

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
January 19, 2011

OCEAN BEACH MASTER PLAN

File No. 08-163-01
Project Manager: Amy Hutzel

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$400,000 to the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association to pursue implementation of recommendations in the Ocean Beach Master Plan by conducting a traffic circulation and access study, developing a joint coastal management framework, and developing a joint open space management agreement among the multiple management entities.

LOCATION: Ocean Beach, City and County of San Francisco

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Ocean Beach Master Plan Presentation: Draft Recommendations](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

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 up to \$400,000 (four hundred thousand dollars) to the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) to pursue implementation of recommendations in the Ocean Beach Master Plan (Master Plan) by conducting a traffic circulation and access study, developing a joint coastal management framework, and developing a joint open space management agreement among the multiple management entities. This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds, SPUR shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a final work program, schedule and budget; and the scopes of work and the roster of contractors to be employed in the project.
 2. SPUR shall develop the project in consultation with the Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the City and County of San Francisco.”
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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 project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated by the Conservancy on November 10, 2011.
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.
3. The San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association is a non-profit organization existing under 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 authorize disbursement of up to \$400,000 (four hundred thousand dollars) to the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR) to pursue implementation of recommendations in the Ocean Beach Master Plan (Master Plan) by conducting a traffic circulation and access study, developing a joint coastal management framework, and developing a joint open space management agreement among the multiple management entities.

Ocean Beach lies within the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), along the west side of San Francisco (see Exhibit 1). It is jointly owned and managed by the GGNRA (the beach) and the City and County of San Francisco (the road and parking). At five-miles long, it is one of the longest urban beaches in the country. Ocean Beach has the potential to become one of the most spectacular metropolitan beaches in the world, but currently suffers from erosion, neglect and a lack of amenities. The Conservancy provided a \$300,000 grant to SPUR in May of 2010 to develop a Master Plan for Ocean Beach. The Master Plan effort has, in less than 18 months, achieved an unprecedented level of cooperation and consensus among the management agencies and key stakeholders at Ocean Beach, after previous planning efforts that had faltered for various reasons.

The Master Plan is nearing completion (the final report will be released in February or March of 2012), with draft recommendations presented to stakeholders in October of 2011 (Exhibit 2). The recommendations reflect a robust process involving many stakeholders and have received broad, enthusiastic support. The recommendations address major issues and processes at Ocean Beach, including climate change and sea level rise; erosion; natural resources protection; public access and recreation; vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access and circulation; and implementation, management and maintenance. There are six key recommendations, divided between the south, middle, and north reaches of Ocean Beach, as follows:

South Reach (Skyline Blvd. to Sloat Blvd.):

- 1) Reroute the Great Highway behind the San Francisco Zoo via Sloat and Skyline Boulevards.
- 2) Introduce a multi-purpose coastal protection, restoration, and access system.

Middle Reach (Sloat Blvd to south end of Golden Gate Park):

- 3) Reduce the width of the Great Highway to provide amenities and managed retreat.
- 4) Conduct native dune restoration in key locations.

North Reach (south end of Golden Gate Park to the south end of Lands End):

- 5) Create a better connection between Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach.
- 6) Implement bicycle and pedestrian improvements north of Balboa St.

The Master Plan is a non-regulatory guidance document and its implementation will depend on sustained engagement of stakeholders and management agencies. This authorization would enable SPUR to pursue implementation of the recommendations in coordination with the appropriate partner agency while keeping the public engaged and political support high and working to secure implementation funding. Specifically, SPUR will conduct the following activities:

Implementation Leadership and Coordination: For each of the implementation actions below, SPUR will serve as the coordinator and manager, providing continuity of leadership and maintaining the key relationships developed to date. SPUR will coordinate closely with partner agencies to pursue and secure additional funding, build political momentum, and maintain the focused engagement of all partners. SPUR will lead public communications and steward the core principles of the Master Plan through the full range of implementation efforts. SPUR will identify and seek funds for implementation of the Master Plan recommendations, including from the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Cosco-Busan Oil Spill Settlement, the National Park Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE).

Traffic Circulation and Access Study: The recommended approach to coastal management at Ocean Beach will require significant reconfiguration of roadways, in particular the closure of the Great Highway south of Sloat Blvd. and the rerouting of traffic via Sloat and Skyline Blvds. This will require the reconfiguration of several intersections and the redesign of Sloat Blvd. into a multi-modal coastal gateway. SPUR will 1) conduct traffic analysis of the Great Highway re-routing and associated roadway and intersection reconfigurations, 2) coordinate with ongoing city transportation plans and studies, including the 19th Avenue Corridor Study, 3) plan for an extension of the L-Taraval rail line to the Zoo entrance, 4) develop an area-wide parking management plan, including a reconfigured access plan for the San Francisco Zoo parking lot, and 5) develop a roadway configuration and design.

