

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

March 27, 2014

CLIMATE READINESS CAPACITY BUILDING – SOUTH COAST REGION

Project No. 14-043-01

Project Manager: Moira McEnespy

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$20,700 to the University of Southern California Sea Grant Program to provide training sessions that will build the capacity of coastal communities in the southern California area to understand and plan for the impacts of climate change.

LOCATION: Los Angeles County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Climate Change

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 31113 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of up to \$20,700 to the University of Southern California for its Sea Grant Program to provide training sessions that will build the capacity of coastal communities in the southern California area to understand and plan for the impacts of climate change. The trainings are a component of state-funded models currently being developed to underpin adaptation strategies to address potential impacts to southern California’s coastal infrastructure.”

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 Public Resources Code Section 31113, regarding addressing the potential impacts of climate change on coastal resources.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.

3. The University of Southern California is an organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, 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 disbursement of up to \$20,700 to the University of Southern California (USC) for the USC Sea Grant Program to provide training sessions that will build the capacity of coastal communities in the southern California area (see Exhibit 1) to understand and plan for the impacts of climate change. The training sessions are a component of state-funded models currently being developed to underpin adaptation strategies to address potential impacts to southern California’s coastal infrastructure. Outreach, training, and capacity-building is a critical element to ensure that state investment in technical tools is appropriately applied, and widely and effectively used. Developing adaptation strategies based on an accurate understanding and broad application of the best available science will ensure that dollars spent to protect existing infrastructure and resources (e.g., to construct or enhance nature-based solutions such as living shorelines, or to install engineered devices) are invested as soundly as possible.

Context/Need: In November 2013, the City of Santa Monica, on behalf of the greater Los Angeles region, was awarded partial funding from the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) under the “[Local Coastal Program \(LCP\) Sea Level Rise Adaptation Grant Program](#)” for its *Capacity Building and Information Acquisition for Sea Level Rise Planning in the Los Angeles Greater Metropolitan Region* proposal. The OPC awarded funds to conduct shoreline change and coastal erosion modeling, but did not choose to fund the capacity-building element.

Training and capacity building is an important but often neglected step in conducting vulnerability assessments, adaptation and other planning processes, and preparing for the impacts of climate change. A 2011 coastal adaptation needs assessment¹ conducted by a collaborative of 15 federal, state, and research agencies/institutions concluded the following:

- Although there are growing efforts to fulfill the need for data sets (e.g., [NOAA’s Digital Coast, Cal-Adapt](#)) and tools (e.g., models, vulnerability assessment guides) to support climate adaptation planning, communities often need assistance in learning how to appropriately apply these resources, and there is a need to train and build capacity within local governments and among other professionals to effectively use the available tools and data;
- A primary need in preparing for climate change is for managers and decision-makers to build their own knowledge, skills, and capacities, and a primary task for federal, state, and academic organizations is to help ensure that coastal professionals have the assistance they need.

City officials and planners, as well as the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability, requested that the USC Sea Grant Program provide outreach and

¹ Finzi Hart, J.A., P.M. Grifman, S.C. Moser, A. Abeles, M.R. Myers, S.C. Schlosser, J.A. Ekstrom (2012) *Rising to the Challenge: Results of the 2011 Coastal California Adaptation Needs Assessment*. USCSG-TR-01-2012, p. 25.

guidance about the modeling component of the Los Angeles regional LCP grant application, and the application of those models to coastal geographies. The capacity-building tasks include conducting outreach, including understanding model users' specific needs, and trainings, including planning for coastal impacts; incorporating social vulnerability, ecological vulnerability, and scientific information into planning processes; and applying the scientific modeling element. These trainings and workshops will ensure that communities have the capacity to apply the complex information to land use planning efforts, and that as future scientific information evolves, communities will be able to incorporate the emerging data into planning updates.

Conducting this outreach, training, and coordination in a regional context builds opportunities for cooperative and mutually-beneficial planning among jurisdictions, and takes advantage of economies of scale. This is especially important in areas such as coastal Los Angeles County, in which numerous separate jurisdictions comprise a system of incorporated cities, unincorporated county-managed facilities and resources, and state-managed parks and beaches.

Collaboration: The Los Angeles regional LCP grant application was submitted by the City of Santa Monica on behalf of the greater Los Angeles region. Participating jurisdictions include the cities of Santa Monica, Torrance, Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach, El Segundo, and Malibu, and the Los Angeles County of Department of Beaches and Harbors. In addition, the following entities have committed in-kind staff time and resources:

The USC Sea Grant Program facilitates connections between scientists and policy-makers, and broadly distributes information through public education outreach. USC Sea Grant will help develop and deliver training, help develop a process for regional planning, and assist in stakeholder engagement and public education.

The Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability (LARC) was formed to create a cross-jurisdictional collaboration promoting best practices in climate change mitigation and adaptation. LARC will continue convening a “coastal impact working group,” enabling a unified way for local jurisdictions to share best practices and approach for addressing the anticipated climate change impacts in the coastal Los Angeles region.

The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission will continue to facilitate the collaboration of coastal county and city jurisdictions along Santa Monica Bay, and will contribute their expertise and resources to help coordinate training and other form of information exchange conducted under this project. They will also assist in collecting and compiling information on coastal features, including both man-made infrastructures and natural beach habitats, and assessing their vulnerability to sea level rise.

Heal the Bay will help conduct outreach about local climate change impacts and the need for adaptation; build understanding and support among Los Angeles area communities for coastal climate change adaptation planning at the local level; advocate for the adoption of climate change adaptation policies at the local and state level; and help communicate information about project work to agencies and interested stakeholders that may not be directly involved.

Project Details: Training sessions will include segments on climate science and local impacts, scientific modeling and shoreline visualization tools, vulnerability assessments, and approaches

to adaptation and coastal planning. Through several half-day and full-day workshops, participants will gain foundational knowledge of climate change and the impacts of sea level rise to their communities; come to understand how to conduct a sea level rise vulnerability study and risk assessment for their particular community; receive training on various scientific modeling, visualization, and mapping tools; and learn how to apply the results of the coastal erosion and shoreline change model in their planning efforts.

Training sessions will also be prepared in webinar format, and will thus be available “on demand” (if one could not attend an in-person training date, or wants to review the information as reference in the future) and available to other coastal communities in California and the U.S.

Grantee Appropriateness and Qualifications: The proposed grant will support the USC Sea Grant Program’s purpose of connecting science to policymakers, particularly under its “hazard resilient coastal communities” focal area. The Sea Grant Program seeks to use its integrated research, training, and technical assistance capabilities, and its presence in coastal communities, to play a major role in helping local citizens, decision-makers, and industries plan for hazardous events and optimize the ability of their communities to respond and rebuild. The USC Sea Grant Program has been extensively involved in working with local and state governments to help coastal managers adapt to the impacts of climate change.² Principals who helped implement the Adapt-LA process, Phyllis Grifman and Dr. Juliette Hart, will also develop and implement the proposed workshops and trainings. USC is a section 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, making the USC an appropriate grantee under the Conservancy’s enabling legislation.

The Conservancy has built a very successful partnership with the USC Sea Grant Program. In June 2013, the Conservancy authorized funds to develop a coastal storm modeling system (CoSMoS) for southern California, and the USC Sea Grant program will ensure the model meets user needs and effectively supports policy and planning decisions. USC Sea Grant has also developed, staffed, and administered OPC-funded seafloor mapping and research rounds—projects in which state investment sought to bring the best available science to support resource and planning decisions.

Project History: On June 20, 2013, the Conservancy authorized funds to the U.S. Geological Survey and the USC Sea Grant Program to develop the CoSMoS model, to support coastal hazard and sea level rise vulnerability assessments in the Southern California area (from Point Conception in Santa Barbara County to the U.S.-Mexico border). As stated above, the USC Sea Grant Program will help lead the model outreach and education piece. The CoSMoS model is directly related to the modeling that will be funded under the Los Angeles regional LCP grant—specifically, the CoSMoS model will drive the shoreline change and coastal erosion scenarios that will be developed for the Los Angeles region. As with development of the CoSMoS model and as explained in the “Context/Need” section above, outreach, training, and capacity-building is a critical element to ensure that state investment in technical tools is appropriately applied, and widely and effectively used. The USC Sea Grant Program will undertake outreach and training to support use of both the SCC- and OPC-funded models/tools in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

² <http://www.usc.edu/org/seagrant/research/climatechange.html>

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$20,700
TOTAL	\$20,700*

*Note that the subject of this authorization is solely the outreach, training, and capacity-building portion of the work proposed under the Los Angeles regional LCP grant application; the OPC awarded \$235,000 for coastal erosion and shoreline change modeling.

