

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
June 5, 2008

**WAVE ORGAN ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS**

File No. 08-025-01  
Project Manager: Moira McEnespy

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$204,000 to The Exploratorium to improve access to the wave organ, City and County of San Francisco.

**LOCATION:** End of the jetty that creates the San Francisco Marina Yacht Harbor, City and County of San Francisco

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

---

**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Site Map](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Site Photos](#)

Exhibit 4: [Letters of Support](#)

---

**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of up to two hundred four thousand dollars (\$204,000) to The Exploratorium to improve an access path and construct an access ramp to the wave organ, located at the San Francisco Marina Yacht Harbor, City and County of San Francisco, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds, The Exploratorium shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:
  - a. A final work program, schedule and budget.
  - b. The scopes of work and the roster of contractors to be employed in the project.
  - c. A sign plan identifying the wave organ from the nearest public road, and acknowledging the Conservancy and displaying its logo in a manner approved by the Executive Officer.

2. Prior to initiating construction, the Exploratorium 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. The Exploratorium and the landowner shall enter into an agreement sufficient to protect the public interest in the project pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31116(c).”

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 the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165.
3. The Exploratorium is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”

---

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorize disbursement of up to two hundred four thousand dollars (\$204,000) to The Exploratorium to improve an access path and construct an access ramp to the wave organ.

Located at the end of the jetty that forms the San Francisco Marina Yacht Harbor (Exhibits 1-2), the wave organ is a unique wave-activated acoustic sculpture that is dependent on the site’s tides, weather and water conditions (Exhibit 3). The wave organ consists of a listening area with stone benches and steps, in which 25 pipes (PVC and concrete) are installed at various elevations. The impact of waves against the pipe ends, the subsequent movement of the water in and out of the pipes, and the pipes’ amplification of the water’s contact create subtle “organ” sounds. Developed by Peter Richards, Artist-In-Residence at The Exploratorium, and installed in 1986 in collaboration with sculptor and master stone mason George Gonzales, the wave organ is recognized in many guidebooks, and has been featured in local, regional, national and international press. The site also provides a place to enjoy spectacular views of the San Francisco skyline, the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge.

The Exploratorium now seeks to improve access to the wave organ as part of a larger restoration that includes restoring the pipes and installing some native plants. Specifically, the Exploratorium will (1) upgrade an existing unpaved 720-ft path from the parking area to the site into an 8-ft-wide asphalt path (see the first photo in Exhibit 3 to see path location), and (2) make the wave organ accessible per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA-accessible) by replacing the stairs leading to the organ’s listening and seating areas with an ADA-accessible ramp (see the second photo in Exhibit 3 of the proposed ramp location and rendition of how

completed ramp will look). Upgrading the path to the wave organ will also result in an upgrade to the San Francisco Bay Trail, as this path is a spur segment of the Bay Trail alignment. Work is slated to be completed by early 2009.

The Exploratorium’s mission is to create a culture of learning through innovative exhibits, environments, programs and tools that stimulate curiosity and enable people of all ages and origins to explore the world around them. Although the Conservancy has not granted funds to The Exploratorium in the past, Conservancy staff is confident that The Exploratorium will successfully complete the project as planned in a timely manner for the following reasons: (1) the organization has successfully managed the wave organ since 1986; (2) the organization has secured multiple sources of matching funds for the renovation, which shows commitment to project completion; and (3) the two original artists/designers of the wave organ are directly involved in the renovation.

**Site Description:** The proposed project is located at the end of the jetty that creates the San Francisco Marina Yacht Harbor, and sits on land owned by the City of San Francisco under the jurisdiction of the Recreation and Park Department. The site consists of the wave organ installation, which, like the jetty itself, is constructed of stone and marble reused from an old Gold Rush-era cemetery.

