

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
June 5, 2008

BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL: JAMESON CANYON PLAN

File No. 08-054-01
Project Manager: Melanie Denninger

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Consideration and possible Conservancy authorization to disburse up to \$55,000 to the Solano Transportation Authority to prepare a multi-jurisdiction plan for regional trails along and across State Route 12 between Interstate 80 and State Route 29, in the Jameson Canyon area of Solano and Napa Counties.

LOCATION: The City of Fairfield and unincorporated Solano and Napa Counties (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Bay Area Ridge Trail Map](#)

Exhibit 3: [Letters of Support](#)

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 the disbursement of up to \$55,000 (fifty-five thousand dollars) to the Solano Transportation Authority to prepare a multi-jurisdiction plan for regional trails along and across State Route 12 between Interstate 80 and State Route 29, in the Jameson Canyon area of Solano and Napa Counties. 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 Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007.

2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165), regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$55,000 to the Solano Transportation Authority (STA) to prepare a multi-jurisdiction plan for regional trails along and across the section of State Route 12 that lies between Interstate 80 and State Route 29 (SR 12, I-80, and SR 29, respectively), in the Jameson Canyon area of Solano and Napa Counties (Exhibits 1 and 2). The plan and the process of preparing it are needed to obtain agreement among the local park and transportation agencies, Caltrans, and landowners about feasible routes for regional trail connections in the Jameson Canyon area and to identify the implementation costs, the relationships of trails to State and local transportation projects, and a funding strategy. Assisting with this plan is a priority for the Conservancy because it helps meet objectives in the Conservancy’s enabling legislation and in its strategic plan with respect to improving public access around the Bay Area and completing Bay Area Ridge Trail (the Ridge Trail). (See “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” and “Consistency with the Conservancy’s 2007 Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives.”)

Under the proposed Conservancy grant, the following types of activities would be undertaken and work products produced:

- Develop a working agreement among Caltrans, and the park departments and transportation agencies in Solano and Napa Counties, the City of Fairfield, and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (BARTC) to work together to formulate and carry out solutions to the regional trail connection and alignment problems in the Jameson Canyon vicinity;
- Compile multi-jurisdictional base maps and evaluate existing trail and transportation plans and other pertinent data;
- Develop alternatives for crossing SR 12 and the railroad tracks;
- Consult with landowners, resource and regulatory agencies and other stakeholders as needed to evaluate the feasibility of alternative routes;
- Develop planning level cost estimates and construction schedule for selected trail routes;
- Develop a strategy for cost-sharing;
- Prepare a report that documents the planning process and conclusions.

The proposed grantee, STA, was created in 1990 through a Joint Powers Agreement between the cities of Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, Vallejo and the County of Solano. The STA is responsible for countywide transportation planning, programming transportation funds, managing and providing transportation programs and services, delivering transportation projects, and setting transportation priorities. In carrying out these responsibilities, STA routinely coordinates with Caltrans, one of the major stakeholders in the proposed project. STA also has a history of advancing pedestrian and bicycle projects and administers several grant programs for this purpose.

SR12 and the parallel railroad tracks have to be crossed in order to connect the Ridge Trail segments that reach from the Bay into southwestern Solano County and are proposed to extend northward into Napa County (Exhibit 2). Caltrans and the park departments and transportation agencies in the two counties are all interested in or amenable to solving the trail connection issues, but need leadership and the initial funding to coordinate among the agencies. STA is prepared to provide that leadership.

Site Description: The site of the proposed project is the gently rolling and curving Jameson Canyon, which is bisected by an approximately 10-mile stretch of SR 12 between I-80 in Solano County and SR 29 in Napa County (Exhibit 1). While most of the land in and around Jameson Canyon is rural, with large cattle ranches, vineyards, and smaller “ranchettes,” SR 12 is a high-speed, heavily traveled connection between the SR 29 and I-80. Caltrans is planning for upgrades to the road and to its interchange with I-80 near Fairfield. A railroad track parallels the eastern half of the SR 12 in Jameson Canyon, and then sweeps southward.

The proposed route for the Ridge Trail stretches north from eastern Vallejo, crosses SR 12, and continues northward in eastern Napa County (Exhibit 2). The route is reflected conceptually in County trail plans, but the specific points for crossing the highway and railroad and the alignment through the rural properties have not been determined.

