

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
October 3, 2013

**DIAS RIDGE TRAIL CONNECTOR, PHASE 2**

Project No. 08-062-02  
Project Manager: Joel Gerwein

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$72,000 to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to plan and design the first segment of the multi-use Dias Ridge Connector Trail, paralleling Highway 1 in Muir Beach, completing a key connecting segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail and California Coastal Trail at Muir Beach in Marin County.

**LOCATION:** Muir Beach, Marin County

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Public Access

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**EXHIBITS**

- Exhibit 1: [Project Map](#)  
Exhibit 2: [Photographs](#)  
Exhibit 3: [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 authorizes disbursement of up to \$72,000 to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (“GGNPC”) to plan and design the first segment of the multi-use Dias Ridge Connector Trail, which will connect the Dias Ridge trail junction at the historic Golden Gate Dairy with the Redwood Creek Trail near the intersection of Frank Valley Road and Highway 1, at Muir Beach in Marin County.”

This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to disbursement of any Conservancy funds for the project, GGNPC shall submit a work program, schedule, and budget for the review and approval of the Conservancy’s Executive Officer (“Executive Officer”).
2. Prior to disbursement of Conservancy funds for specific portions of the project, GGNPC shall submit the names and qualifications of all contractors GGNPC retains to complete those portions of the project.

3. GGNPC shall ensure that the designs for the trail and related facilities improvements are consistent with all applicable federal and state statutes, regulations and guidelines governing barrier-free access for persons with disabilities.”

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 authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding a system of public accessways.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The GGNPC is a nonprofit organization existing under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”

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**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$72,000 to the GGNPC for the planning and design of the first segment (approximately 1,000 linear feet) of the multi-use Dias Ridge Connector Trail, which will span 1,300 feet paralleling Highway 1 in Muir Beach, connecting the Dias Ridge trail junction at the historic Golden Gate Dairy with the Redwood Creek Trail near the intersection of Frank Valley Road and Highway 1 (Exhibit 1). This trail will complete a key connecting segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail and California Coastal Trail, and will be served by a new bus stop planned for 2013 construction near the Golden Gate Dairy. Conservancy funding will primarily be utilized for the final design of the connector trail, with a small amount allocated to community outreach activities during the planning and design process. Match funding provided by the GGNPC will pay for a portion of the final design work, environmental compliance, outreach, and project management. The new multi-use trail will be a minimum of 6’ wide (10’ where conditions permit) and will require various structural improvements including new culverts, retaining walls (Sutter Walls), guardrail and redwood boardwalk with a timber curb. Surface materials will be consistent with the surrounding trail network in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and will be constructed with Granular Chert Tread Paving. The trail will be separated from the road. It will not be necessary to acquire easements for this portion of the trail, as it is located entirely on National Park Service (NPS) property. Additional improvements include relocating paddock fencing at Golden Gate Dairy, new vegetated swale/basin, soil stabilization, modifications to adjacent driveways (NPS housing), connections to existing bicycle facilities and improved pedestrian crossings. The staging Area will be in the parking lot adjacent to Golden Gate Dairy.

This new trail connection will eliminate the safety concern of pedestrians, bicycles, and equestrians walking and riding the narrow shoulder of Highway 1 between these trail destinations (Exhibits 2 and 3). The need for this trail connection will increase in the near future, with the addition of a bus stop and the completion of a pedestrian trail from the intersection of Pacific Way and Highway 1 to Muir Beach and its trail network.

The multi-use trail will meet Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas<sup>1</sup> (AGODA) standards where feasible and will meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards in locations that connect to the existing roadway network where feasible.

GGNPC has already begun public outreach and presented this project at two NPS open houses. This project will continue the public outreach with a series of meetings with the local community, specifically the Ocean Riders of Marin equestrian stakeholders at Golden Gate Dairy; Marin County Bicycle Coalition; Muir Beach Community Services District; Marin County; Caltrans; and residents of NPS housing in the project area. GGNPC will coordinate with these stakeholders to discuss details at key stages throughout the design process (e.g. current 30%, 60%, and 95% design plans).

This segment is considered Phase 2 of a three-phase project. Phase 1 completed the construction of the Dias Ridge Trail in 2009; Phase 3 will ultimately connect this segment with the Coast View Trail and close this gap in the Ridge Trail.

Marin County has expressed support for this project and potential partnership on construction funding. Conceptual design plans (30% design) have been prepared for this project (Exhibit 1). The NPS is currently seeking funding to advance the plans to final design and construction documents including public outreach and compliance. The proposed Conservancy grant funds would enable the GGNPC to work with the NPS to advance the plans to final design and construction documents, as well as to conduct public outreach and complete environmental compliance by summer 2014, allowing construction to begin shortly thereafter pending available construction funding. Construction costs for the first phase (including trail construction, driveway and NPS housing modification and contingency for Caltrans coordination) are estimated to be between \$600,000 - \$650,000. Marin County has identified this project as a top priority for county transportation funds in 2015. While the proposed planning grant tasks are being completed, GGNPC will seek construction funding from a variety of federal and state sources, such as the Transit in Parks Program, Federal Lands Access Program, Public Lands Highways Discretionary Program, Recreational Trails, and Transportation Enhancements.

