

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
March 14, 2019

SANTA MONICA BAY RESTORATION GRANTS

Project Nos. 19-001-01 thru 19-001-10
Project Manager: Kara Kemmler

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$6,895,100 to nine nonprofit organizations and public agencies for ten projects to improve coastal water quality, preserve and enhance coastal resources, and enhance coastal access within Santa Monica Bay and its watershed to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan.

LOCATION: Various locations in the Santa Monica Bay Watershed, Los Angeles County

PROGRAM CATEGORIES: Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources Protection, Resource Enhancement, Reservation of Significant Coastal Resource Areas

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission Resolution](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Letters of Support](#)
- Exhibit 4: *Environmental Assessment Palos Verdes Reef Restoration Project (EA/ND)*
- Exhibit 5: *Enhanced Watershed Management Programs Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR)*
- Exhibit 6: [CEQA Checklists for the Beach Cities Green Streets and Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Capture Projects](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31117, 31220, 31251 *et seq.*, and 31350 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code, regarding projects in the Santa Monica Mountains zone, integrated coastal and marine resources, resource enhancement and reservation of coastal resource areas, respectively:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed six million eight hundred ninety-five thousand one hundred dollars (\$6,895,100) to nine

nonprofit organizations and public agencies for 10 projects that implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan as follows:

- Trust For Public Land: Three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) for acquisition of 91 acres of undeveloped land in Carbon Canyon, Malibu (Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 4453-005-081 through 4453-005-087).
- Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains: Four hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$460,000) for planning the restoration of Topanga Lagoon in Topanga State Park.
- Palos Verdes Land Conservancy: Two hundred one thousand two hundred eighty dollars (\$201,280) to restore 13 acres of rare coastal bluff habitat to support threatened and endangered wildlife and plant species, reduce coastal erosion, improve water infiltration and enhance public access in Abalone Cove Reserve, Ranchos Palos Verdes.
- The Bay Foundation: Ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) to restore two acres of sensitive habitat through community restoration events at the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve.
- National Parks Service: Two hundred two thousand one hundred dollars (\$202,100) for the restoration of the California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*) population in the Santa Monica Mountains.
- National Parks Service: Five hundred sixteen thousand dollars (\$516,000) to implement site improvements that will reduce sedimentation and polluted runoff to improve coastal water quality, restore riparian habitat, improve visitor circulation, and reduce erosion and flooding at Paramount Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area.
- Southern California Marine Institute: One million one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$1,150,000) to restore 69 acres of lost rocky reef/ kelp bed habitat offshore of Bunker Point on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.
- City of Torrance: Two million dollars (\$2,000,000) to design and construct multiple green streets to improve water quality and provide urban greening benefits at five sites in four south bay beach cities: Torrance, Redondo Beach, Manhattan Beach and Hermosa Beach.
- County of Los Angeles: One million dollars (\$1,000,000) to construct a stormwater infiltration system, and recreational and landscape improvements at Monteith Park and View Park alley in the Ballona Creek Watershed.
- Las Virgenes Municipal Water District: Nine hundred twenty-five thousand seven hundred twenty dollars (\$925,720) to construct an indirect potable water reuse demonstration facility to demonstrate its feasibility, and to educate the public on new water technology and conservation, to ultimately reduce dependence on imported water in the Malibu Creek Watershed.

This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to disbursement of funds for all non-acquisition projects, each grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy

(Executive Officer) the following:

- 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 acknowledging the Conservancy's assistance, consistent with Proposition 12 requirements and the related guidelines developed by the California Natural Resources Agency.
 - d. If applicable, evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
 - e. If applicable, evidence that the grantee has entered into, and recorded if applicable, landowner agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project and to protect the public interest in the project.
 - f. If applicable, a monitoring plan.
2. The City of Torrance shall comply with all mitigation measures in the *Los Angeles County Flood Control District Enhanced Watershed Management Programs Programmatic Environmental Impact Report* (PEIR), which was certified by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LAFCD) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act on May 26, 2015, that are applicable to the proposed Beach Cities Green Streets project as identified in the checklist attached as Exhibit 6 to the accompanying staff recommendation.
 3. The County of Los Angeles shall comply with all mitigation measures in the *Los Angeles County Flood Control District Enhanced Watershed Management Programs Programmatic Environmental Impact Report* (PEIR), which was certified by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LAFCD) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act on May 26, 2015, that are applicable to the proposed Monteith Park and View Park Alley Stormwater Capture project as identified in the checklist attached as Exhibit 6 to the accompanying staff recommendation.
 4. The following conditions apply to the grant of funds for the Carbon Canyon acquisition:
 - a. Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds, the grantee shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer the following:
 - i. All relevant acquisition documents for the acquisition including, without limitation, the appraisal, purchase and sale agreement, deed, escrow instructions, environmental or hazardous materials assessment, and title report;
 - ii. A baseline conditions report;
 - iii. A monitoring and reporting plan; and
 - iv. Evidence that sufficient funds are available to complete the acquisition.
 - b. The grantee shall pay no more than fair market value for the property, as established in an appraisal approved by the Executive Officer.
 - c. The property acquired under this authorization shall be managed and operated for open space, habitat and natural resource preservation, and public access. The property shall be permanently dedicated to those purposes by an appropriate instrument

approved by the Executive Officer.

- d. Conservancy funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining a sign on the property, or in a nearby publicly-viewable area, the design and location of which are to be approved by the Executive Officer.”

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 Chapters 5.5, 6 and 8 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31220, 31251 *et seq.* and 31350 *et seq.*), regarding integrated coastal and marine resources, resource enhancement, and reservation of coastal resource areas.
2. Consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31117, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy supports the Conservancy’s funding for the projects in the Santa Monica Mountains zone.
3. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
4. Each nonprofit organization grantee proposed under this authorization is organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and their purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.
5. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the information contained in the *Environmental Assessment Palos Verdes Reef Restoration Project* adopted by the California State Lands Commission on February 27, 2018, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4. The Conservancy finds that there is no substantial evidence based on the record as a whole that the Palos Verdes Reef Restoration Project may have a significant effect on the environment.
6. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the *Los Angeles County Flood Control District Enhanced Watershed Management Programs Program Environmental Impact Report* (PEIR), which was certified by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LAFCD) pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act on May 26, 2015 and is attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 5. The Conservancy has also reviewed the environmental checklists in Exhibit 6 for the Beach Cities Green Streets Project and the Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Capture Project and the mitigation measures needed to reduce or avoid those effects, all of which were fully identified and considered in the PEIR and checklists. The mitigation measures will reduce any potentially significant effects to less than significant. There are no new additional or more severe environmental impacts associated with these specific projects beyond those previously considered by the PEIR, and there is no need for new or additional mitigation measures to reduce or to avoid the impacts of the projects. Accordingly, the Conservancy finds that as mitigated, these projects will not have a significant effect on the environment.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize up to \$6,895,100 for grants to nine nonprofits and public agencies for ten projects to improve coastal water quality, preserve and enhance coastal resources, and enhance coastal access within Santa Monica Bay and its sub-watersheds to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan. The proposed projects included in this authorization are described below.