Joint Coastal Management Framework: The coastal management recommendations will require significant analysis and their implementation will depend on agreement among GGNRA, USACE, and SFPUC. A joint coastal management framework will define an agreed upon set of triggers and actions for adaptation to rising sea levels and associated coastal hazards at Ocean Beach. SPUR will facilitate the development of a Joint Coastal Management Framework, to provide the basis of a formal agreement among the agencies responsible for and affected by coastal management. Elements will include: coastal engineering studies, phasing plan with climate and erosion triggers, economic and cost benefit analysis, and coordination on capital project planning.

Joint Open Space Management Agreement: Ocean Beach is experienced as a single place, but to date, management of Ocean Beach as an open space resource has been divided among several public agencies, namely GGNRA, San Francisco Department of Recreation and Parks, SFPUC, and the San Francisco Zoo. SPUR will facilitate the creation of a joint open space management agreement or similar structure, to both improve day-to-day operations and maintenance and allow for future improvements to public access and amenities, as recommended in the Master Plan. This effort will include drafting a management agreement and facilitating its execution, developing an open space and programming plan, developing a cost and revenue sharing framework, and doing a schematic design of public access improvements.

SPUR is a long-standing 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization formed in 1910 as the San Francisco Planning and Housing Association, and changed to the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association in 1959. SPUR is a public policy “think tank” that seeks to promote good planning and good government through research, analysis, public education and advocacy. SPUR has extensive experience with planning, land use, transportation and economic issues in San Francisco, including revitalization of San Francisco as the Bay Area’s urban core. SPUR has done excellent work developing the Ocean Beach Master Plan under the previous Conservancy grant.

Site Description: Ocean Beach lies within GGNRA, along the west side of San Francisco. It is jointly owned and managed by GGNRA (the beach) and the City and County of San Francisco (the road and parking). At five-miles long, it is one of the longest urban beaches in the country. The project area is bounded by Golden Gate Park and residential areas to the East, Fort Funston to the South and cliffs to the North (see Exhibit 1). Even with its current lack of amenities, Ocean Beach is annually visited by as many as two million people for activities such as walking, picnicking, jogging, dog walking, surfing and fishing. The Master Plan includes recommendations to enhance the visitor experience, including improved access between Golden Gate Park and Ocean Beach and improved bicycle connections from Ocean Beach to the north.

Ocean Beach also provides habitat for plants and animals, including the Western snowy plover, a federally threatened species, and the bank swallow, a state-listed threatened species. There are large dune areas, which are primarily vegetated with European beach grass. The Master Plan includes recommendations for dune restoration in the middle reach.

Ocean Beach is facing a severe coastal erosion issue in the south reach (between Sloat and Skyline Blvds.) which has caused temporary closures of that section of the Great Highway and prompted the City of San Francisco to undertake emergency repairs and seek Coastal Commission permits for additional work. The Corps deposits dredged materials to the south of the shipping channels entering San Francisco Bay, which have resulted in the growth of the northern end of Ocean Beach. However, due to where the sediments are placed and offshore dynamics, there is no (or limited) deposition on the southern end of Ocean Beach, which is eroding away and threatening the Great Highway.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission manages major infrastructure within the bounds of the project area, namely the Oceanside Wastewater Treatment Plant, and the associated Lake Merced Wastewater Tunnel, Southwest Ocean Outfall, and the sewer transport boxes that run under the Great Highway. This infrastructure is susceptible to sea level rise and coastal erosion to varying degrees, and was a significant driver in the Master Plan process.

The Great Highway and Sloat Boulevard are major traffic corridors in the area, but are both oversized. The Master Plan includes recommendations for improved traffic circulation, which would allow for the permanent closure of the Great Highway south of Sloat and a reduction in size of the Great Highway north of Sloat Blvd., which allows for more creative solutions to the coastal erosion issue, allows for a greater level of managed retreat from sea level rise, and allows for increased public amenities.

