

# COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
February 14, 2013

## **PEDRO POINT HEADLANDS HABITAT AND TRAIL ENHANCEMENT**

Project No. 07-092-14  
Project Manager: Janet Diehl

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to augment by up to \$80,000 its December 13, 2007 grant to the Pacifica Land Trust for habitat and trail enhancement at the Pedro Point Headlands in San Mateo County.

**LOCATION:** Pedro Point Headlands, Pacifica, San Mateo County (Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Public Access

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### **EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)
  - Exhibit 2: [December 13, 2007 Staff Recommendation](#)
  - Exhibit 3: [Site Photographs](#)
  - 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 hereby amends its December 13, 2007 authorization to disburse an additional amount of up to eighty thousand dollars (\$80,000) to the Pacifica Land Trust (“PLT”) for habitat and trail enhancement at the Pedro Point Headlands in Pacifica, San Mateo County. This authorization remains subject to the conditions of its December 13, 2007 authorization, attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 2.”

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(Sections 31400-31410) of the Public Resources Code, regarding the establishment of a system of public accessways to and along the California Coast.

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3. The Pacifica Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that qualifies under section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Service Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
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**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

The proposed project will provide an additional disbursement of \$80,000 to the Pacifica Land Trust (PLT) to augment and extend the Conservancy’s December 2007 grant to PLT of \$112,585 for a community-based program of habitat and trail enhancement at the Conservancy-owned Pedro Point Headlands property in Pacifica. This work is vital to keeping trails open and repairing damage from erosion and past misuse on this spectacular 246-acre Conservancy property that hugs the cliffs at the entrance to Devil’s Slide. With public visitation expected to increase dramatically in the coming year with the opening of more than a mile of Coastal Trail adjacent to Pedro Point Headlands, PLT’s work on the property will be essential.

PLT’s program began several years ago with support from the Conservancy’s Community-Based, Educational, Environmental, Restoration and Trail Projects Grant Round (Exhibit 2). It has enlisted hundreds of volunteers, improved many segments of trail, and stabilized with native plants several areas prone to landslides (Exhibit 3). By augmenting the existing grant and extending its completion date through February 2015, the Conservancy can support PLT’s efforts to make the Pedro Point Headlands more accessible for public use on an interim basis, until the Conservancy’s property can be conveyed to the National Park Service – a goal that is hoped to be accomplished within the next two years.

PLT aims to accomplish the following tasks with the additional funds and time:

- Continue monthly volunteer work parties for habitat and trail enhancement.
- Repair existing trails to improve visitor safety and comfort.
- Offer additional educational programs to the community, such as hikes led by the California Native Plant Society and bird walks led by local experts.
- Install low-tech measures to deter illegal off-road vehicle use.
- Revegetate landscape scars caused by previous off-road vehicle use, and prevent further erosion with a variety of techniques, including netting, straw, sterile grasses, water bars, and fiber and wood barriers to help build up soil in the target sites.
- Provide temporary signs to guide visitors who will be drawn to the Pedro Point Headlands when the adjacent Devil’s Slide Coastal Trail parking lot opens in 2014.

PLT is well suited to carry out this work, as its members live in the area and are able to visit and inspect the property with ease. Some members of the land trust have been involved in the protection of the Pedro Point Headlands for more than 20 years, when they were a critical part of the Conservancy’s effort to acquire the property.

PLT has attracted many new members since then, thanks in part to the organizational talent and contagious enthusiasm of the part-time volunteer coordinator the land trust hired under the existing grant. That coordinator would continue to work with the program for two more years if the grant is extended. Approximately half of the grant augmentation funds would go toward the volunteer coordinator’s salary. The other half would be spent on supplies and, when necessary,

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contractors for trail repair, erosion control, revegetation, and off-road vehicle deterrence.

**Site Description:** The Pedro Point Headlands is a large promontory located at the southern edge of the City of Pacifica, 15 miles south of San Francisco (Exhibit 1). While a small portion of Pedro Point is developed with houses, the Conservancy owns approximately 98 acres as permanently protected open space, and the City of Pacifica owns another adjacent 148 acres.

The land rises almost vertically from the ocean to a height of 625 feet, where the bluff-tops provide a spectacular view of the coastline north to Point Reyes, south to Devil's Slide, and east to Montara Mountain and the Santa Cruz Mountains. The only level land on the 246 acres owned by the Conservancy and the City is found at the top of the ridgelines and the floor of the main valley.

Informal trails run along these level areas and down through the valley, connecting to a trail that runs parallel to Highway One. This six-foot-wide trail runs along the "bottom" of the property, and connects to Highway One at the point where a parking lot will be built to service the 1.2 miles of new Coastal Trail at Devil's Slide that will be opened in 2014. A second trail will connect this parking lot to the Pedro Point Headlands from a bike path under construction by Caltrans.

The Pedro Point residential neighborhood climbs the slopes of San Pedro Mountain on the west side of Highway 1. One-of-a-kind homes have been built there on impossibly narrow and steep streets. Twisted cypress and Monterey pine cling to the hillsides. At the foot of the coastal side of the mountain, hidden from view to all but walkers, is a tiny village called Shelter Cove. Just north of the Headlands, San Pedro Terrace Road supports some mixed commercial uses, and the Linda Mar Boulevard shopping mall is a half mile to the north, across Highway One. Other protected lands nearby include the Sweeney Ridge and Mori Point units of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, the 18-hole public Sharp Park Golf Course owned by the City of San Francisco, and Pacifica State Beach.

Aside from its recreational value, the Headlands provide habitat that supports the health of local coastal plant and animal species. Its usefulness as wildlife habitat is enhanced by its proximity to other open spaces and protected lands. The Bay Area Upland Habitat Goals Project rates the Pedro Point Headlands as an "area essential to the Conservation Goals" of the Santa Cruz Mountains North landscape unit. The lands owned by the Conservancy and the City host healthy communities of native vegetation, including areas of reed-grass prairie, which has been identified by the California Department of Fish and Game as a rare plant community type. The proposed trail work is not near this plant community.

**Project History:** The effort to preserve the Pedro Point Headlands began in 1989, when the Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land and the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) provided technical assistance to Pacifica residents in establishing a local land conservation organization, the Pacifica Land Trust. PLT immediately turned its attention to the 246-acre Pedro Point Headlands property, which was threatened at the time with a subdivision plan for 217 units.

With the assistance of POST, the PLT reached agreement with the owners of the Pedro Point property on a phased acquisition plan. In August 1992, the Conservancy granted the City of Pacifica funds for the acquisition of Parcel 1 for the purpose of public access, and authorized the Conservancy to act as co-optionee with the PLT for a purchase option for Parcel 2. In 1995, the Conservancy provided funds to match a federal grant, and acquired Parcel 2 for the same purpose

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– public access.

Since then, two obstacles have faced the development of a public park at Pedro Point: How will the public access the property, and who will manage it? Access to the Conservancy’s and City’s land is currently gained by parking along the Caltrans right-of-way on Highway One. Improved access will become reality in 2014, when the Devil’s Slide Coastal Trail parking lot will be opened on the adjacent land to the south.

Progress is being made on long-term management issues as well. After the boundaries of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) were expanded in 2005 to include Pedro Point, the National Park Service expressed interest in accepting the properties, but only after issues of parking and improved public access are resolved. GGNRA staff has requested that PLT continue its habitat and trail enhancement program over the next two years, as staff pursues the inclusion of the Headlands in the GGNRA.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

Coastal Conservancy	\$80,000.00
Coastal Conservancy December 2007 grant	<u>112,585.00</u>
<b>Total Project Costs</b>	<b>\$192,585.00</b>

The anticipated source of funds for the augmentation to this project is the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Act of 2002, Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 5096.600 *et seq.* (Proposition 40). These funds are allocated to the Conservancy for development, rehabilitation, restoration and protection of land and water resources in accordance with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the PRC. PRC Section 5096.650(b). Proposition 40 also requires the Conservancy to give priority to projects that include a commitment for a matching contribution in the form of money, property, or services.

The Pacifica Land Trust will provide in-kind services consisting of volunteer trail and habitat enhancement, maintenance and management services for the property. The value of these services can be considered a match. Other organizations providing in-kind services are Go Native, Inc. (native plants) and members of the Pedro Point Community Association.

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

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31410), regarding public access and enjoyment of coastal resources. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy shall have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline. Consistent with this section, PLT’s program of repairing and enhancing trails at Pedro Point Headlands will improve the public’s access to the coast in this area.

Section 31400.1 allows the Conservancy to award grants to a nonprofit organization for development of lands for public access purposes to and along the coast. The proposed grant is

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consistent with this section because it will improve access along the coast to an area that is visited by a large number of people from the region and beyond.

Section 31400.2 allows the Conservancy to provide up to the total cost of the initial development of public accessways by a nonprofit organization. Consistent with this section, Conservancy staff has considered a number of factors in determining the amount of funding for the proposed project. The proposed level of funding was evaluated relative to the total amount of funding available to the Conservancy for coastal public accessway projects, the very limited fiscal resources of the applicant, and the project selection criteria discussed below. The proposed grant is consistent with this section because the applicant has very limited fiscal resources but will provide a significant amount of volunteer labor.

Section 31400.3 states that the Conservancy may assist nonprofit organizations in developing and implementing a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. The proposed project will further these goals by channeling the public toward the best of the existing trails, improving those existing trails and revegetating old, retired trails on the property that now pose erosion problems.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2013 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will result in the reconstruction of dilapidated trails at the Pedro Point Headlands to increase and enhance coastal recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective B**, the proposed project will result in the restoration and enhancement of coastal scrub habitat on the Pedro Point Headlands property.

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective A**, the proposed project will provide programs and events that improve public understanding of coastal resources on the Pedro Point Headlands property.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective H**, the proposed project includes work days focused on the eradication of non-native invasive species that threaten important habitats on the Pedro Point Headlands property in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Consistent with **Goal 12, Objective M**, the proposed project expands environmental educational and interpretive programs available to the urban population of the San Francisco Bay Area that are tied to on-the-ground restoration projects and trail construction at the Pedro Point Headlands.

### **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.

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2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Support of the public:** The broad level of support for environmental restoration and trail-work activities at the Pedro Point Headlands is indicated by the large numbers of people that have participated in PLT’s programs over the past three years. In addition, letters in support of the project are attached to this recommendation as Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone of the City of Pacifica and unincorporated San Mateo County.
5. **Need:** Without funding from the Conservancy, PLT would not be able to continue its program of habitat and trail enhancement on Pedro Point Headlands. The opportunity to provide local stewardship of the Conservancy’s property would be lost.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project serves communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. The most recent community event organized by PLT in November, 2012 drew about 150 volunteers from places as far as Gilroy, Livermore and San Jose. On a typical weekend, 50-60 people can be found hiking on the Headlands.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project area is not vulnerable to sea level rise, as it is located on the top and the inland sides of the Pedro Point Headlands, which rise to 625 feet above sea level.

### Additional Criteria

8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** This project provides multiple benefits by fulfilling environmental education, stewardship, habitat restoration and trail enhancement needs.
9. **Readiness:** The proposed authorization would enable the continuation of a project that is already underway.
10. **Cooperation:** This project is the result of cooperation among the private sector, a local agencies and the Conservancy. PLT is a local nonprofit that will provide stewardship of properties owned by the City of Pacifica and the State of California.
11. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Enhancement of habitat on this property will improve landscape-scale connectivity, increasing suitable habitat that can provide resilience to future alterations associated with climate change.
12. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The proposed project will not result in the production of greenhouse gas emissions. Trail and habitat enhancement work is done by hand. Because PLT members are located in Pacifica near the property, they do not have to travel far to implement their program. PLT’s stewardship of the Pedro Point Headlands results in fewer miles traveled than if Conservancy staff had to travel 30 miles from Oakland to inspect the property on a regular basis.

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

The proposed project is consistent with the Local Coastal Land Use Section of the City of Pacifica’s Local Coastal Program, which specifically addresses the Pedro Point Headlands on pages C-49-50: “Because of its value as a vista point, importance to coastal views, value as a

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recreation area and susceptibility to erosion, this area is designated a Special Area. Management would require trails to a vista point to regulate hiking and minimize trampling of the vegetative cover.” Because the proposed project will result in the improvement of trails and the restoration of vegetative cover, it is consistent with the City’s LCP.

The proposed project also would further policies of the County of San Mateo’s Local Coastal Program. Policy 7.31 of the “Sensitive Habitats Component” of the LCP states: “Restrict pedestrian traffic in bluff and cliff areas and on faces to a limited number of well-defined trails which avoid seabird nesting and roosting sites.” Policy 10.9 of the “Shoreline Access Component” states: “Provide safe access to shoreline destinations; discourage public use of hazardous trails; protect sensitive habitat.” Consistent with these sections, the project will protect sensitive habitat by providing and directing public access along trails so that environmentally sensitive areas are avoided, scenic views are protected, and the public has access to views of the shoreline for recreation.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project is only for additional funding for the same project discussed and analyzed in the Conservancy’s December 13, 2007 authorization. The project does not have any possible new significant effects. Thus, the proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s December 13, 2007 finding regarding compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.