

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 6, 2018

City of Eureka Bay to Zoo Trail

Project No. 18-017-01
Project Manager: Peter Jarausch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$110,000 to the City of Eureka for preliminary design and environmental review of the Bay to Zoo Trail, which will connect the eastern half of Eureka with the California Coastal Trail along Humboldt Bay in Humboldt County.

LOCATION: Eureka, Humboldt County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

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 Sections 31400-31410 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred ten thousand dollars (\$110,000) to the City of Eureka (“the grantee”) for preliminary design and environmental review of the Bay to Zoo trail, which will connect the eastern half of the City of Eureka with the California Coastal Trail along Humboldt Bay, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer):
 - a. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
 - b. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
 - c. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.

2. To the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development' and the requirements of all applicable federal and state laws governing barrier-free access for persons with disabilities into the Bay to Zoo trail."

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 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 proposed project serves greater than local needs."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$110,000 to the City of Eureka (City) for preliminary design and environmental review of the Bay to Zoo Trail. The Bay to Zoo Trail will connect two local schools, a regional hospital, and residential areas with the City's recently completed six-mile long Waterfront Trail, a section of the California Coastal Trail. It would provide a safe and nearly car free route and make it possible for both kids and adults to gain easy access to Humboldt Bay. The trail will be a paved shared use trail between 8 and 10 feet wide for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

The City of Eureka celebrated the opening of its Waterfront Trail this Spring and residents are very excited by the prospect of expanding the trail network. The Waterfront Trail gets daily use by families with small children, adults exercising, dog walkers, and visitors to the area. However, most residents still feel that they must drive to the trail because Highway 101 and busy local roads form a barrier through the northern part of the City. The Bay to Zoo trail will bypass many of the local roads and provide safe crossings of others. Residents will be able to leave their cars at home and feel safe walking and pedaling to the waterfront with their children. In addition, visitors to the area will be able to walk from centrally-located hotels to the zoo.

The project will include preliminary design and environmental review for the proposed 2.5 mile-long trail. Environmental review will include preparation of any necessary environmental documents to comply with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as well as any studies necessary to support those documents. Expected studies include a wetland delineation, cultural resources study, Phase I and Special Status Plant Survey. The environmental studies will inform the preliminary design work and the specific route of the trail.

Site Description:

The proposed trail starts in the northeast corner of Eureka where it connects with California Coastal Trail at the Open Door Health Clinic and the Shoreline RV Park. From here, the proposed trail heads south along a sewer easement owned by the City of Eureka until reaching Zane Middle School and St. Joseph Regional Hospital. After crossing over Harris Street the proposed trail follows surface streets until it connects with Washington Elementary School and the Sequoia Park Zoo (See Exhibit 1 Project Location).

Much of the alignment is behind homes in an existing greenway and is already used informally. A formal trail through this greenspace would open up the area to wider use and improve public safety. In addition to connecting residents to Humboldt Bay the proposed trail will also provide other opportunities for the community. It will: provide a new ‘safe route to school’ for students walking and biking to Zane Middle School; increase the opportunities for classes to help restore the adjacent creek; and provide new access to greenspace for the staff and patients at St. Joseph’s Hospital. The trail will also connect the two major tourist destinations in Eureka, Old Town along the City’s waterfront, and the Eureka Zoo.

The City of Eureka owns over 80 percent the right of way already and is pursuing negotiations with the remaining landowners for the right to have the trail pass through their property. Alternative alignments along City streets are available if the negotiations are not successful. City staff have contacted all of the adjacent landowners and nearly everyone has expressed support for the trail.

Grantee Qualifications: The City of Eureka is well qualified to carry out this project. In recent years it has demonstrated a strong commitment and capacity for developing public access opportunities to and along its waterfront. Since 2000 and in part with Conservancy funds, the City has successfully completed the Eureka Waterfront Boardwalk Phases 1 and 2, the Hikshari’ Trail, and the Eureka Waterfront Trail, in all totaling more than 6.5 miles of new Humboldt Bay & Coastal Trail. The grantee has demonstrated it can successfully implement urban trail design and implementation.

Project History:

The Conservancy has a long history of assistance to the City of Eureka in its effort to restore the City’s waterfront, dating back to the late 1970s and through the 1980s. Over that period the Conservancy provided nearly \$1.3 million dollars to assist the City with public access improvements along the northern waterfront. In January 1993 the City committed to revitalizing the Old Town District waterfront, improving historic public access to Humboldt Bay and the coast and returning the commercial hub of the city to the community. Since then, the City has undertaken a variety of waterfront restoration projects with public access components, including the Adorni recreation/community center and the Wharfinger Building events center, both of which include segments of waterfront trail. As noted above, in 2002 the City constructed the Eureka Boardwalk, partially funded by \$500,000 in Conservancy funds. The City continued its waterfront restoration efforts in 2006 by with the construction of the Fishermen’s Work Area and Commercial Dock, designed to allow the public to see fishermen at work and funded in part by a \$1,500,000 Conservancy grant.

