

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
December 4, 2008

**BODEGA BAY TRAILS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT PROJECT  
REVISION**

File No. 07-047-02  
Project Manager: Deborah Hirst

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to modify the prior Conservancy authorization for the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Plan by redirecting funds for use by Sonoma County, Regional Parks Department for preparation of 1) a programmatic environmental document for the Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan which includes the Bodega Bay area, and 2) site-specific environmental review and planning for a 1.2-mile segment of Coastal Trail in Sonoma County.

**LOCATION:** Bodega Bay, Sonoma County (Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Public Access

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**EXHIBITS:**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [September 20, 2007 Staff Recommendation](#)

Exhibit 3: [Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Project List](#)

Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400, *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy modifies its authorization of September 20, 2007 to redirect a portion of these funds for use by Sonoma County, Regional Parks Department (SCRPD) to develop 1) a programmatic environmental document for the Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan that will include the Bodega Bay area; and 2) site-specific environmental review and planning for the 1.2-mile segment of Coastal Trail along Bodega Bay in Sonoma County. This authorization remains subject to the conditions contained in the September 20, 2007 staff recommendation attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 2.”

*BODEGA BAY TRAILS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT PROJECT REVISION*

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 objectives of Chapter 9, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines updated by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007.
3. The project will serve greater than local needs.”

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**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

The Conservancy approved the Bodega Bay Trail Environmental Document project on September 20, 2007 and authorized the disbursement of up to \$100,000 to Sonoma County, Regional Parks Department (“SCRPD”) to complete a programmatic environmental document for the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Plan for Bodega Bay, Sonoma County (See Exhibit 1: Project Location Maps and Exhibit 2: September 20, 2007 Staff Recommendation). However, the SCRPD has now determined that the programmatic environmental review necessary for the Bodega Bay Trail Plan can be incorporated into the environmental document being completed for the Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (“USCBPP”) resulting in significant cost savings to the project. Pursuant to this proposed authorization, a portion of the Conservancy’s funds now would be used to supplement the budget for the USCBPP programmatic environmental impact statement to provide the initial environmental review for the Bodega Bay Trail Plan. The remaining majority of the Conservancy’s funds would complete site-specific environmental review and planning for a 1.2-mile segment of the California Coastal Trail identified in the Bodega Bay Trail Plan.

The USCBPP environmental document will provide necessary environmental evaluation and review of all the related trail projects in the USCBPP including the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Study’s Conceptual Improvement Plan (See Exhibit 3 for USCBPP draft Project List). The SCRPD anticipates the document will be completed and submitted to the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors for review in late spring 2009. Subsequent adoption of the County Plan by the Board of Supervisors will meet the programmatic environmental review necessary for the Bodega Bay Trail Plan segments. This will accomplish the objective of the September 20, 2007 authorization while using only \$15,000 in Conservancy funds. With the remaining \$85,000 from the previous authorization, the SCRPD will complete site-specific review and planning for a 1.2-mile priority segment of the California Coastal Trail identified in the Bodega Bay Trail Plan. This segment, when constructed, will provide public access improvements along Highway One and Smith Brothers Road as well as a new boardwalk at the south end of Bodega Bay. Additional site-specific environmental review will be completed as

## *BODEGA BAY TRAILS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT PROJECT REVISION*

necessary for development of the Bodega Bay Conceptual Improvement Plan, to be implemented over the next five to ten years.

SCRPD operates a network of parks and public access trails throughout the County and hosts over 2 million visitors along its spectacular coast each year. SCRPD has successfully completed a number of coastal planning and implementation projects with public input and Conservancy support, including the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Study Conceptual Improvement Plan in September 2005 (“Bodega Bay CIP”) which identified the sequence of trail projects necessary to complete safe access for bicycles and pedestrians through Bodega Bay, Salmon Creek and Bodega Headlands.

### **Site Description:**

The proposed project will provide environmental review for bicycle and pedestrian access projects included within the USCBPP that are located in the coastal and inland unincorporated areas of Sonoma County (Exhibit 3). Among these, the Bodega Bay CIP identifies a preferred route, as well as alternative routes and additional improvements, to provide bicycle and pedestrian access through a combination of park land, Caltrans right-of-way and potential easements in the coastal village of Bodega Bay in unincorporated Sonoma County.