Project History: The vision for the Ridge is a 500-mile multi-use, continuous trail that rings San Francisco Bay, high on the ridgeline. Under the leadership of the Conservancy and the BARTC, and supported by a diverse group of project partners, the Ridge Trail creates an interconnected system of open space and trails that provides recreational opportunities and scenic views to the public. Begun almost 20 years ago, over 300 miles of trail are now dedicated and/or open to the public in all nine Bay Area counties. This authorization will further the Conservancy's statutory and strategic goal of improving access around San Francisco Bay, and is consistent with previous Conservancy authorizations to negotiate and acquire trail easements, prepare trail construction plans and designs, and construct and open trail segments to the public.

Last November, the STA submitted a funding application to the BARTC and the Conservancy for the Jameson Canyon project. In February, following consultation between staff of the Council and the Conservancy, BARTC’s Executive Committee endorsed STA’s request (Exhibit 3).

STA has taken the initiative to begin working with the BARTC and other stakeholders to resolve the Jameson Canyon trail connection and transportation issues. It is also offering in-kind services as a partial match. (See (“Project Financing”))

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$55,000
Solano Transportation Agency (in-kind)	<u>12,500</u>
Total Project Cost	\$67,500

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the fiscal year 2007-2008 appropriation to the Conservancy from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). This funding source may be used to

promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state. The proposed project is consistent with this allowed use in that it would complete planning needed to make connections in Bay Area regional trails.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Pursuant to Section 31162(a) of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help to improve public access to, within, and around the ridgetops, consistent with the rights of private property owners, and without having a significant adverse impact on agricultural operations and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife. Consistent with Section 31162(a), the proposed project will engage private property owners and other stakeholders in a consensus-based process to identify a route for the Ridge Trail that is mutually satisfactory. The owners and operators of agricultural operations in the project area, as well as fish and wildlife agencies will be consulted to ensure that the proposed plan would not propose trails that would cause significant adverse impacts on agricultural operations or environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife.

Pursuant to Section 31163(c), the Conservancy shall give priority to projects that, to the greatest extent, meet criteria including support by adopted local or regional plans; multiple jurisdictions or service to a regional constituency; ability to be implemented in a timely way; opportunities for benefits that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented; and matching funds from other sources of funding or assistance. Consistent with criteria in Section 31163(c), the proposed project would implement the Ridge Trail Plan and the County of Napa’s Park and Open Space Plan with respect to regional trails; include the trail and transportation agencies of two counties, Caltrans, and the City of Fairfield; be undertaken immediately upon approval of the proposed grant; take advantage of the opportunity to affect ongoing Caltrans planning for SR 12 improvements; and include a funding match in the form of in-kind services from the grantee.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective F** of the Conservancy’s 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will result in a plan for the alignment of a total of approximately 5 miles of the Ridge Trail.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on 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:** Letters of support have been received from State Senator Michael Machado, Assemblymember Lois Wolk, Assemblymember Noreen Evans and others.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is within the nine-county jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
5. **Need:** While the grantee and the cooperating agencies are amenable to staff participation in the proposed project, funding is not available for consultant services to develop base maps, collect and evaluate information, convene and follow up on meetings, and produce a final report.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project is necessary for implementing a section of the Ridge Trail, a regionally significant trail system.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** Caltrans is in the process of designing improvements to the Jameson Canyon section of SR 12. It is important that trails that may cross or parallel the road be located and designed as soon as possible to enable inclusion in the road plans.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Conflict resolution:** The proposed project is intended to resolve conflicts between trail and highway routes.
12. **Readiness:** The STA has already consulted with most of the major stakeholders and developed a work program. It is ready to proceed immediately upon authorization of funding assistance.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
15. **Cooperation:** The premise of the proposed project is that local and State agencies, private non-profit organizations, and landowners with disparate interests will work together on planning for regional trails that will be satisfactory to all. In addition, completion of the Ridge Trail is one of the goals identified in the Bay Area Open Space Council’s “The San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program Regional Needs Briefing Book (July 1999).” The project is also consistent with the BARTC’s adopted alignment and the report entitled “400 Miles and Beyond: A Strategic Plan for Completing the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Draft 2006).”

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of CEQA under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15262 in that it involves planning for possible future actions, which the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the proposed authorization.