The Trust for Public Land **\$350,000**
Carbon Canyon Acquisition **Malibu**

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) will acquire fee title to seven parcels (Assessor’s Parcel Numbers: 4453-005-081 through 4453-005-087) totaling approximately 91 acres of undeveloped land in Carbon Canyon, Malibu. The parcels will ultimately be owned and managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) for the purposes of open space, habitat and natural resource preservation, and public access. The landscape includes native chaparral habitat, rocky outcroppings and small mammal burrows-- habitat characteristics essential to amphibians, reptiles and other small mammals such as foxes. Larger mammals (including mountain lion, bobcat, and coyote) are supported by the property’s rugged mountainside habitat and are known to use the property for transit between protected areas. The acquisition will preserve native habitat and the scenic viewshed, and its connection to recently acquired adjacent properties owned by MRCA will provide contiguous habitat as a wildlife corridor connecting the coast to the inland portions of the Santa Monica Mountains.

The property was recently marketed for residential development which would allow up to four estate homes under the existing zoning. The acquisition will avoid the impacts associated with development including native habitat removal and fragmentation, degraded water quality, erosion, and additional vehicle miles traveled associated with both construction of and daily use of the new residences.

The site provides coastal access opportunities; it is located one-half mile from Carbon Beach in Malibu and could enable development of an important link in the Coastal Slope Trail (CST). The CST is a 70-mile recreational trail network stretching from Topanga State Park to Point Mugu State Park. When complete, the CST will link a network of public lands for a seamless recreational experience across the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, spanning Los Angeles and Ventura counties. The CST is partially completed, and acquisition of private land is required to fill in gaps between existing public lands in the trail plan. Without this acquisition, the CST would need to be substantially rerouted in this area.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$350,000
California Natural Resources Agency (EEM)	\$500,000
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Prop 68)	\$350,000
<u>Los Angeles County (Prop A)</u>	<u>\$1,000,000</u>
Project Total	\$2,200,000

TPL will provide in-kind services valued at approximately \$85,000 for due diligence, closing costs, staff time, and other transactional costs associated with purchase of the property.

Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains **\$460,000**
Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning **Topanga**

The Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning Project will advance the long-term planning effort for the restoration of Topanga Lagoon. Topanga Lagoon is a coastal estuary at the terminus of Topanga Canyon within Topanga State Park, which is owned and managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). Over the last two decades, State Parks has been engaged in a collaborative effort with multiple agency partners toward the ultimate restoration of Topanga Lagoon. The Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains (RCDSMM) has led the previous planning efforts in partnership with State Parks, and these agencies will continue that partnership for this phase. The lagoon and surrounding park provide a unique opportunity for ecological restoration, resiliency planning, and improvements for public access and recreation.

The Conservancy has previously funded various preliminary studies and activities in support of the larger restoration. The proposed project consists of developing three conceptual restoration alternatives. The project includes reviewing existing data and conducting technical studies to inform the restoration design; developing ecosystem restoration and public access goals and objectives with input from a technical advisory committee and public stakeholders; and developing three conceptual alternatives to restore ecological function, increase resiliency to sea level rise and climate change, and enhance the visitor experience.

Topanga Watershed is 18 square miles, the third largest watershed draining into Santa Monica Bay. The watershed provides habitat for the federally listed endangered southern steelhead trout and tidewater goby. Steelhead in the Santa Monica Bay are on the brink of extinction and Topanga Creek is currently the only stream with a reproducing population. However, the current conditions in Topanga Lagoon are not optimal to support growth and rearing opportunities for steelhead and the existing narrow channel opening under the bridge over Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) intensifies high flows and limits the opportunities for steelhead to enter the creek or for smolts to emigrate. The PCH bridge is under Caltrans jurisdiction, and it has been identified as a priority for replacement to enhance fish passage. The new bridge span will be longer which will allow the lagoon footprint to be enlarged to restore ecological function and increase resiliency to sea level rise impacts.

The project area is approximately 23 acres and includes several structures that could be modified and utilized for visitor activities, including low cost overnight accommodations. The existing structures include a vacant historic motel with approximately 27 structures; parking, picnic tables, and an accessway crossing under PCH to the beach. The remains of a Native American village have also been documented. Topanga Beach is visited by 750,000 people annually, and the park offers a 36-mile canyon-and-ridgeline trail system. The onsite resources and visitorship provide a multitude of opportunities to connect people and nature.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$460,000
RCDSMM	\$71,810
<u>State Parks</u>	<u>\$133,000</u>
Project Total	\$664,810

Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy

\$201,280

Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration

Rancho Palos Verdes

The proposed project consists of restoration of 13 acres of rare coastal bluff habitat to support threatened and endangered wildlife and plant species, reduce coastal erosion, and improve water infiltration; and installation of signage and other improvements to enhance public access along the California Coastal Trail (CCT) in Abalone Cove Reserve (Reserve) on the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

The 64-acre Reserve is one of ten reserves covering a total of 1,400 acres that are owned by City of Rancho Palos Verdes and managed by the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC). It is a designated State Ecological Reserve and serves as an important ecological resource for the Santa Monica Bay Watershed and larger Los Angeles Region. Southern coastal bluff scrub is listed as a rare vegetation community in the California Natural Communities Database and is composed of several rare coastal plants. Coastal sage scrub is also an ecologically significant vegetation type in southern California, with a high level of diversity, endemism, and rare species. These communities provide habitat for several listed species including the coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), federally listed as threatened and a California Species of Special Concern, the federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly (*Euphilotes battoides allyni*), Palos Verdes blue butterfly (*Glaucopsyche lygdamus palosverdesensis*) and the coastal cactus wren (*Campylorhynchus brunneicapillus*), whose numbers are currently in decline. Encroachment by several species of non-native plants is threatening the ecological health of the native vegetation on the bluffs. These species persist throughout the area to be restored and must be eradicated to allow the rare natives to thrive. The restoration project will increase resiliency for sensitive wildlife species; increase numbers of rare plant species; and decrease erosion and sediment movement along the bluffs.

The proposed project involves removal of invasive *Acacia* trees and invasive plants including iceplant, fennel, mustard, non-native annual grasses, tumbleweed, and scotch broom; installation of temporary drip irrigation for establishment; revegetation with native plants propagated in PVPLC's plant nursery, grown from seeds sourced in the vicinity of the project; and for three years after planting, removal of invasive plants and replacement planting to fill in areas of low native plant coverage. In addition, the project includes trail improvements that support the restoration and enhance the visitor experience at the Reserve. Trail improvements include installing low-impact fencing to protect the restoration areas and guide foot traffic onto the CCT and other approved trails; posting CCT decals and trail markers to enhance wayfinding from the parking area to the beach; and installing signage including Reserve welcome signage and educational signs promoting awareness of Abalone Cove's rare ecology. Restoration activities will be performed by PVPLC staff, volunteers and Conservation Corps youth.

As part of PVPLC’s management of the Reserve, they conduct various community volunteer programs and host public education nature walks through the Reserve to engage and educate the public about coastal resources. The proposed restoration would provide additional learning opportunities within that larger education program.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$201,280
Natural Resource Conservation Service	\$198,000
Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy	\$75,520
<u>REI</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>
Project Total	\$484,800

Volunteers will play a large role in helping to implement and maintain the project, in-kind for their service is estimated at \$94,000.

The Bay Foundation

\$90,000

Ballona Wetlands Community Restoration

Ballona Wetlands

The Bay Foundation (TBF), in partnership with Friends of the Ballona Wetlands (FBW), and with support from California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), will restore two acres of habitat at two sites within the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (Reserve), through removal of invasive, non-native vegetation and supplemental revegetation, informed by scientific monitoring, to help native plants establish. To encourage community participation in protecting resources at the Reserve, TBF and FBW will conduct community restoration events that engage school children and other youth groups in the habitat restoration project.

The Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve which is owned by CDFW, encompasses approximately 600 acres and is the last remaining major coastal wetland in the Santa Monica Bay. The Reserve protects salt marsh and freshwater wetlands, coastal bluffs, dunes, and upland habitats, which support several state- and federally-listed species of concern. Developed urban areas surrounding the wetlands, as well as many other human activities, have significantly impacted the wetlands. A larger restoration effort to restore the wetlands complex is being undertaken by CDFW, and an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared for those activities. No activities are proposed in the EIR for the proposed community restoration project area.

Proposed Funds

<u>Coastal Conservancy</u>	<u>\$90,000</u>
Project Total	\$90,000

TBF is conducting similar habitat restoration activities at adjacent sites and providing ongoing monitoring and maintenance of those restored areas which are considered part of a larger restoration project, of which TBF also considers the proposed project to be a part. The funds requested are for the new activities in the two-acre restoration described above, funding provided by other funders for the efforts in adjacent areas totals \$133,743.

National Park Service

\$516,000

Paramount Ranch Enhancement

Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area

National Park Service (NPS) will design and implement site specific solutions at Paramount Ranch, a park unit within the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area, that will reduce erosion and sedimentation improving coastal water quality, increase riparian habitat, improve visitor circulation, and reduce flood impacts. The park unit consists of two parcels, approximately 664 acres in total area. The site includes the old movie sets at Western Town (buildings burned in the Woolsey Fire but will be rebuilt), a network of hiking/equestrian trails, ranger and maintenance facilities, and a large, unpaved parking area. The park receives over 900,000 visitors annually. Coyote Creek, a 413-foot long tributary, drains from the northwest part of Western Town to Medea Creek, a perennial stream that runs north-south through the property connecting downstream to Malibu Creek and ultimately to Malibu Lagoon and the Santa Monica Bay.

Malibu Creek is impaired by a variety of problems, including sedimentation/siltation, coliform bacteria and algae. Existing site conditions and exacerbate water quality impairments in the watershed. The project will improve coastal water quality, enhance habitat and improve visitor access through the following actions:

- regrade areas of the site to address drainage and erosion impacts;
- recontour and restore creek banks with native riparian plants to stabilize banks and reduce erosion and peak flows into Medea Creek;
- replace pedestrian/equestrian instream crossings with bridges across the creeks;
- install a vegetation buffer incorporating bioswales and berms along the edge of the 2 hectare parking area to redirect drainage, manage stormflows, encourage infiltration, and reduce sediment input to the creek and regrade parking area to reduce flood impacts; and
- conduct public education efforts to relay the benefits of these methods to reduce sedimentation, vehicle particulate and fluid runoff, and horse manure loading in coastal watersheds.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$516,000
Helium Act Fund	\$342,000
<u>National Park Service (plants)</u>	<u>\$20,000</u>
Project Total	\$878,000

NPS will contribute in-kind services estimated at \$154,583 and volunteer assistance for restoration planting, weeding and monitoring following construction is estimated at \$20,000.

National Park Service

\$202,100

California Red-legged Frog Reestablishment

Santa Monica Mountains

The California Red-legged Frog (*Rana draytonii*) Reestablishment Project builds on an earlier effort by National Park Service (NPS) to reintroduce the rare California red-legged frogs (CRLF)

to the Santa Monica Mountains (SMM), and consists of actions to establish self-sustaining populations of CRLF in SMM streams. The proposed project has been modified to address impacts from the recent Woolsey fire on the reestablishment effort.

Once common in Southern California, CRLF have been extirpated from 75% of their former range and are absent altogether from the southern part of their range in the U.S. The CRLF is the largest native amphibian in the western U.S. and an important member of freshwater ecosystems. The species is listed as threatened at federal and state levels, and efforts to restore this culturally and ecologically significant species are necessary to reverse population declines. NPS implemented a reintroduction project in the SMM, funded previously by the Conservancy, and this project continues the work from that effort with the goal of establishing self-sustaining populations. However, in late 2018 the Woolsey fire burned a significant portion of every CRLF site in the SMM. The loss of habitat and potential for debris flows caused NPS to make adjustments to the proposed project. The focus shifted from building on previous successes toward full reestablishment to putting in place protective measures in case of urgent situations threatening the populations and restoring habitat to support existing populations and building the populations up as much as feasible under new conditions.

The proposed project includes monitoring and restoring burned sites to implement the reintroduction protocol that was working well in the years before the fire, and if necessary, relocating frogs and/or eggs to the Santa Barbara zoo to keep them safe from harm during storm events. In addition, NPS will conduct habitat assessments at two new sites in the SMM, Cold Creek and Temescal Canyon, which were unaffected by the Woolsey fire. If the new sites are suitable, NPS will initiate the reintroduction protocol in those streams.

Successful reintroduction projects alleviate small population size through repeated translocations and establish multiple locations for populations to thrive to provide a safety net in the event of a population crash. This reestablishment project is critical to the recovery of CRLFs, and, post-fire, will provide an opportunity to test new measures for protecting populations in post-disaster conditions. The project also offers opportunities to engage the public about the frogs and the sensitive riparian areas where they live through NPS's existing public education programs, academic lectures, social and traditional media, and school programs. NPS rangers host monthly programs at NPS properties where CRLF occur and provide interactive, field-based educational opportunities for 4th graders to learn about CRLF in NPS's "Be a Biologist" programs. NPS also plans to submit their innovative work for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$202,100
National Park Service	\$79,000
<u>Disney Conservation Fund</u>	<u>\$40,000</u>
Project Total	\$321,100

NPS will contribute in-kind services and equipment estimated at \$184,250. In addition, services provided by Santa Barbara Zoo permitted biologist volunteers is estimated at \$36,000.

Southern California Marine Institute

\$1,150,000

Palos Verdes Reef Restoration

Palos Verdes Peninsula

This project will restore 69 acres of lost rocky reef/ kelp bed habitat offshore of Bunker Point on the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The project site is submerged lands owned by the State Lands Commission. The restoration project, once the habitat is mature, will restore the nearshore ecological rocky reef community, support approximately six tons of reef fishes and a proportional population of invertebrates, and increase the abundance of commercial and recreational species offsetting historical losses to ecosystem services.