Planning for the Eureka Waterfront Trail took its first steps forward with the Conservancy-funded Humboldt Bay Trails Feasibility Study (2001) funded. It provided recommendations for non-motorized access to and around Humboldt Bay and prioritized the Hikshari' Trail at the very southern end of the City of Eureka. Construction of the Hikshari' Trail was completed in 2013. The Humboldt County Coastal Trail Implementation Strategy (2011), also funded by the Conservancy, took this a step further and outlined a potential route along the Eureka waterfront for the CCT. As part of that study, the Redwood Community Action Agency worked with the City of Eureka to complete engineering and design plans for what has now become "Phase B" of the Eureka Waterfront Trail. Since that time the City of Eureka has embraced the Waterfront Trail project. In 2016, the Conservancy provided \$1,150,000 towards completion of the entire trail along the City's waterfront.

The Bay to Zoo Trail also comes from early planning efforts and the Humboldt Bay Trails Feasibility Study (2001). It provided recommendations for trails through a number of gulches or existing greenways through the City of Eureka. These efforts were put on hold while the City concentrated on the Eureka Waterfront Trail. Now that the waterfront trail is complete, the City is again working on how to connect its residents and visitors through the existing greenways to the Waterfront Trail.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$110,000
Project Total	110,000

The anticipated source for the Conservancy funds is a FY 2016-2017 appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84, Public Resources Code Section 75001 et seq). Proposition 84 authorizes the Conservancy's use of these funds to promote access to and enjoyment of coastal resources through projects undertaken pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Division 21 of the Public Resources Code). The proposed project will promote access to and enjoyment of Humboldt Bay by planning a new section of trail that will connect inland portions of the City of Eureka to the California Coastal Trail. The project is consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, as described below. Accordingly, the proposed project is an appropriate use of Proposition 84 funds.

The City of Eureka is contributing an additional \$30,000 in in-kind and direct expenditure on this project. The City also submitted an application to the Caltrans Alternative Transportation Program (ATP), which if successful would cover the cost of final design, permitting, and construction. ATP awards will be announced January 2019.

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. 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.

In particular, this project is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31400.1, which allows the Conservancy to provide grants to public agencies to develop lands for public access purposes to and along the coast when the subject accessways serve greater than local needs. The proposed access will serve out of town visitors to the area.

The project is consistent with Public Resources Code § 31400.3 and 31409 in that the proposed authorization will enable the City of Eureka to develop inland trail links to the California Coastal Trail along Humboldt Bay.

Consistent with Section 31400.2, the amount of funding provided by the Conservancy for this project is based upon the amount of funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the City of Eureka, the urgency of this project and the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, as described below.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

Standard No. 5, Environmentally Sensitive Areas: The proposed alignment will travel through sensitive areas. The trail will be designed to minimize any impacts.

Standard No. 8, Trails: The trail will be designed to provide privacy to local residents.

Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access: The trail will be designed to meet the applicable accessibility standards.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective E** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project designs a new regional trail that will connect inland populations with the coast.

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 October 2, 2014, 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. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:**

California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report. The project meets “Goal 2: Build Sustainable Regions that Support Healthy, Livable Communities” by constructing a trail that will support increased bicycling and walking, and safe routes to schools.

The *California Blueprint for Bicycling and Walking 2002*. The project will construct new sections of Caltrans Class I bicycle route (separated path), which will help achieve the goal of increasing the number of bicycle and walking trips statewide by 50%.

4. **Support of the public:** See Exhibit 2: Project Letters
5. **Location:** The proposed project would be partially located within the coastal zone of the City of Eureka. The proposed project will promote access to the coast by designing a direct connection from inland areas to the California Coastal Trail.
6. **Need:** The City of Eureka is actively raising funds for project construction and the proposed planning project will allow the City to move the trail forward as well as strengthening grant applications in a very competitive environment.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project will promote access to the California Coast by designing a new connection to the California Coastal Trail. It will also provide continuous access from Old Town, the center of tourism in Eureka and the Eureka Zoo.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** A portion of the project is located directly adjacent to Humboldt Bay and is therefore vulnerable to sea level rise in the long term. Through the design process supported by the proposed grant the City of Eureka will take sea level rise into account and both design the trail so that it can withstand some inundation and locate the trail at a high enough elevation that it will not have to close during inclement weather.

Additional Criteria

9. **Readiness:** The grantee has experience designing and constructing trails projects in a timely fashion and is ready to implement the project upon approval.
10. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.”
11. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Design and siting of the project will take into consideration flooding from more frequent or intense storms.
12. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The project once completed will make it possible for residents of the areas to enjoy the California Coastal Trail without needing to drive to the trailhead. It will therefore slightly reduce the GHG emissions from automobile use. Best management practices for trail construction are likely to be employed by the grantee once the design phase is completed.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the 14 Cal Code of Regs. §15262, which exempts planning and feasibility

studies for possible future actions. The project involves only the preparation of plans and information needed for environmental analyses and permit applications for trail construction for possible future actions that the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded, and the project will consider environmental factors in its environmental analysis. The proposed project is also categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to § 15306, which exempts basic data collection and research which will not result in a serious disturbance to an environmental resource.

Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval.