreational uses, and habitat restoration.

Need: The financial support and participation of the Conservancy are critical for the success of this project because the City lacks the financial and technical resources to proceed on its own.

Additional Criteria

Greater than local interest: People who reside outside the city recreate at the lagoon. Tidally influenced marine ecosystems have been virtually eliminated from southern California.

Resolution of more than one issue: Colorado Lagoon provides marine habitat for plants, fish, clams, and birds but does

so in an urban recreational setting. The water in the lagoon is supplied by urban runoff and influenced by tidal flushing. Discharge from the lagoon reaches coastal habitat in Alamitos Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The proposed feasibility study must balance the objectives of natural resource enhancement, stormwater management, recreation, and water quality improvement. The City anticipates setting up a committee of technical advisors and agency representatives to assist in formulating a feasibility study with recommendations that will integrate these objectives.

Leverage: The City of Long Beach has secured funds from other state agencies to construct structural solutions to some of the water quality and flood control problems in Colorado Lagoon. The proposed feasibility study would help coordinate the design of these and future improvement projects to support habitat restoration and recreation in the lagoon.

Cooperation: City of Long Beach, Regional Water Quality Control Board, State Water Resources Control Board, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, local environmental advocates, and residents agree that the issues of pollution, flooding, and habitat restoration need to be addressed at Colorado Lagoon. All these organizations and individuals are committed to contribute their support, time, and expertise.

**CONSISTENCY WITH
THE COASTAL ACT:**

The proposed project would be consistent with the planning and management policies contained in Section 30231 of the Public Resource Code, which states that “the biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored. . . .” The objectives of the project would include restoring marine and freshwater habitat in order to replace past losses of similar habitat on the coast, and improving the quality of the water that is discharged from Colorado Lagoon and reaches the coast.

**CONSISTENCY WITH
LOCAL COASTAL
PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the City of Long Beach’s certified Local Coastal Program (LCP), which acknowledges the recreational and ecological importance of Colorado Lagoon not only for the surrounding community but also for visitors. The LCP calls for study and planning to coordinate improvement and management of water quality, ecol-

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ogy, and recreational use of the lagoon. The proposed project would evaluate and recommend feasible opportunities to restore the historic marine ecosystem and support safe recreation while improving water quality, eliminating contaminated sediments, and managing storm water in Colorado Lagoon.

COMPLIANCE

WITH CEQA: The proposed project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 Cal. 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.

EXHIBIT 2
Letters of Support