Project History: In 2000, residents, businesses, government entities and community-based organizations came together to coordinate the activities of the many government agencies involved in the Ocean Beach area, as well as develop an active grassroots movement to support its revitalization and protection. This group identified the need for a single document that integrates the requirements of the natural environment and green spaces, the desires of area residents, recreational opportunities, as well as the plans and expertise of the number of public agencies maintaining the area. In early 2008, Mayor Gavin Newsom created the Ocean Beach Vision Council, whose main task was to create a Master Plan for revitalizing Ocean Beach. The Conservancy authorized a \$300,000 grant to SPUR in May of 2010 to develop the Master Plan, building upon the work of the Ocean Beach Vision Council. Through the Master Plan effort, SPUR developed a set of far reaching and multi-objective recommendations. This authorization would allow for SPUR to take the next step in ensuring the recommendations are implemented by the public agencies responsible for management of Ocean Beach.

PROJECT FINANCING:

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| Coastal Conservancy | \$400,000 |
| San Francisco Public Utilities Commission | \$300,000 |
| National Park Service | <u>\$125,000</u> |
| Total Project Cost | \$825,000 |

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). Proposition 84 funds may be used for the purposes of promoting access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the State in accordance with the provisions of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. Consistent with the purposes of Proposition 84, the proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program (Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code), and will consist of planning and related activities necessary to assist, promote and enhance access to and visitor-serving amenities at Ocean Beach in the City and County of San Francisco.

The SFPUC has indicated in their budget documents, which are subject to approvals by the Mayor and Board of Supervisors, an appropriation of \$300,000 for this effort over the next two fiscal years. The SFPUC may be able to increase their contribution. The National Park Service has committed \$125,000 towards the efforts to implement the Ocean Beach Master Plan, using funds intended for transportation enhancements within GGNRA. Funds are also being sought for the project through the San Francisco County Transportation Authority. In addition, the project will benefit from the in-kind services of members of the steering committee and advisory committee.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, sections 31160-31165 regarding San Francisco Bay projects.

Pursuant to Section 31162, the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that help to achieve various specific goals, including the goals of increasing public access to the coast, protecting natural habitats and open space resources of regional importance, and promoting projects that provide open space and natural areas accessible to urban populations for recreational purposes. The proposed project is located entirely within the County of San Francisco.

Consistent with Section 31162(a), the proposed project will plan for improved public access to the coast and improved connection of population centers to the coast through efforts to implement the Master Plan recommendations. The proposed project will not have a significant adverse effect on agricultural operations, environmentally sensitive areas or wildlife; in fact, the Master Plan recommends dune restoration to better protect environmentally sensitive habitat areas and wildlife and changes in traffic circulation to allow for improved public amenities, enhanced habitat, and managed retreat from sea level rise.

Consistent with Section 31162(b), the proposed project, which will pursue implementation of the Master Plan recommendations, will increase protection of natural habitats, scenic areas and open-space resources of regional importance in the Ocean Beach area.

Consistent with Section 31162(c), the activities proposed for funding will serve to assist in carrying out the policies of the City and County of San Francisco’s certified Local Coastal Program, as discussed in detail in the “CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES” section, below, as well as the policies governing the GGNRA.

Consistent with Section 31162(d), the activities proposed for funding will assist and promote a project whose major purpose is to provide increased accessibility of the Ocean Beach area to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes.

In addition, the proposed project satisfies criteria for determining project priority under Section 31163(c), as follows: (1) the proposed project is multijurisdictional (Ocean Beach is jointly owned and managed by the National Park Service as part of the GGNRA and the City and County of San Francisco) and will serve a regional consistency (Ocean Beach receives over two million visitors annually, including residents and tourists); (2) the proposed project will be implemented in a timely way (anticipated to start immediately); (3), the proposed project will include matching funds from other sources (SFPU and GGNRA); and (4) the project is fully consistent with and supported by adopted local plans, as described in the “Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies” section, below.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective C** of the Conservancy’s 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will plan for the creation or improvement of approximately 3.5 miles of the Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective G**, the proposed project will facilitate development and implementation of efforts to manage shoreline erosion.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective A**, the proposed project will facilitate implementation of a plan that provides for recreational opportunities.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective H**, the proposed project will develop a plan for community connectors that link an urban area to the Coastal 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 November 10, 2011, 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 Senator Dianne Feinstein, State Senator Leland Yee (District 8), State Assemblymember Fiona Ma (District 12), Supervisors Eric Mar (District 1) and Carmen Chu (District 4), Surfrider, Save The Waves, and many individuals who reside near or use Ocean Beach. Please see letters in Exhibit 3.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located on the Pacific Coast waterfront of the City and County of San Francisco, which is within the nine-county Bay Area.
5. **Need:** Conservancy funds are needed to leverage SFPUC and GGNRA funds and allow SPUR to begin work immediately, which will sustain the engagement of agencies and stakeholders.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Located within the City and County of San Francisco and the GGNRA, Ocean Beach receives over two million visitors annually, from local to international origin.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The Master Plan addresses sea level rise, laying out an ambitious and new approach to management of Ocean Beach in the face of coastal erosion and sea level rise. This proposed next phase of work will develop a new traffic circulation plan that will allow for managed retreat, as well as phasing plans with triggers for adapting to sea level rise and associated coastal erosion.