The Palos Verdes Peninsula, the downcoast border of Santa Monica Bay, has suffered a myriad of impacts from coastal development, infrastructure, pollution, overfishing and associated anthropogenic effects. These impacts have resulted in over a 50% decline in giant kelp beds (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) and associated losses in ecological and socioeconomic services. One source of this loss is meticulously documented; over 200 acres of nearshore rocky reef/kelp bed habitat from Portuguese Bend to Point Fermin have been buried by sedimentation and lost due to poor upland land management practices that have since been ameliorated. This project will restore 69 acres of this lost habitat in an innovative, state-of-the art subtidal reef restoration project in the subtidal waters of Bunker Point. The reef will be composed of a set of eight “blocks” constructed by placing 70,000 tons of quarry rock from Catalina Island. The blocks will be placed proximate to natural reef habitat and oriented to restore the lost features of the reef.

The restoration project has been modeled on nearly a decade of intensive physical and biological surveys overlaid on the backdrop of decades of studies and monitoring of the Palos Verdes Peninsula. The restoration habitat design incorporates biological and physical models of the region and builds upon the lessons learned from all previous reefing projects in Southern California. The modeling incorporated into the design specifically reproduces the features of the most productive reef ecosystems in the region so that the project will be designed to permanently restore the lost ecological services. This project represents the largest production restoration habitat for temperate reefs in the world.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,150,000
<u>Montrose Settlements Restoration Program</u>	<u>\$5,500,000</u>
Project Total	\$6,650,000

The Montrose Settlements Restoration Program will also provide match funds for year-one monitoring: \$353,859.

City of Torrance

\$2,000,000

Beach Cities Green Streets Torrance, Redondo Beach, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach

The Beach Cities Green Streets Project to design and construct multiple green streets to improve water quality and provide urban greening benefits at five sites in four south bay beach cities: Torrance, Redondo Beach, Manhattan Beach and Hermosa Beach. The green streets will be composed of a variety of below and above ground green infrastructure facilities to intercept,

filter and retain dry and wet weather runoff from two highly urbanized coastal sub-watersheds to improve coastal water quality in the Santa Monica Bay Watershed. The project will retrofit existing impervious areas within the public parkways and rights-of-way using green infrastructure technologies identified in the Beach Cities Enhanced Watershed Management Plan (EWMP), such as porous pavement, catch basin trash screens, bio-filtration/bio-retention systems, vegetated curb extensions, planters, swales and rain gardens and dry wells. Each project site will offer a unique set of multi-benefits depending on its location.

The Beach Cities have been systematically working to achieve water quality objectives through the development and implementation of the Beach Cities EWMP, which identified green streets as an integral component in the overall strategy for achieving water quality objectives in the Santa Monica Bay. The drainage areas to the Herondo Street and 28th Street storm drain outfalls were identified in the EWMP as high-priority sub-watersheds for the implementation of regional and green street projects to achieve these water quality objectives.

The project will address urban runoff and stormwater pollution at its source instead of sending it through one of two storm drains at Herondo Street and 28th Street which convey water to the Santa Monica Bay beaches and ocean. This approach will address well-documented water quality issues in the Santa Monica Bay and help achieve waste load allocations in Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for bacteria (dry and wet weather), nearshore and offshore debris (Trash), and toxic chemicals (DDT and PCB). Recently, the State Water Board also listed impairments for mercury and arsenic in the Santa Monica Bay. These two high priority sub-watersheds (city drains) are monitored daily (5 days per week) for indicator bacteria in the wave wash adjacent to the storm drain outfall, and both consistently get “F” grades on Heal the Bay’s Beach Report card during wet weather. The four cities are cooperating to implement green street improvements at five locations. The project will produce multiple benefits to the maximum extent possible at each location, including stormwater infiltration for groundwater recharge and urban greening benefits in locations where native plants and trees will be planted.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$2,000,000
Torrance	\$864,996
Hermosa Beach	\$615,990
Manhattan Beach	\$498,024
Redondo Beach	\$615,990
TBD	\$550,000
Project Total	\$5,145,000

The City of Torrance is providing in-kind staff time valued at \$100,000. In addition, each of the other three Beach Cities will contribute in-kind staff time estimated at \$63,360 total or \$21,120 per agency.

County of Los Angeles \$1,000,000
Monteith Park & View Park Green Alley Stormwater Capture Ballona Creek Watershed

The proposed project is a stormwater capture project to capture and infiltrate stormwater at two locations in the Ballona Creek Watershed to improve water quality in Santa Monica Bay. The County will construct an infiltration system and recreational and aesthetic improvements at Monteith Park (Park) and View Park Alley (Alley). The diversion system at the Park will divert flows from two storm drain systems and the system at the Alley will divert flows from an additional storm drain system to the infiltration system. The infiltration system will intercept and infiltrate the 85th percentile, 24-hour stormwater runoff volume of 9.3 acre-feet from the upstream 228-acre watershed. The project will prevent polluted runoff from being discharged downstream thus improving water quality in the Ballona Creek Watershed and ultimately Santa Monica Bay.

Over the past several years, bacteria and metals water quality monitoring data have shown that Ballona Creek and its tributaries periodically exceed the water quality objectives set in the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) established for Ballona Creek and Santa Monica Bay. The Ballona Creek EWMP indicated that an 85.3 percent reduction in metals is needed to meet the water quality objectives.

The project involves installing two underground infiltration systems to capture stormwater and improve water quality, which provides an opportunity to provide recreational and aesthetic improvements for the community above ground. The existing Alley, which runs between a commercial area and a residential neighborhood, will be transformed from an uninviting, asphalt corridor into a vibrant, green alley with improvements such as light-colored paving to reduce the heat island effect; cross walk striping, public art, and signage; and drought tolerant planting for cooling and beautification. The Park is a popular rest and recreational green space for the community with existing ornamental lawn, trees and benches. Park improvements include replacing some of the existing irrigated turf with native, climate appropriate plants, such as native grasses or a pollinator garden, and passive recreation amenities. The County will engage the community to gather input on final designs for the Park and Alley.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,000,000
<u>Los Angeles County</u>	<u>\$2,711,505</u>
Project Total	\$3,711,505

Las Virgenes Municipal Water District \$925,720
Pure Water Demonstration Malibu Creek Watershed

The Pure Water Demonstration project involves installation of an indirect potable water reuse (IPR) demonstration facility to demonstrate its feasibility, and to educate the public on new water technology and conservation, to ultimately reduce dependence on imported water in the Malibu Creek Watershed. The proposed project is a component of the larger Pure Water Project, which is a visionary project to improve local water supply reliability and drought resilience, and eliminate the unsustainable practice of discharging recycled water to Malibu Creek in the winter.

The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (District) will construct a 100 gallon per minute advanced water treatment demonstration facility to test the microfiltration, reverse osmosis, ultraviolet light disinfection, and advanced oxidation components of the Pure Water advanced treatment facility. The demonstration facility will occupy an existing vacant building owned by the District, only minor refurbishment of the building is needed to create the demo facility. Interpretive signage and educational materials will explain each step of the treatment process, need for potable reuse and the environmental benefits associated with the project. Tours will be conducted for local schools, service groups, and the general public. Visitors will be provided the opportunity to taste the treated water and will fill in before and after surveys. The project will also include a demonstration garden in front of the facility which will inform community members about climate appropriate garden design and ocean friendly gardening practices.

Operation of the advanced water system will provide the opportunity to evaluate the performance of equipment, optimize operational efficiency, train operators and compile information into a final report to be shared with other entities interested in pursuing potable reuse projects. During operation information will be collected on operational controls, system performance and treated water quality which will be used to assist in the development of future regulatory documentation for design and completion of the larger Pure Water advanced water treatment facility. The facility is expected to operate for at least ten years until a permanent facility is in place.

Proposed Funds

Coastal Conservancy	\$925,720
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Water Smart Research Grant)	\$300,000
Las Virgenes-Triunfo JPA	\$1,288,529
TBD	\$229,665
Project Total	\$2,743,904

The District will provide in-kind staff services for the project estimated at \$300,739.

Site Description: All the projects are located in the Santa Monica Bay and its watershed. The Santa Monica Bay Watershed encompasses approximately 414 square miles. See Exhibit 1 for maps of the larger watershed and specific locations of the projects.

Project History: The federal Clean Water Act authorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to select an estuary to be part of the National Estuary Program (Clean Water Act Section 320). The National Estuary Program (NEP) is designed to promote collaborative watershed-based partnerships in order to develop and implement a comprehensive conservation and management plan that addresses the range of environmental problems facing the estuary, while recognizing and balancing the needs of the local community. In 1988, the State of California and the USEPA established the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project (SMBRP) as a NEP. The SMBRP has since been reestablished as the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (SMBRC). (Public Resources Code Sections 30988-30988.3.)

As a NEP, the SMBRC is charged with producing and overseeing implementation of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan (Bay Plan) to serve as the blueprint for the Bay’s long-term recovery. In 1995, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan was approved by the State of

California and the USEPA. The Bay Plan has been updated periodically and was approved in its current form in 2013. The Bay Plan includes specific goals and objectives related to water quality, natural resources and benefits to humans including, public access and education.

The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Proposition 12, Public Resources Code Sections 5096.300, et seq.) allocated \$25,000,000 to the Coastal Conservancy for the restoration of Santa Monica Bay in accordance with the goals and priorities of the Bay Plan. (Public Resources Code Section 5096.352(b)(1)) In accordance with Proposition 12, the SMBRC determines project eligibility and establishes grant priorities for these funds. To date, the Conservancy has awarded over \$17 million of Proposition 12 Santa Monica Bay funds for 49 projects in the Santa Monica Bay Watershed. A project solicitation was jointly announced by the SMBRC and the Conservancy in May 2018 to award the remaining balance of \$6,895,100 of Proposition 12 Santa Monica Bay funds. SMBRC and Conservancy staff participated in reviewing and ranking 15 eligible grant applications, resulting in a list of ten recommended projects for consideration. The SMBRC passed a resolution on December 13, 2018, recommending that the Conservancy fund the ten proposed projects (see Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$6,895,100
<u>Others (See Project Descriptions for breakdown)</u>	<u>\$15,994,019</u>
Project Total	\$22,889,119

The source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Proposition 12, Public Resources Code Sections 5096.300, et seq.) specifically designated for the restoration of Santa Monica Bay, which allows the Conservancy to “fund grants to public entities and nonprofit organizations to implement stormwater and urban runoff pollution prevention programs, habitat restoration, and other priority actions specified in the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan.” (Pub. Res. Code Section 5096.352).

The projects are consistent with the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan and have been recommended for funding by the Governing Board of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed projects are consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (PRC), specifically with Section 31117, and Chapters 5.5, 6 and 8 regarding integrated coastal and marine resources protection, resource enhancement and reservation of significant coastal resources, as described below.

Consistent with PRC Section 31117, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy supports the Conservancy's funding for the five projects in the Santa Monica Mountains zone (see Letters of Support, Exhibit 3).

Chapter 5.5, Section 51220 (a), permits the Conservancy to provide grants to protect and improve marine and coastal water quality through coastal watershed, sediment management, and resources protection and restoration projects if the projects meet one or more of the objectives detailed in Section 31220(b). Pursuant to Sections 31220(b)(1) and (7), the Beach Cities Green Streets Project and Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Capture Project will reduce contamination of waters within the Santa Monica Bay and will reduce the impact of population and economic pressures on coastal and marine resources. As also required by Section 31220(a), Conservancy staff has consulted with the State Water Resources Control Board to ensure consistency with Chapter 3 of Division 20.4 of the PRC. In addition, consistent with Section 31220(c), the projects each include a monitoring component and are part of the local watershed management plan, the Beach Cities Enhanced Watershed Management Program and the Ballona Creek Enhanced Watershed Management Program, respectively.

Seven of the proposed projects are consistent with Chapter 6, Sections 31251-3127, which provides for the Conservancy's participation in a program of coastal resource enhancement:

- Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning;
- Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project;
- Ballona Wetlands Community Restoration Project;
- Paramount Ranch Enhancement Project;
- California red-legged frog Reestablishment Project;
- Palos Verdes Reef Restoration Project; and
- Pure Water Demonstration.

Consistent with Section 31251, the proposed authorization would award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to enhance coastal resources that have become degraded due to natural and human-induced events. These events have caused the spread of invasive exotic plants, the pollution of stormwater entering Santa Monica Bay and other adverse impacts to habitat and water quality. The proposed projects consist of corrective measures that will contribute to the enhancement of the natural and scenic character of the coastal resources and the ability of the Santa Monica Bay watershed to support the federally listed California red-legged frog, southern steelhead trout, California gnatcatcher, El Segundo blue butterfly, Palos Verdes blue butterfly, and other wildlife species.

PRC Section 31253 provides that the Conservancy "may provide up to the total cost of any coastal resource enhancement project including the state or local share of federally supported projects." Consistent with Section 31252, these seven proposed projects are consistent with their respective, certified Local Coastal Plans as requiring action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems, as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies and the Coastal Act section below.

Chapter 8 provides for the reservation of significant coastal resource areas. PRC Section 31350 expresses the legislature's intent to assure that significant coastal resource sites shall be reserved

for public use and enjoyment and vest in the Conservancy the authority to ensure the reservation of resource lands that would otherwise be lost to public use. The Carbon Canyon Acquisition is consistent with Section 31351 because the Conservancy is cooperating with other public agencies and nonprofit organizations to ensure the reservation of property for park, recreational and wildlife habitat purposes to meet the objectives of the Coastal Act. The proposed acquisition is consistent with the habitat and access protection policies of the Coastal Act. (See “Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies and the Coastal Act,” below).