**Project History:** The Conservancy does not have a prior history with The Exploratorium, but was approached to assist with funding the access-related components of the renovation in Fall of 2007.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$204,000
American Express Foundation (secured)	40,000
Tin Man Fund (secured)	10,000
Grants for the Arts (secured)	10,000
San Francisco Conservation Corps (in-kind)	10,000
Ann Hall Trust (secured)	5,000
SF Beautiful (pending)	<u>5,000</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$284,000</b>

Conservancy funds are anticipated to come from the “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006” (Proposition 84). These funds are available for all the purposes of the Conservancy, including the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, and are appropriate for promoting access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the State. Consistent with the purposes of Proposition 84, the proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, and will create ADA-accessible access to a unique, wave-activated acoustic sculpture and the San Francisco Bay shoreline.

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

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, sections 31160 *et seq.* regarding San Francisco Bay projects.

Consistent with Section 31162(a), the Conservancy will award a grant to conduct a project that will improve public access to the bay, and help provide ADA-accessible access to a related bay-dependent interpretive installation. Consistent with Section 31163(c), the proposed authorization will be used for funding an outdoor recreational project that is supported by an adopted regional plan (see the “Consistency with the San Francisco Bay Plan” section), serves a regional constituency, can be implemented in a timely way, and includes matching contributions from other sources of funding or assistance.

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

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective B** of the Conservancy’s 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will increase access to a recreational facility.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective L**, the proposed project will make an existing recreational installation ADA-compliant.

**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:** The proposed project is supported by State Senator Carol Migden (District 3), Assemblyman Mark Leno (District 13), Supervisor Alioto-Pier (District 2), San Francisco Conservation Corps, and Marina Community Association. Please see letters of support in Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located on the waterfront of the City and County of San Francisco, which is within the nine-county Bay Area.
5. **Need:** Absent Conservancy participation, the proposed project will not have enough funds to install the ADA-accessible access upgrades.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project is known locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

**Additional Criteria**

7. **Urgency:** The proposed project upgrades need to be installed in conjunction with the other proposed renovations, which are slated to be completed by early 2009.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
11. **Innovation:** The proposed project consists of renovating an extremely unique site-specific acoustic sculpture.
12. **Readiness:** The Exploratorium is ready to complete renovations to the wave organ by early 2009.

**CONSISTENCY WITH SAN FRANCISCO BAY PLAN:**

The proposed project is consistent with the applicable policies contained in Part IV, Development of the Bay and Shoreline: Findings and Policies, of the San Francisco Bay Plan adopted by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) in January 2006.

Public Access Policy No. 8 states:

Access to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available. Diverse and interesting public access experiences should be provided which would encourage users to remain in the designated access areas to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects on wildlife and their habitat.

Consistent with Public Access Policy No. 8, the proposed project will provide a walkway to the waterfront that connects to a public thoroughfare where convenient public transportation is available (Marina Boulevard), and will provide a diverse and interesting public access experience (specifically, a wave-activated acoustic sculpture) that will encourage users to remain in designated public access areas.

Appearance, Design and Scenic Views Policy No. 2 states in relevant part that “[a]ll bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay” and “[m]aximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas...” Consistent with this policy, the proposed project will be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay by providing increased access to a unique, wave-activated acoustic sculpture and a place where the public can relax and enjoy the San Francisco shoreline.

Finally, Recreation Policy No. 3 states that recreational facilities should be encouraged by BCDC if they are located, improved and managed such that they (1) are concentrated as close to major population centers as is feasible, (2) do not preempt land or water area needed for other priority uses, (3) are feasible from an engineering standpoint and (4) are consistent with public access policies that address wildlife compatibility and disturbance. The proposed project constitutes an upgrade to a recreational facility that is close to a major population center (the City and County of San Francisco), does not preempt land or water area needed for other priority

uses, is feasible from an engineering standpoint, and does not disturb wildlife. The proposed project is thus encouraged by BCDC per Recreation Policy No. 3.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project is categorically exempt under from California Environmental Quality Act under the following Sections of the Public Resources Code:

Under Section 15301, “existing facilities,” because it consists of repair, maintenance or minor alteration of an existing private structure involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency’s determination.

Under Section 15302, “replacement or reconstruction,” because it consists of replacement or reconstruction of a portion of an existing structure where the new portion will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced.

Staff will file a notice of exemption upon approval of the project.