

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
May 24, 2012

PIGEON POINT LIGHT STATION RESTORATION PLANNING

Project No. 12-010-01
Project Manager: Janet Diehl

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Disbursement of up to \$200,000 to the California State Parks Foundation to produce detailed construction drawings for the structural restoration of the Pigeon Point Light Station in southern San Mateo County, so the lighthouse tower and oil house can be re-opened to the public.

LOCATION: Pigeon Point, approximately five miles south of Pescadero, San Mateo County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Photographs](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400-31410 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to the California State Parks Foundation (“CSPF”) for the purpose of producing detailed construction drawings for the structural restoration of the Pigeon Point Light Station, so the lighthouse tower and oil house can be re-opened to the public. This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of Conservancy funds, CSPF shall submit for review and approval of the Executive Officer:
 - a. A work plan, schedule and budget.
 - b. The names and qualifications of any contractors.
 - c. An agreement between CSPF and the California Department of Parks and Recreation authorizing CSPF to access the site and produce the construction drawings.

2. The construction drawings shall be consistent with the Conservancy's 'Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development,' and with the 'Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historical Properties.'"

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.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the establishment of a system of public accessways to and along the California Coast.
3. The California State Parks Foundation is a nonprofit organization that qualifies under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The proposed project will provide a \$200,000 grant to the California State Park Foundation (CSPF) to complete the design phase of the Pigeon Point Light Station Restoration Project in southern San Mateo County. These detailed construction drawings are needed to guide the structural restoration of Pigeon Point's upper and lower lighthouse towers and the rehabilitation of the oil house. The ultimate goal is to "fix" the lighthouse so it can once again be open to the public, so people can climb its winding staircase and enjoy the spectacular view of the coast below.

The majestic Pigeon Point Light Station has served as a beacon for mariners for 140 years, and a scenic inspiration to millions of people traveling along Highway One. But the years of severe coastal weather have taken its toll on this historic landmark. When chunks of brick and iron fell 115 feet from the top of the lighthouse to the ground in December 2001, public tours were suspended. Since then, several more pieces of the iron banding that holds the tower together have fallen. Now the building's sides are streaked with rust, its floor tiles are broken, and a chain link fence blocks out the public (Exhibit 2).

An analysis by a historic preservation firm in 2008 concluded that a comprehensive structural restoration is needed in order to save the lighthouse and reopen it to the public. Due to the complex composite iron and masonry construction system at the top of the lighthouse, the analysis found that no simple interim measures can be taken to stabilize the structure – it requires a major renovation.

CSPF took on the task of raising the millions of dollars needed to accomplish this goal in 2010. Working with the State Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), which owns the Pigeon Point buildings and property, CSPF recently completed the first phase of the restoration. That \$325,000 phase included:

- Removal of the Fresnel lens from the lighthouse tower to a building on the site.

- Restoration of the lens (inspecting, cleaning and resetting each one of the 1,008 glass prisms that make up the 10-foot-tall lens).
- Stabilization of the upper tower of the lighthouse to prevent further deterioration while major restoration and structural work takes place.

Preparation of construction drawings is the next critical step. Because the light station is listed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks, the work must be done to the Department of Interior's standards for rehabilitation – which makes for a particularly time-consuming and expensive job. CSPF expects the planning work to take about a year and to cost about \$500,000. CSPF will provide \$300,000 to supplement the Conservancy's grant for the project while it continues its campaign to raise \$7 million to do the actual restoration work. Although the numbers are daunting, CSPF has a track record of successfully raising money and managing complex restoration and construction projects at dozens of State Parks projects since it was founded in 1969.

Site Description: Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park is located west of Highway One, about midway between Half Moon Bay and Santa Cruz along the southern San Mateo County coast (Exhibit 1). Within a 45-minute drive of the major metropolitan centers of San Francisco and San Jose, Pigeon Point is one of the most spectacular and ecologically diverse coastal areas in California. The site is surrounded by rocky shoreline, sandy beaches and scenic farmland, all of which is either in public ownership or owned by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (Exhibit 2).