The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 8, Section 31352, which states that the Conservancy may award a grant to an agency or nonprofit organization for a purpose specified in Section 31351 if (as is the case with this project) that entity would otherwise be unable, due to limited financial resources, to acquire such property. Without the proposed Conservancy funding TPL would lack the additional funding needed to acquire the Carbon Canyon parcels.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#)
GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

The ten projects proposed for funding assist the Conservancy in meeting several of its Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives. Relevant Goals and Objectives are listed below, along with the names of the proposed projects that meet each goal. Please see the “Project Summary” section, above, for how each proposed project meets the relevant goal(s) and objective(s).

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objectives A and F**, which seek to promote awareness and use of the California Coastal Trail (CCT) and ensure there is at least one sign on each segment of existing CCT, the following proposed project will contribute to this goal:

- Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective C**, which seeks to design facilities to increase and enhance coastal recreational opportunities and enable people to enjoy natural, cultural and historical resources, the following proposed project will contribute to this goal:

- Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning Project

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective G**, which seeks to acquire land to allow for the development of new coastal accessways, the following proposed project will contribute to this goal:

- Carbon Canyon Acquisition

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective A**, which seeks to support educational programs and interpretive events that improve public understanding and promote stewardship of coastal resources, the following proposed projects will contribute to this goal:

- Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project
- Ballona Wetlands Community Restoration Project
- California red-legged frog Reestablishment Project

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective B**, which seeks to support the design and installation of interpretive or educational displays and exhibits related to coastal, watershed, and ocean resource education, and climate change, the following proposed projects will contribute to this goal:

- Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project
- Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Project
- Pure Water Demonstration Project

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective A**, which seeks to protect significant coastal and watershed resource properties, the following proposed project will contribute to this goal:

- Carbon Canyon Acquisition

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective C**, which seeks to implement projects that preserve fish and wildlife corridors between core habitat areas along the coast and from coastal to inland habitat areas, the following proposed project will contribute to this goal:

- Paramount Ranch Enhancement Project

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective A**, which seeks to develop plans for the restoration and enhancement of coastal habitats, including coastal wetlands and intertidal areas, stream corridors, dunes, coastal terraces, coastal sage scrub, forests, and coastal prairie, the following proposed project will contribute to this goal:

- Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning Project

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective B**, which seeks to restore or enhance coastal habitats, including coastal wetlands and intertidal areas, stream corridors, dunes, coastal sage scrub, coastal terraces, forests, and coastal prairie, the following proposed projects will contribute to this goal:

- Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project
- Ballona Wetlands Community Restoration Project
- Paramount Ranch Enhancement Project
- California red-legged frog Reestablishment Project
- Palos Verdes Reef Restoration Project

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective C**, which seeks to develop plans to preserve and enhance coastal watersheds and floodplains, including plans to improve fish passage, the following proposed project will contribute to this goal:

- Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning Project

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective G**, which seeks to implement projects to improve water quality to benefit coastal and ocean resources, the following proposed projects will contribute to this goal:

- Paramount Ranch Enhancement Project
- Beach Cities Green Streets Project

- Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Project
- Pure Water Demonstration Project

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective B**, which seeks to plans and design adaptation projects to increase resilience to sea level rise and other climate change impacts, the following proposed projects will contribute to this goal:

- Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning Project
- Beach Cities Green Streets Project

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective C**, which seeks to implement projects to increase resilience to sea level rise and other climate change impacts using nature-based solutions and other multi-benefit strategies, the following proposed projects will contribute to this goal:

- Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project
- California red-legged frog Reestablishment Project
- Palos Verdes Reef Restoration Project
- Beach Cities Green Streets Project
- Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Project

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:**
 - a. *California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report* (Governor's Office of Planning and Research, 2015)

The proposed projects help achieve the goals in the plan listed below.

- Build a resilient and sustainable water system, supporting integrated water management, facilitating and maximizing the use of recycled water and prioritizing watershed protection and health in ecosystem management.
- Steward and protect natural landscapes, supporting landscape-scale approaches to conservation and mitigation that account for multiple benefits, building resilience into natural systems and prioritize natural and green infrastructure solutions.
- Incorporate climate adaptation into planning and investment, prioritizing GHG emission reduction actions that provide climate resilience benefits, especially in

the natural resource sector, including water efficiency programs.

b. *Safeguarding California Plan (2018)*

The proposed projects advance the goals in the plan specifically listed below.

- Biodiversity and Habitat: B-2 Enhance habitat connectivity and protect climate refugia through strategic acquisition and protection activities; B-3 Increase restoration and enhancement activities to increase climate resiliency of natural and working lands; and B-4 Increase biodiversity monitoring efforts to better understand baseline conditions and make possible the early detection of climate impacts.
- Ocean and Coast: O-2 Design and implement nature-based projects to protect and enhance the adaptive capacity of coastal and marine ecosystems, including beaches and wetlands; and O-4 Continue to assess community and ecosystem vulnerability to climate impacts.
- Water: W-2 Support regional groundwater management for drought resiliency; W-3 Diversify local supplies and increase water conservation and use efficiency; W-5 Prepare California for hotter and drier conditions and improve water storage capacity; W-8 Utilize low-impact development and other methods in state and regional stormwater permits to restore the natural hydrograph; and W-10 Protect and restore water resources for important ecosystems.
- Parks, Recreation and California Culture: PC-3 Maximize opportunities to connect urban populations to natural spaces through urban parks, wetlands, and river parkways; PC-5 Incorporate climate change in all California State Park and conservancy planning and decision-making; and PC-6 Engage the public and foster ongoing and diverse partnerships to create a shared commitment to stewardship and to harness complementary skills, capacities, and support.

c. *California Water Action Plan*

Seven of the ten proposed projects help achieve the plan's goals below:

- Action 1: Make conservation a way of life, specifically urban water conservation including increasing the use of recycled water.
- Action 2: Increase regional self-reliance and integrated water management, notably multi-benefit solutions for ensuring sustainable water resources.
- Action 4: Protect and restore important ecosystems to assist in natural water management and improved habitat including restoring coastal watersheds and encouraging flood projects that plan for climate change and achieve multiple benefits.
- Action 6: Expand water storage capacity and improve groundwater management, such as replenishing groundwater basins by allowing water to percolate naturally or from constructed facilities to capture stormwater.
- Action 8: Increase flood protection by providing runoff capture and alleviating local flooding.

d. *California Wildlife Action plan*

Six of the ten proposed projects help achieve the plan's statewide conservation goals below:

- Goal 1 – Abundance and Richness: Maintain and increase ecosystem and native species distributions in California while sustaining and enhancing species abundance and richness.
- Goal 2 - Enhance Ecosystem Conditions: Maintain and improve ecological conditions vital for sustaining ecosystems in California.
- Goal 3 - Enhance Ecosystem Functions and Processes: Maintain and improve ecosystem functions and processes vital for sustaining ecosystems in California.

