

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
December 13, 2007

**COASTAL TRAIL AT LAND'S END**

File No. 07-086-01  
Project Manager: Joan Cardellino

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to eight hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$850,000) to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to construct Coastal Trail improvements at Land's End, City and County of San Francisco.

**LOCATION:** Land's End, San Francisco (See Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** San Francisco Bay Conservancy

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**EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)
  - Exhibit 2: [Site Plan](#)
  - Exhibit 3: [Grand Trailhead Schematic](#)
  - 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 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed eight hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$850,000) to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (“GGNPC”) for the purpose of constructing improvements to the Coastal Trail at Land's End, in the City and County of San Francisco, subject to the following conditions:

1. No Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (“Executive Officer”) has reviewed and approved in writing a final work program, including a budget and schedule; a sign plan acknowledging Conservancy funding; and any contractors to be employed in the project.
2. Prior to initiating construction, GGNPC shall provide written evidence to the Executive Officer that all permits and approvals necessary to the implementation and completion of the project under applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations have been obtained
3. GGNPC shall enter into an agreement sufficient to protect the public interest in the project pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31116(c). ”

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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 authorization is consistent with Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165 regarding resource and recreational goals in the San Francisco Bay Area.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001 and September 20, 2007.
3. The GGNPC is a nonprofit organization whose principle purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”

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### PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization to disburse up to \$850,000 to the GGNPC for the purpose of constructing improvements to the Coastal Trail at Land's End. The project includes creating a wheelchair accessible pathway and viewing area along the western edge of the gateway entrance to Land's End at Merrie Way and Point Lobos Avenue (“the overlook”). (See schematic in Exhibit 2.) The overlook leads to a grand trailhead (Exhibit 3) that will serve as a gathering place for visitors and as a primary entrance to the Coastal Trail in San Francisco. The grand trailhead will have informational signage and a small seating area for use by the National Park Service (“NPS”) and GGNPC for visitor orientation and public programs.

Conservancy funding is proposed for the construction of the overlook and the grand trailhead. The 415-foot long overlook will run the entire length of the new parking lot and will provide a wheelchair accessible route to the trailhead from the Merrie Way parking lot, the tour bus drop-off within the parking lot, and from the sidewalk along Point Lobos Avenue. A combination of 21-inch-wide seat walls and benches will run along the length of the overlook, providing an opportunity for visitors to relax and enjoy the views over the Sutro Baths and the Cliff House to the Pacific. These improvements will enable visitors to experience the Coastal Trail in a variety of ways: they can ‘hike’ the trail in a wheelchair, in a stroller, on a bicycle or by foot; they can learn about the natural and cultural history of the Lands End/Sutro Historic District through interpretive signage; or they can simply visit to enjoy the views. The trailhead provides a place for groups to gather, hear presentations, or for visitors simply to look at the maps and interpretive signs to plan their excursion. For scenery, historic and cultural interpretation, and use by large numbers of people, the Land's End segment of the Coastal Trail may be unsurpassed.

Land's End has fallen into disrepair over the years and the GGNPC and NPS have embarked upon an ambitious plan to restore native vegetation and improve public access facilities to accommodate visitors in a manner commensurate with the beauty of the site. The NPS has developed a comprehensive plan for improvements to the Land's End/Sutro Historic District. The GGNPC has completed the first phase of forest management and thinning of the Monterey cypresses that are so plentiful along the bluffs. Now travelers along the Coastal Trail at Land's End can see through the trees to the spectacular views of the Pacific, the coast and the Marin Headlands. In 2006 the 2,000 foot long section of the Coastal Trail between the grand trailhead and the newly constructed Mile Rock Overlook was re-aligned, widened and resurfaced to

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provide an accessible route for wheelchairs. Landscaping with over 40,000 native plants began in Fall of 2006 following removal of invasive plants. Stewardship programs are underway to continue planting and maintaining the newly landscaped areas.

Due to heavy use of the Land's End entrance to the park by vehicles, tour buses, bicycles and pedestrians, redesign and reconstruction of the existing Merrie Way parking lot at the corner of El Camino del Mar and Point Lobos Avenue is a high priority. The new lot will provide terraced parking for vehicles as well as a drop-off and separate parking area for tour buses. Accessible parking for vans and cars will be located adjacent to the overlook. Landscape islands between the terraces will be planted with native plants to help screen views of the cars from the overlook. The west edge of the site will be reinforced with a grade beam and piers along the top of the slope above the Sutro Baths to meet seismic requirements.

The GGNPC (formerly Golden Gate National Parks Association) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting historical and scientific work and educational and interpretive activities of the NPS, principally in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. GGNPC staff has expertise in developing and managing projects of this size and scope since 1981.

**Site Description:** The Land's End segment of the Coastal Trail is situated along the high, rugged bluffs south of the mouth of San Francisco Bay on the City's northwest corner. Stretching roughly 2 miles, the trail spans the area from the Merrie Way parking area above the historic Sutro Baths in the Richmond District and extends northeast along the coastline to the Eagle's Point Overlook near the Sea Cliff neighborhood. The trail offers thirty-mile views: east to the Golden Gate Bridge, north to the Marin Headlands and Point Reyes, west to the Farallon Islands and the Pacific Ocean, and south to the San Mateo coast.