Built in 1871, the Pigeon Point Light Station is the tallest lighthouse on the West Coast. Designed by French architect Phineas F. Marston, it is an excellent example of classic mid-19th century American lighthouse architecture. The station includes five facilities that are on the National Register of Historic Places: the Light Tower, Oil/Watch House, Fog Signal Building, Carpenter Shop and Oil Storage Building.

One of the light station's major attractions is its first-order Fresnel lens. The 17-foot-tall, four-ton lens was made in Paris and shipped to Pigeon Point via Cape Horn. The lens contains 1,008 magnificent polished glass lenses and prisms set in a brass framework. Since CSPF has moved the lens from the top of the lighthouse to the fog signal building for the course of the restoration project, the public now has a unique opportunity to view it at eye level until the work on the lighthouse tower is done and the lens is put back in place.

The site also features four bungalows that serve as a highly popular hostel providing low-cost overnight accommodations for up to 59 people. The hostel is particularly attractive to school groups on field trips to see the elephant seals at Año Nuevo State Natural Reserve, just a few miles to the south. A small visitor center at the hostel offers interpretive facilities, with support from a volunteer docent program. A boardwalk behind the fog signal building provides the public with an excellent spot to see gray whales on their annual migration between January and April. More than 100,000 people visit Pigeon Point Light Station each year, including 11,000 hostel guests and 2,500 school children.

Project History: This impetus for restoration occurred in December 2001, when chunks of brick and iron fell from the lighthouse and forced DPR to close it to the public. That structural failure prompted DPR to work with CSPF to develop a plan to not only restore stability to the lighthouse but also do a complete and thorough restoration. During the 20-plus years that DPR

had leased the lighthouse from the U.S. Coast Guard, it was not allowed to make significant structural repairs. With the title recently conveyed to DPR, restoration work can now be done.

Due to budget cuts, however, DPR is not in a position to fund this work. At DPR's request, CSPF raised private funds to hire a historic preservation firm to produce a structural analysis/rehabilitation plan for Pigeon Point Light Station in 2007. The plan was completed in 2008. Based on the recommendations of that plan, CSPF launched a major fundraising campaign. By 2011, CSPF had raised enough money to undertake the first phase of the restoration. It entered into a concessionaire agreement with DPR and began that work while continuing to seek funds for additional work.

The Conservancy has supported projects of many types at Pigeon Point, ranging from improvements to the hostel in the 1980s to a new parking lot completed a few months ago, to the public or nonprofit acquisition of most of the property that is visible from the top of the lighthouse. Supporting planning for the restoration of the lighthouse so that people can once again climb the stairs and enjoy that view would build on the years of work that the Conservancy has done in the area.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$200,000.00
California State Park Foundation	<u>300,000.00</u>
Total Project Costs	\$500,000.00

The anticipated source of funds for this project is the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, Public Resources Code section 75001 *et seq.* ("Proposition 84"). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of bond funds for projects that promote access to the coastal resources of the state and are consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code section 31000 *et seq.* (Public Resources Code Section 75060(b).) Consistency of the project with the Conservancy's statutory mission is discussed below in "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation." The proposed project will help improve access to coastal resources by planning for re-opening to the public a historic lighthouse that has been closed since 2001.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be carried out pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31409) regarding the implementation of public coastal accessways. Section 31400 directs the Conservancy to have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. In undertaking that role pursuant to Section 31400.1, the Conservancy may award grants to a nonprofit organization to develop, operate, or manage lands for public access purposes to and along the coast. In addition, Section 31400.3 states that the Conservancy may provide such assistance as is required to aid nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways and related functions necessary to meet that objective. Granting funds to CSPF, which is a nonprofit organization, to develop a plan that would enable public access to be re-established to the Pigeon Point Lighthouse, a coastal resource, is consistent with these sections.