In addition, the plan identifies the Tidewater Goby, CRLF and Cactus Wren in the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the South Coast Province and lists acquisition as a conservation strategy to protect vital wildlife habitat.

e. *Species Recovery Plans*

Several of the proposed projects will advance the efforts of Species Recovery Plans, including those for the El Segundo blue butterfly (Abalone Cove and Ballona Wetlands), Coastal California gnatcatcher (Abalone Cove and Ballona Wetlands), Palos Verdes blue butterfly (Abalone Cove), California red-legged frog, and the Southern Steelhead Recovery Plan. The Steelhead Recovery Plan identifies the Topanga Canyon steelhead population as a Core 1 population, the highest priority for recovery actions.

f. *Rancho Palos Verdes Natural Community Conservation Plan/Habitat Conservation Plan (NCCP/HCP)*

The Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy is a key partner in the Rancho Palos Verdes NCCP/HCP responsible for conservation activities including habitat restoration and monitoring. The plan describes habitat restoration as “an important component of the NCCP/HCP conservation strategy.” The Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project will address core elements of the plan by restoring habitat within the NCCP/HCP managed area at the Reserve to uniquely support plant and animal species (i.e., California gnatcatcher, cactus wren, El Segundo blue butterfly, PV blue butterfly and CNPS 1B rare plant species) explicitly targeted for protection and recovery actions under the plan. The project will also aid in providing public access as a compatible activity to accomplish the conservation goals of the NCCP sub-area.

g. *Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan*

The proposed projects will advance several of the water quality, natural resource and human benefits policies and goals of the Bay Plan.

- 4. Support of the public:** As indicated by the support letters provided in Exhibit 3, the suite of proposed projects are supported by elected officials, public agencies, and numerous community and nonprofit organizations.
- 5. Location:** All the projects are located within the Santa Monica Bay and its watershed.

- 6. Need:** The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan identifies significant natural coastal resources that require public action to conserve, enhance and restore natural resources of statewide interest. These projects will be funded with monies appropriated to the Conservancy specifically for implementing the Bay Plan. Without this funding, the proposed projects would either not proceed or would need to be scaled back.
- 7. Greater-than-local interest:** Santa Monica Bay has been identified by both the State of California and the US EPA as a coastal water body of national significance. The Santa Monica Bay watershed contains much of the remaining wetlands within Los Angeles County, a priority of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project.
- 8. Sea level rise vulnerability:** Two of the ten projects are vulnerable to sea level rise. The Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning will incorporate projected sea level rise into conceptual restoration designs. The Beach Cities Green Streets will attenuate impacts of sea level rise on the stormwater management system which includes tidally influenced outfalls and increase the assimilative capacity of the watershed by infiltrating stormwater. None of the other projects will be impacted by projected sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

- 9. Urgency:** The remaining balance of \$6,895,100 of Prop 12 SMB funds must be encumbered by June 30, 2020, and projects must be completed by March 2022. The funds will not be reallocated, thus, approving grants at this time is necessary to allow the projects to occur with available funding.
- 10. Resolution of more than one issue:** The projects will provide multiple benefits by fulfilling various habitat restoration, water quality improvement, public access and education needs throughout the Santa Monica Bay region.
- 11. Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
- 13. Innovation:** The proposed California Red-legged Frog Reestablishment, Palos Verdes Reef Restoration and Pure Water Demonstration projects are particularly innovative, forging new scientific techniques and water technologies to restore significant coastal resources and promote conservation that can be replicated and upscaled elsewhere.
- 14. Readiness:** All ten proposed projects were recommended by the SMBRC for funding in part because they are each ready to begin immediately and to complete the project by the funding deadline in 2022.
- 15. Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** The Conservancy has been involved in resource protection, enhancement and restoration projects within the Santa Monica Bay watershed for more than two decades, including projects focused on improving coastal water quality and coastal nearshore resources within the Bay. Implementation of these projects at this time will contribute to the fulfillment of long-standing Conservancy goals. The Conservancy has also been involved in enhancement and restoration planning for the Malibu Creek, Ballona Creek and Topanga Creek watersheds for the past several years.
- 17. Cooperation:** The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project is a cooperative venture involving a broad range of interested and affected stakeholders including private industry, citizens, environmental groups, and local, regional, state and federal agencies. In addition, many of

the proposed projects rely on partnerships and close coordination with other agencies and organizations.

- 18. Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** The proposed projects have taken vulnerabilities from climate change impacts, other than sea level rise, into consideration. Restoring habitat will attenuate impacts of warmer temperatures on wildlife and provide linkages for species movement in response to climate change. Establishing self-sustaining populations of CRLF will help the species survive the warmer temperatures, flashy rain events and increased frequency of wildfire. The projects involving stormwater infiltration and water reuse increase resiliency to drought.
- 19. Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The proposed projects will minimize GHGs by various means, including but not limited to, acquisition of land will eliminate the potential for residential development on the site and its associated emissions generated by site preparation, construction and use; planting of new vegetation will reduce GHGs directly through carbon sequestration; and construction of a water reuse facility will decrease reliance on imported water thereby reducing GHGs created by water transport.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM OR COASTAL ACT POLICIES:

The Carbon Canyon Acquisition, Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning, Paramount Ranch Enhancement, California Red-legged Frog Reestablishment, and Pure Water Demonstration projects are all located within the Santa Monica Mountains area in the coastal zone. The projects are consistent with conservation and open space and public facilities policies of the Los Angeles County Santa Monica Mountains Local Coastal Program (LCP), as described below.

The proposed projects are consistent with Water Quality Goal CO-1, which seeks to maintain and restore biological productivity and coastal water quality appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine and freshwater organisms and to protect human health. The projects are consistent specifically with policies CO-3 seeking to reduce runoff and erosion associated with development; CO-5 seeking to infiltrate development runoff onsite to preserve or restore the natural hydrologic cycle; CO-6 requiring development to protect the absorption, purification, and retention functions of natural drainage systems; CO-7 seeking to protect water quality by limiting maximum potential buildout in sensitive watersheds; and CO-21 requiring natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats to be maintained.

The proposed project are also consistent with Biological Resource Goal CO-2, which provides for the protection of Sensitive Environmental Resource Areas (SERAs), and specifically with the following policies: CO-41 restricting new non-resource-dependent development in the most SERAs to protect from disruption of habitat values; CO-42 allowing only resource-dependent uses in SERAs, sited and designed to avoid significant disruption of habitat values; CO-44 requiring new development to be sited in a manner that avoids the most biologically-sensitive habitat onsite; CO-45 seeking to preserve, protect, and enhance habitat linkages through limitations in the type and intensity of development and preservation of riparian corridors; and CO-48 permitting new and replacement infrastructure provided that it is designed to avoid and, if infeasible, minimize adverse impacts to environmental and scenic resources.

The projects also support Recreation and Trails Goal CO-6, which seeks to provide maximum public access and recreational opportunities for all people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resources from overuse. The project are consistent with policies CO-164 seeking to encourage opportunities for recreation throughout the LCP area when consistent with environmental values and protection of natural resources, and CO-179 seeking to protect and, where possible, enhance recreation and access opportunities at existing public beaches and parks as an important coastal resource.