The Land's End/Sutro Historic District is one of the most heavily visited sites within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, with over 1.4 million visitors annually. It has a dynamic, wind-swept, wave-dashed, "edge-of-the-continent" character that ranks it with other renowned overlooks like the rim of the Grand Canyon and the brink of Niagara Falls.

The area's native vegetation was disturbed by the development of a railroad corridor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, extensive planting of non-native Monterey cypress trees, and the construction of the Sutro Baths. As mentioned above, efforts are underway to restore the indigenous vegetation and trim the cypress trees to provide views of the surrounding land- and seascape.

**Project History:** In 2004, the Conservancy provided a grant to the GGNPC to develop a comprehensive signage program for the Coastal Trail from Muir Beach in Marin County to Land's End. That work has been completed, and now there are handsome wayfinding and informational signs throughout the project area. In August 2007, the GGNPC submitted an application for additional funding to help with the extensive improvements planned for the Land's End entrance to the park and Coastal Trail.

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**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$850,000
NPS, GGNPC (grants and donations)	<u>3,356,997</u>
<b>Total Project Cost—Phase I</b>	<b>\$4,206,997</b>

Conservancy funds are expected to come from the Conservancy's 2007-2008 appropriation of the "Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006." These funds can be used, among other things, for public access to and along the coast.

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

This project is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31160-31165 in the following respects:

Section 31162 allows the Conservancy to undertake projects and award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help achieve the following goals of the Bay Conservancy Program: Section 31162(a) is to improve public access to the coast by completing regional trail systems that are consistent with local plans and provide related facilities. The Land's End project will provide a connection in the statewide Coastal Trail that is consistent with the Sutro Historic District Master Plan prepared by the National Park Service. It will also provide a staging and interpretive area at the entrance to the Coastal Trail at Land's End.

Section 31162(b) is to protect, restore and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open space resources of regional importance. The complete Land's End/Sutro Historic District project being undertaken by the NPS includes extensive restoration of native plants. The Coastal Trail elements proposed for Conservancy funding will provide opportunities for visitors to view this superbly scenic area.

Section 31162(c) is to assist in the implementation of the policies and programs of the California Coastal Act of 1976. A primary policy of the Coastal Act is to provide public access to the state's coastline, which this project will do.

Section 31162(d) is to promote, assist and enhance projects that provide open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes. Land's End is in the City of San Francisco and serves the city's residents, as well as regional and international visitors. The proposed project will provide recreational opportunities for this urban population, and will educate visitors about the history of the site and the native habitat that is being re-established.

Pursuant to Section 31163(c) the Conservancy shall give priority to projects that meet the following criteria: (1) are supported by adopted local or regional plans; (2) are multijurisdictional or serve a regional constituency; (3) can be implemented in a timely way; (4) provide opportunities for benefits that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented; (5) include matching funds. The proposed project at Land's End helps implement the NPS's Sutro Historic

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District Master Plan (1); serves a huge visiting public drawn from the City of San Francisco, the broader San Francisco Bay Area, and beyond (2); is ready to be constructed in the winter/spring of 2008 (3); will provide wheelchair accessible facilities which should be implemented sooner rather than later to benefit visitors needing such accommodations (4); and includes significant matching funds in a ratio more than 5:1.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

This project is consistent with **Goal 11, Objectives 11B and 11M** in that it will provide public access and interpretive facilities.

### **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 and September 20, 2007 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 enjoys popular support from the surrounding neighborhood, and numerous community and environmental groups. See letters of support in Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of the City and County of San Francisco.
5. **Need:** The NPS and the GGNPC have embarked upon an ambitious plan for improving the Land's End/Sutro Historic District. Without funding assistance from the Conservancy, it is likely the proposed project would be delayed indefinitely.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Land's End has long attracted over a million visitors annually, drawn from all over the Bay Area and the world.

#### **Additional Criteria**

7. **Urgency:** Construction on the Land's End parking lot is already underway, and if the funding is approved for the overlook and trailhead, then construction can proceed smoothly from one project to the next without the need to incur additional mobilization costs.
12. **Readiness:** As mentioned above, the adjacent parking lot is under construction and GGNPC would like to move directly into construction of the overlook and trailhead once the parking lot is complete.

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### **CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The Recreation and Open Space Element of the San Francisco General Plan discusses the need to preserve and maintain regional and shoreline open space throughout the City. Policy 3.2 specifically addresses the need to maintain and improve the quality of existing shoreline open space. Policy 3.3 encourages the creation of the Bay and Coastal Trails around the perimeter of the City which links open space along the shoreline and provides for maximum waterfront access.

The proposed project at Land's End will greatly improve the quality of existing shoreline open space and will create improved connections in the Coastal Trail.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The portion of the Land's End Improvement Project proposed for funding by the Conservancy, specifically the overlook and the grand trailhead, are categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to California Code of Regulations Section 15304 as the project involves only minor alterations to land. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.