The 1.2-mile trail segment included for site-specific environmental review in the revised project is located at the southern edge of Bodega Bay. The project begins at Bird Walk Coastal Access Park west of Highway One and continues north along the Highway, past Lucas Warf and up onto Smith Brothers Road. The project when constructed will include 2,240 feet of improvements along Highway One and Smith Brothers Road to the west of the Highway and 1,050 feet of a tideland boardwalk. The new trail will enable continuous access from Doran Beach Park, across the recently completed pedestrian bridge at Cheney Creek, through Birdwalk Coastal Access Park, along the Highway One improvement and up through Lucas Warf to the new boardwalk adjacent to Smith Brothers Road.

The Bodega Bay Trail project area will serve the approximately 1,400 residents living in Bodega Bay and many of the estimated 2 million visitors traveling along the Sonoma Coast each year.

### **Project History:**

Over the course of 2002-2005, the Conservancy supported an extensive outreach and planning process conducted by Sonoma County for the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Study. The resulting Bodega Bay CIP provided a phased plan for access and trail improvements from Salmon Creek to the north of Bodega Bay, down through the coastal town and out to the resources to the south, including Doran Beach Regional Park. The Bodega Bay trail segments will together form an important part of the California Coastal Trail where only 2.3 miles of coast (and 9 miles by road) remain as a gap between southern Sonoma County and northern Marin County. The Conservancy has

*BODEGA BAY TRAILS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT PROJECT REVISION*

already supported the construction of one of the trail segments identified in the plan – the pedestrian bridge linking Doran Beach with the Birdwalk Coastal Access Park – and that trail is now open to the public.

On September 20, 2007, the Conservancy authorized \$100,000 for completion of an environmental document for the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Plan. Subsequent developments in countywide trails planning led to the current opportunity to meet the environmental review for the Bodega Trail Plan within the review of a larger scope project through the County already underway.

Sonoma Parks proposed the revised project as an efficient method of meeting the programmatic review of the Bodega Bay CIP segments as a whole by including the plan within the environmental review for the wider Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The expected completion date for the Unincorporated Sonoma County Plan to be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors is late spring of 2009. The site-specific review for the 1.2-mile segment linking Birdwalk Coastal Access Park and Smith Brothers Road was included as a component of the revised project to move forward with the implementation of the County’s priority segments for the Bodega Bay Trails Plan. This timing will enable site-specific review to be completed in 2010 and construction will be anticipated in 2011 provided construction funding is secured. Additional site-by-site environmental reviews will be completed prior to the implementation of individual trail segment projects from the Bodega Bay CIP wherever necessary.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$100,000*
Sonoma County	\$101,974
<hr/> Total Project Cost	<hr/> \$201,974

\*These funds represent funds previously authorized under the Conservancy’s September 20, 2007 authorization. (See Exhibit 2).

Upon approval of this authorization, up to \$15,000 of the funds approved by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007 will be used to complete an environmental document for the Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and up to \$85,000 will be used to complete site-specific environmental review and planning for 1.2 miles of the Coastal Trail identified in the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Plan.

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

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 (Sections 31400, *et seq.*) of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline.

*BODEGA BAY TRAILS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT PROJECT REVISION*

Section 31400.1 of the Public Resources Code authorizes the Conservancy to award a grant to a local public agency to develop and manage lands for public access to and along the coast, so long as the accessway will serve more than local public needs. The proposed project is consistent with this section as the SCRPD is a public agency and the Bodega Bay area is recognized as a destination of regional, national and international interest to millions of people annually.

Pursuant to Section 31400.2, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of acquisition of interests in land and the initial development of public accessways by any public agency or nonprofit organization, as provided in Section 31400.1. The proposed project is consistent with this section as project funding will derive from the Conservancy and Sonoma County, for the development of an accessway in the Bodega Bay area. Staff has evaluated the project in light of the total amount of funding available for coastal accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the grantee, the urgency of the project and other factors herein described in recommending this grant.

Pursuant Section 31400.3, the Conservancy is authorized “to provide such assistance as is required to aid public agencies and nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division.” Consistent with this section, the proposed project will assist SCRPD in developing a programmatic environmental document for the system of accessways planned for Sonoma County and the Bodega Bay area as described in the Bodega Bay CIP and the Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Pursuant to Section 31409, the Conservancy is authorized to award grants and provide assistance to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to establish and expand those inland trails systems that may be linked to the California Coastal Trail. The proposed project is consistent with this section as it will provide the environmental document necessary for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and lead to the construction of multiple segments connecting the California Coastal Trail through this southern section of Sonoma County and for trail projects throughout Sonoma County.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES:**

Consistent with **Goal 2 - Objective C & D**, the proposed project will enable the necessary environmental review for the Unincorporated Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, including the future construction of a series of trail projects to complete the California Coastal Trail and provide safe bike and pedestrian coastal accessways for the public through the Bodega Bay area of Sonoma County, and will enable site-specific environmental review and planning for a 1.2-mile link in the California Coastal Trail in Bodega Bay.

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

The revised project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines updated 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 public provided input to the Bodega Bay Trail Conceptual Improvement Plan, and regional partners have submitted letters in support of the proposed project (Exhibit 4).
4. **Location:** The proposed project will evaluate trail projects in the unincorporated area of Sonoma County including segments in the Bodega Bay environs. The future trail segments will be constructed on a variety of publicly owned properties and right-of-ways within the coastal zone.
5. **Need:** Absent Conservancy funding, the SCRPD will be unable to complete the necessary steps for implementation of the trails designed in the Bodega Bay Trail Conceptual Improvement Plan.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The project area provides non-vehicular access in a highly congested and dangerous segment of Highway 1 used by those seeking recreation through bird watching, hiking, biking, beach visits and site-seeing in the harbor area of this Sonoma County coastal community. Bodega Bay as a whole, including its natural resources and fishing town character, attracts local families and visitors as well as regional and international tourists.

**Additional Criteria**

7. **Urgency:** The need to pursue a safe trail access separate from Highway 1 through Bodega Bay is urgent. The proposed project will provide environmental review for a safe, continuous route from Salmon Creek, through Bodega Bay and down to the spit at Doran Beach Regional Park and other unincorporated area trails in Sonoma County.
8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The proposed project includes elements that will both extend the reach of the California Coastal Trail and close a gap between multiple community and recreation destinations that are unsafe to reach by bicycle and foot along the narrow and highly traveled stretch of Highway 1 in

## *BODEGA BAY TRAILS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT PROJECT REVISION*

Bodega Bay.

9. **Leverage:** The Conservancy's contribution to this project is leveraged by funding from partner agencies, as discussed in the "Project History" section above.
10. **Readiness:** SCRPD has begun to implement initial projects identified in the Conceptual Improvement Plan (September 2005) and has the capacity and readiness to conduct the proposed project for environmental review leading to subsequent trail construction projects. The SCRPD is ready to complete the environmental review for the Unincorporated Sonoma Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the project-specific review for the revised project.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
12. **Cooperation:** The project was developed through the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Study which involved many stakeholders and agencies working together to identify trail opportunities.

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

The USCBPP and the Bodega Bay CIP involve properties that are located within the Coastal Zone and are subject to the jurisdiction of the County of Sonoma's Local Coastal Program (Certified June 1982, Amended December 2001). The revised project is consistent with the relevant sections of the Local Coastal Program (LCP) and the County of Sonoma's General Plan.

Consistent with Section V (Recreation) of Sonoma County's LCP and Section 30210 of the Coastal Act, "maximum access and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people, consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from over use," the proposed project will provide environmental review for increased public access to the resources along Bodega Bay by adding to the California Coastal Trail and improving safe passage off Highway 1.

Consistent with Section VI (Harbor) and Coastal Act Section 30221, "ocean front land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreation activities that could be accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area," the revised project will provide additional access for bird watching, hiking, biking and water sports by linking State Park, regional parks and recreational access areas around the harbor with the California Coastal Trail.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project to conduct environmental review does not have the potential for a significant effect under CEQA and as such, is exempt under CEQA. (See 14 Cal. Code

*BODEGA BAY TRAILS ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT PROJECT REVISION*

Regs. §15061(b)(3)). The proposed project to complete planning for the Coastal Trail is exempt from CEQA under 14 Cal. Code of Regs Section 15262 as it involves only planning and feasibility studies for an action which has not yet been approved, adopted or funded. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.