Additional Criteria

8. **Urgency:** Winter storms in December 2009 and January 2010 have eroded between 30 and 70 feet of bluff along Ocean Beach, affecting the Great Highway, the Lake Merced Wastewater Tunnel and the Southwest Ocean Outfall Pipe. The recommendations in the Master Plan squarely address this issue and need to be moved towards implementation.

9. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The proposed project addresses the following elements by pursuing the implementation of the Master Plan’s multi-objective recommendations: climate change and sea level rise; coastal erosion; natural resources protection; public access and recreation; vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access and circulation; and implementation, management and maintenance.
10. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
11. **Conflict resolution:** A comprehensive public engagement process took place as part of the Master Plan development, and included three public workshops, numerous community presentations, an Advisory Committee and Steering Committee that each met several times, and a robust online and social media presence, and an exhibit at SPUR’s Urban Center. These efforts have deepened public understanding of the challenges and constraints at Ocean Beach and have resulted in a set of broad, multi-objective recommendations that resolve multiple conflicts.
12. **Readiness:** The proposed project will commence as soon as funds are authorized, and will be completed within three years.
13. **Cooperation:** The proposed project will build upon the stakeholder engagement to date and the cooperation of the public agencies involved in management of Ocean Beach.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed project is consistent with the applicable policies contained in the land use plan portion of the City and County of San Francisco’s certified Local Coastal Program (certified March 14, 1986), namely the *Western Shoreline Plan: A Part of the Master Plan of the City and County of San Francisco* (adopted by the San Francisco City Planning Commission by Resolution No. 10289 on April 18, 1985).

The Western Shoreline Plan covers a six-mile area from the Point Lobos recreational area in the north to the Fort Funston cliff area in the south, and includes Lake Merced, the San Francisco Zoo, Ocean Beach, the Great Highway, Golden Gate Park, and the Sutro Heights Park and Sutro Baths. Much of this planning area will be within the scope of the Ocean Beach Master Plan, which is consistent with the following Western Shoreline Plan policies:

Consistent with “Transportation” Policies 1 and 2, the proposed project will seek to improve east-west public transit connections to Ocean Beach, and improve connections amongst the coastal recreation destinations (e.g., the zoo, etc).

Consistent with “The Great Highway” Policy 4, the proposed project will seek to provide for a continuous Class 1 bicycle trail; consistent with Policy 6, the proposed project will seek to improve public access to Ocean Beach from Golden Gate Park; consistent with Policies 7-8, the proposed project will seek to address safe and flexible parking areas; consistent with Policies 9-11, the proposed project will seek to improve pedestrian safety at crossings and parking areas.

Consistent with the “Golden Gate Park” Objective (No. 3), the proposed project will seek to enhance the recreational connection between Golden Gate Park and the beach frontage by strengthening visual and physical connections.

Consistent with “The Zoo” Objective (No. 4), the proposed project will seek to improve the quality of the zoo’s relationship to the coastal zone recreational system.

Consistent with the “Ocean Beach” Objective (No. 6), the proposed project will seek to maintain and enhance the recreational use of the Ocean Beach shoreline. Consistent with Policies 1 and 2, the proposed project will seek to continue and maintain the beach’s natural areas; consistent with Policies No. 3-4, the proposed project will seek to maintain and improve the beach’s natural appearance and physical condition; consistent with Policy No. 5, the proposed project will seek to enhance the enjoyment of visitors by providing for convenient visitor-oriented services.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed planning project is statutorily and categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under two sections of the CEQA Guidelines, 14 Cal. Code of Regulations §§15000, et seq. The proposed planning activities are statutorily exempt pursuant to Section 15262 in that they will involve feasibility and planning analysis for possible future action that has not yet been adopted, approved or funded and they will include consideration of environmental factors. The planning activities are likewise categorically exempt under §15306 to the extent that they involve basic data collection and resource evaluation activities. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the project.