The GGNPC is highly qualified to carry out this project, as evidenced by their role in the successful completion of many complex trail construction and restoration projects in the GGNRA. Since 2007, the GGNPC has worked with the NPS to successfully plan and construct new trail and trail improvements at Mori Point, the Presidio, Dias Ridge, and Lands End.

**Site Description:** The Dias Ridge Connector Trail will be located along a 1,300 foot stretch of Highway 1 in Muir Beach. This stretch of Highway 1 consists of two lanes with paved shoulders that are generally less than a foot in width. A private residence and NPS housing are located on the east side of the highway, while the Pelican Inn and a private residence are located on the west side of the highway.

**Project History:** The Conservancy has worked with the GGNPC on a number of projects to construct or improve segments of the coastal trail in the San Francisco Bay area in recent years. In 2008, the Conservancy granted \$385,000 to the GGNPC for public access and habitat restoration improvements along the Dias Ridge Trail, which were completed in 2010. The

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<sup>1</sup> The Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas (AGODA), published in 2009 by the federal Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (“Access Board”), contains the most recent standards used to design and construct pedestrian trails to be accessible and to assess accessibility.

proposed project will provide a safe connection between the improved Dias Ridge Trail and the Redwood Creek Trail, a segment of the California Coastal Trail. GGNPC staff approached the Conservancy and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council in January 2013 and has been working with Conservancy staff to advance the project since that time.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	\$72,000
Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy	\$35,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$107,000</b>

The expected source of Conservancy funds for this project is the FY 2008-09 appropriation to the Conservancy from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84). This funding source may be used for projects and expenditures to promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state, provided that such projects are consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. The project will promote access to and enjoyment of the coast by providing a safe connection between Redwood Creek Trail, which is a popular section of the California Coastal Trail, and the Dias Ridge Trail, which is a popular portion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, as well as enhancing safe connections to the trail network at Muir Beach. As discussed below, the project is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21.

\$35,000 in matching funds have been included in the GGNPC's FY 2014 budget, to be approved by its Board in October 2013.

**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 et seq.) relating to the provision of public access to the coast. Under Section 31400, the Conservancy is directed to have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline.

The project is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31400.1, which allows the Conservancy to provide grants to nonprofit organizations to develop lands for public access purposes. As authorized by this section, the Conservancy would provide funds to allow the GGNPC, a nonprofit organization, to plan a safe trail connection between popular segments of the California Coastal Trail and the Bay Area ridge Trail.

Section 31400.2 states that the amount of funding provided by the Conservancy shall be determined by the total amount of funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the applicant, the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects, and the application of factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of determining project eligibility and priority in order to more effectively carry out the provisions of the division. Consistent with Section 31400.2, the amount of funding to be provided by the Conservancy was determined based on the project's high public benefit, the limited resources of the applicant, and the leveraging of Conservancy funds by other funds provided for the project by the applicant.

Section 31400.3 states that the Conservancy may provide such assistance as is required to aid nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public accessways. Consistent with this section, the Conservancy would provide funds to the GGNPC, a nonprofit organization, required to enhance public access to the coastal trail and the Bay Area Ridge trail.

This project also carries out the requirements of sections 31408 and 31409, which mandate that the Conservancy coordinate the development of the California Coastal Trail and authorizes the award of grants to carry out that purpose and to support linkages between the Coastal Trail and inland trail systems.

The project is consistent with Section 31111, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to nonprofit organizations to fund plans and feasibility studies.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design a new segment of the California Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 12, Objective H** of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will develop a plan for a regionally significant connector trail providing a link between the Bay Area Ridge Trail and the California 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 project enjoys broad public support, including the support of equestrian trail users and the Marin County Bicycle Coalition (Exhibit 3).
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Marin County.
5. **Need:** The project has secured outside funds, but will not be able to move forward without Conservancy funding.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed Dias Ridge Connector is a crucial trail link that will enhance the safety of equestrians, pedestrians and cyclists in an area visited by large numbers of people almost every day of the year.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Trail design will consider the impacts of future 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:** There is an urgent need to enhance the safety of trail users that will increase with the addition of a bus stop in the project area in 2014.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Conflict resolution:** The project will reduce conflicts between motorists and trail users in the project area.
11. **Readiness:** Planning and design for the project are ready to proceed, as conceptual design for the trail is complete, and match funding for planning and design is secured.
12. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
13. **Cooperation:** The project will be a collaborative effort between the GGNRA and the GGNPC.
14. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The proposed authorization is for trail planning and design, and thus does not have the potential for significant greenhouse gas emissions. When constructed, the project will enhance the safety of bicyclists, pedestrians, and equestrians in this area, encouraging the use of alternatives to cars for access to the area and thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

**CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The Marin County Local Coastal Program (MCLCP), certified on April 1, 1981 and as revised by the Marin county Planning Commission as of July 30, 2013, identifies the importance of public access facilities for non-motorized transportation in the coastal zone, as follows:

In order to carry out the Coastal Act priority to maximize public coastal access while still protecting these resources, it is necessary to maintain and expand alternatives to auto transportation in the Coastal Zone. Public transit, especially services oriented to recreation sites that draw heavy visitation, is an essential component in a balanced transportation network... Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are not only an alternative to auto-dependent transportation but also are compatible with maintaining the rural, scenic character of the Coastal Zone... Bicycles and pedestrians can be accommodated with smaller facilities, and those on foot or bicycle experience more of the sights and sounds of the coastal environment around them. (MCLCP, Pp. 107-108)

The project is consistent with the following policies of the LCP:

**C-TR-1 Roads in the Coastal Zone.** Limit roads in the Coastal Zone to two lanes. Work with state and federal agencies and local communities to enhance road safety, improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access, and stabilize or reduce congestion through means such as limiting local parking, creating a multipurpose path from West Marin to the City-Centered Corridor, and providing shuttle service to popular destinations. Shoulder widening for bicycles, turn lanes at intersections, turnouts for slow-moving traffic or at scenic vistas, traffic calming measures, and similar improvements would be permitted. However, projects will not be undertaken to increase the motorized vehicular capacity of these roads. (MCLCP, Pg. 108)

Consistent with this policy, the project will improve pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access by providing a safe, multi-use connector trail that provides an alternative to Highway One and is adjacent to a planned bus stop.

**C-TR-4 Expansion of Bicycle and Pedestrian Access.** Expand bicycle and pedestrian facilities and access in and between neighborhoods, employment centers, shopping areas, schools, public lands, and recreational sites. (MCLCP, Pg. 109)

Consistent with this policy, the project will expand pedestrian and bicycle access between public lands and recreational sites by linking the Dias Ridge Trail and the Redwood Creek trail.

**C-TR-5 Bicycle and Pedestrian Network.** Ensure that the Coastal Zone has adequate bicycle and pedestrian links, both internally and to other parts of the county, and that streetscape improvements and standards are safe and pedestrian and bicycle friendly. Consistent with LCP natural resource policies, avoid incursions into environmentally sensitive areas unless such incursions are dependent on the resource and the environmentally sensitive area is protected from significant disruption of habitat values. In addition, minimize impacts to active agricultural lands or operations. (MCLCP, Pg. 109)

Consistent with this policy, the project will expand pedestrian and bicycle access between public lands and recreational sites by linking the Dias Ridge Trail and the Redwood Creek trail. Design will minimize impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.

**C-TR-8 Expansion of the Countywide Trail System.** Acquire additional trails to complete the proposed countywide trail system, providing access to or between public lands and enhancing public trail use opportunities for all user groups, including multi-use trails, as appropriate. (MCLCP, Pg. 110)

Consistent with this policy, the project will expand the countywide trail system by designing a multi-use connector trail to link existing trails.

**C-PK-10 Appropriate Uses of Federal Parks.** The following policies shall be advisory for development on federal parklands within the Coastal Zone.

1. Public access and transportation.

a. Provide additional coastal access trails and bike paths where feasible and consistent with protection of the park's natural resources. Non-vehicular accessways should connect to points accessible by both automobile and transit. (MCLCP, Pg. 122)

Consistent with this policy, the project will design an additional coastal access trail connecting to a proposed bus stop, as well as to points accessible by automobile.

**C-PK-14 Appropriate Alignment of the California Coastal Trail.** Support completion of the California Coastal Trail through Marin County as shown generally on Map 25, working with willing sellers or donors and other entities. Acquisition, siting, and design of the California Coastal Trail should reflect the following standards...

7. Wherever possible, avoid locating the trail along roads with motorized vehicle traffic. If it is necessary to site the trail along roads, provide for separation of the trail from traffic. (MCLCP, Pg. 126)

Consistent with this policy, the project will design a new segment of the California Coastal Trail that will provide for separation of the trail from traffic on Highway 1.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The project involves only data gathering, planning, and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been authorized or approved by the Conservancy or another agency and is thus statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262. Planning carried out as part of the project will, however, consider environmental factors, as required by Section 15262. In addition, data collection and resource evaluation activities conducted for this project are categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15306. This categorical exemption applies to activities that consist of basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon Conservancy approval.