Consistent with Section 31400.2, staff recommends approval of this project after evaluating the proposed amount of Conservancy funding in light of the total amount of Conservancy funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the grantee, the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects, and the Conservancy's project selection criteria. The proposed authorization would leverage matching funds by providing 40 percent of the amount needed to complete the lighthouse restoration planning project.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, planning for the structural restoration of the Pigeon Point Light Station will lead to opening a coastal area that is currently closed to public use.

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective E**, the proposed project will produce plans for the restoration of a dilapidated and unsafe facility (the light station) to increase and enhance coastal recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

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:** This project has widespread support, including that of U.S. Representative Anna Eshoo, State Senator Joseph Simitian, Assemblymember Jerry Hill, San Mateo County Supervisor Don Horsley, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the California Department of Parks and Recreation and the San Mateo Coast Natural History Association (Exhibit 3).
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone of San Mateo County.
5. **Need:** Funding from the Coastal Conservancy is needed to bridge the existing gap in planning funds. The Conservancy's proposed grant represents 40 percent of the total cost of the planning project.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project would serve the 100,000 people who currently visit Pigeon Point Light Station every year by enabling them to climb the lighthouse tower, learn about its history and enjoy the spectacular view from the top. Because the lighthouse is so clearly visible from Highway One, the preservation of the lighthouse serves millions of annual visitors to the San Francisco Bay Area who enjoy the view of the lighthouse as they drive by, even if they don't stop to visit the park.

7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The plans produced for the proposed project will consider sea level rise in order to assess project vulnerability and, to the extent feasible, reduce expected risks and increase resiliency to sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

8. **Urgency:** The Pigeon Point Light Station is in a compromised position, and any delay in implementation of the project could result in further deterioration of the building and increased construction costs.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Readiness:** CSPF is ready to begin work on the proposed project as soon as funding is available.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History,” above.
12. **Cooperation:** The nonprofit CPSF will work cooperatively with DPR to restore the light station and open it to the public.
13. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** The proposed project will address the expected increase in the severity of coastal storms by planning to utilize selected materials that are resistant to erosion. The project will include a maintenance plan that will ensure that the restoration work, once undertaken, will be maintained and repaired on a regular basis.
14. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The proposed planning project will not produce greenhouse gas emissions.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS

The proposed authorization will result in plans consistent with applicable Conservancy “Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development.” Consistent with Standard 1, the plans will minimize any impact of the restoration on coastal resources or landforms and prevent unwarranted hazards to the land and public safety. Consistent with Standard 2, the proposed plans for reconstruction of the lighthouse will be designed to correct the potential of hazards to public safety that are present with the deteriorating lighthouse tower. Consistent with Standard 9, the proposed plans will contribute to re-opening to the public an extremely scenic overlook – the view from the top of the lighthouse, 115 feet above the shore.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The San Mateo County Local Coastal Program (LCP) contains several policies that support the construction of public access improvements at Pigeon Point. The Shoreline Access Component of the LCP, Table 10.6, “Site Specific Recommendations for Shoreline Destinations” identifies the Pigeon Point Lighthouse area as a priority for the development of parking, trails, and blufftop viewpoints. In addition, Policy 10.35 calls for the establishment “of priorities for expenditure of public funds, including Coastal Conservancy funds, based on maximizing public recreational opportunities.” The project area is considered to be San Mateo County’s most popular and visible coastal landmark, and the proposed authorization will serve to maximize public recreational opportunities there.

Policy 11.24.a(1) of the “Recreation/Visitor Serving Facilities Component” of the LCP

establishes the improvement of public recreation areas in the Mid-Coast as a priority for the expenditure of public funds. Because the proposed plans would serve to improve an existing publicly owned recreation area at Pigeon Point, it would implement this policy.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15262 because the project involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions which have yet to be approved or adopted. As required by this section, environmental factors will be considered in the planning of the restoration of the light station.

Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the action.