The anticipated source of funds is an 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). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of these funds to protect beaches, bays, and coastal waters and watersheds (Section 75060 of the Public Resources Code). Consistent with this authorization, the proposed project will protect coastal resources by providing the outreach/training/capacity-building piece of region-specific models that will enable coastal communities to assess potential impacts from SLR and climate change, and develop or update plans based on the best available science. Developing adaptation strategies based on an accurate understanding and broad application of the best available science will ensure that dollars spent to protect existing infrastructure and resources are invested as soundly as possible.

In addition, Section 75060(b) of the Public Resources Code specifically allocates funding to the Conservancy for expenditure pursuant to the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. Section 75074 further emphasizes that Proposition 84 funds “may be used to the full extent authorized by the statute governing” the Conservancy. As discussed in the section found immediately below, the project is consistent with Section 31113 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.

There will also be in-kind contributions of staff time and resources:

USC Sea Grant Program*	\$24,667
LARC	37,148
SMBRC	21,600
Heal the Bay	21,985
City of Santa Monica	22,122
Los Angeles County	19,500
Total Value of In-Kind Contributions	\$147,022

*The USC Sea Grant Program has also applied for a modest amount of funding from the NOAA National Sea Grant Office to additionally support this project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Section 31113 of the Public Resources Code.

Section 31113(a) authorizes the Conservancy to address the potential impacts of climate change on resources within its jurisdiction, and undertake projects that address extreme weather events, sea level rise, storm surge, beach and bluff erosion, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. Consistent with this section,

the proposed project will allow the Conservancy to draw upon the expertise of the USC Sea Grant Program to provide outreach, training, and capacity-building to coastal communities in order to ensure that state investment in technical models and tools is widely and effectively used to address the potential impacts of climate change on coastal resources.

Section 31113(b) enables the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations for activities authorized pursuant to Section 31113(a), prioritizing projects that, among other things, maximize public benefits. Consistent with this section, the Conservancy will grant funds to the USC Sea Grant Program, a program within a nonprofit organization, to ensure that regional models of the effects of climate change meet user needs and effectively support policy and planning decisions.

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

Consistent with **Goal 7** of the Conservancy’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project seeks to enhance the resiliency of coastal communities and ecosystems to the impacts of climate change. Consistent with **Goal 7 Objective A**, the proposed project involves cooperating with public agencies, universities, and others to identify significant climate-related threats and provide technical assistance to assess this threat and prepare appropriate adaptation strategies. Consistent with **Goal 7 Objective B**, the proposed project will provide outreach, training, and capacity-building that will enable communities to conduct regional vulnerability assessments from sea-level rise and extreme storm events, and develop adaptation strategies to address threats to communities, public infrastructure, and natural resources.

**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 many communities and collaboratives in the south coast region. See the “Collaboration” section, above, and Exhibit 2, which contains letters of support for the regional LCP Grant Round (the capacity-building portion of which is the subject of this authorization).
4. **Location:** The proposed project will serve coastal communities in the greater Los Angeles region.
5. **Need:** See the “Context/Need” section above.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project will serve coastal communities in the greater Los Angeles region.

7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project will support assessment of communities' vulnerability to sea-level rise, and associated planning to minimize and address those vulnerabilities.

Additional Criteria

8. **Urgency:** Models and tools about which the proposed project will provide outreach and education are now being developed, and various vulnerability assessments, hazard assessments, adaptation, Local Coastal Program, and other planning processes are already underway or planned in the south coast region.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Cooperation:** See the “Project Summary” and “Funding” sections, above.

CONSISTENCY WITH CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT POLICIES:

The California Coastal Act states that each local government lying in whole or in part within the coastal zone shall prepare an LCP for that portion of the coastal zone within its jurisdiction. See Section 30500(a) of the Public Resources Code. LCPs are basic planning and regulatory tools used by local governments to guide development in the coastal zone, in partnership with the Coastal Commission. LCPs specify appropriate location, type, and scale of new or changed uses of land and water.

Impacts of climate change such as sea-level rise and increased storm frequency will affect existing property and infrastructure in the coastal zone. Therefore, LCP and other³ coastal plan policies, ordinances and standards may need to be updated and revised as new information about the impacts of climate change is developed.

Consistent with the intent of Section 30500(a), the proposed project will provide the complementary outreach, training, and capacity-building activities to ensure that the state's investment in tools and models funded under the LCP Sea Level Rise Adaptation Grant Program are appropriately, effectively, and widely used to address the potential impacts of climate change on coastal resources.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15306 because the project involves only data collection, research and resource evaluation activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource.

³ For example, Port Master Plans and University Long-range Development Plans.