The Carbon Canyon Acquisition is consistent with open space policies CO-121 seeking to pursue a variety of methods to preserve open space, including fee-simple acquisition. It is also consistent with CO-123 which prioritizes acquisitions of lands that contain unique ecological features; protect undeveloped streams, watersheds, woodlands, and grasslands; prevent vegetation clearance or grading of steep areas; help reduce development-induced runoff; and protect existing and approved recreation areas. In addition, the acquisition is consistent with scenic resource policies CO-124 seeking to protect and, where feasible, enhance the scenic, and visual qualities of the Santa Monica Mountains contain scenic resources, and CO-125 seeking to protect public views within Scenic Areas and throughout the Coastal Zone.

The Pure Water Demonstration Project is consistent with public facilities policies: PF-3 which seeks to reduce potable water consumption and the need for new water supplies through required and active water conservation programs. Policy PF-6 seeks to maximize use of recycled water and thereby reduce the need for exploiting domestic water supplies when potable water is not required.

The Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration Project is located in the Rancho Palos Verdes LCP area of the coastal zone. The project is consistent with the Rancho Palos Verdes Coastal Plan's Urban Environment (UE) and Natural Environment (NE) Policies which promote public access to the coast and habitat enhancement and protection. Specifically, the project is consistent with NE Policy #9 as it will revegetate with native plant materials where removal of non-native vegetation will occur and NE Policy #20 as it is a restoration effort designed to enhance the coastal environment.

No LCP has ever been completed for the lower Ballona Creek watershed area, therefore, the Ballona Wetlands Community Restoration Project will be analyzed for consistency with Coastal Act policies. The proposed project is consistent with the policies related to environmentally sensitive resources. Section 30230 states that marine resources shall be maintained, enhanced, and where feasible, restored. Section 30231 states that the biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored. In addition, Section 30240 states that environmentally sensitive habitat areas must be protected against the disruption of habitat values. The project is consistent with these policies as it will restore and enhance degraded habitat in the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve.

The Palos Verdes Reef Restoration is located seaward of the mean high tide line and, therefore, lies in the Coastal Commission's retained jurisdiction so this project will be analyzed for consistency with Coastal Act Policies. The proposed project is consistent with the Section 30210, which states that "recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with the public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse." The restored reef will provide new public recreational diving and fishing opportunities. The proposed project is also consistent with the policies related to the marine environment. Section 30230 states that marine resources shall be maintained, enhanced, and where feasible, restored. Section 30231 states that the biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored. In addition, Section 30233 states that the diking, filling, or dredging of open coastal waters, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes shall be permitted in accordance with other applicable provisions of this division, where there is no feasible less environmentally damaging alternative, and where feasible mitigation measures have been provided to minimize adverse environmental effects, and shall be limited to the following:...(6) restoration purposes; and (7) nature study, aquaculture, or similar resource dependent activities. Further, Section 30234.5 provides protection for the economic, commercial, and recreational importance of fishing activities. The proposed project will restore 69 acres of rocky reef/kelp bed habitat which will support numerous reef fishes and invertebrates, including the protected pink, green and pinto abalone (*Haliotis corrugata*, *H. fulgens* and *H. katschankana*, respectively), the endangered White Abalone (*H. sorenseni*), and the protected Giant Sea Bass (*Stereolepis gigas*).

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

Carbon Canyon Acquisition

The proposed acquisition is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 14, Section 15325 in that the acquisition constitutes a transfer of ownership to preserve open space and habitat. The proposed project also is exempt under Section 15313, which exempts the acquisition of lands for fish and wildlife conservation purposes.

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

Topanga Lagoon Restoration Planning

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to 14 CCR Section 15262, which exempts planning and feasibility studies for possible future actions which have not been approved, adopted or funded. The project involves only the development of conceptual site designs for possible future actions that the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded.

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

Abalone Cove Habitat Restoration

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to 14 CCR Section 15304, regarding minor public or private alterations to the condition of land, water and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. The project will involve the removal of invasive nonnative plants and the planting of native plants and placement of signs with no land alteration, no removal of mature, scenic trees and no alteration of any existing facilities.

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

Ballona Wetlands Community Restoration

The proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA review pursuant to 14 CCR Section 15333 as a small habitat restoration project of less than five acres that assures the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife. The proposed project will restore two acres of habitat, and with the exception of spot removal of invasive plants by hand-pulling, no work will occur during the summer avian breeding season to avoid any potential impacts. There will be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat; there are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that may be disturbed or removed; and the project will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.

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

Paramount Ranch Enhancement

The proposed project consists of installation of bioswales and berms along the edge of an existing parking area; minor grading in an area with existing buildings and a parking lot to reduce flooding impacts; installation of rain gutters and underground cisterns to capture, store and reuse rain water; recontouring the banks and planting of new native plants along a creek channel; and installation of a pedestrian/equestrian free span bridge across a stream channel. The proposed minor grading, and installation of bioswales, berms, and water capture equipment is categorically exempt under Section 15304 which allows minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees, and Section 15301, which allows the operation, repair, maintenance, and minor alteration of existing public facilities, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use including maintenance wildlife habitat areas and stream channels to protect fish and wildlife resources.

The work to restore the degraded stream banks and riparian habitat and placement of a free span bridge are exempt under Section 15333, which allows small restoration projects less than five acres in size to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife, and Section 15303, which allows the construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only

minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure. The free span bridge is estimated to be 1370 square feet and construction will not occur in an environmentally sensitive area.

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

California Red-legged Frog Reestablishment

The proposed frog reestablishment project involves survey work to assess and monitor habitat conditions and frog population success. Portions of the project are categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines Section 15306 as they involve information collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. In addition, where fire damage has impacted frog habitat, restoration work including removal of debris, pool creation and riparian vegetation planting to provide suitable conditions may occur prior to translocation of frog egg masses. This work is exempt under Section 15304(d) which allows minor alterations in land, water, and vegetation in designated wildlife management areas which result in improvement of habitat for wildlife resources.

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

Palos Verdes Reef Restoration

The activities to be undertaken to restore rocky reef/ kelp bed habitat on the Palos Verdes Peninsula are addressed in the *Environmental Assessment Palos Verdes Reef Restoration Project* dated February 21, 2017 (EA) prepared by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. Section 4321 *et seq.*). The EA includes, as Appendix C, an Initial Study prepared by the California State Lands Commission (CSLC) pursuant to CEQA. In accordance with CEQA, on February 27, 2018, the CSLC adopted the EA as a Negative Declaration (ND) and authorized a lease of state lands for the project. A copy of the EA/ND can be found in Exhibit 4.

The EA/ND analyzes the potential impacts of the project and concludes that there is no substantial evidence, that the project may have a significant effect on the environment. The project will place 70,300 tons of quarried rock on 40 acres of sandy ocean bottom within a 69-acre site. The project design includes protection of biological resources. The majority of the site, 60 acres, is degraded soft-bottom habitat. Placement of rock in the areas of soft-bottom substrate will be carried out in a slow (one acre per day), localized manner that will enable aquatic species to move away prior to placement of the rock. The more sensitive areas of the project site are the 9 acres of hard-bottom habitat that can be considered biologically important. To protect the hard-bottom habitat, no rock will be placed on hard-bottom habitat and no anchoring will occur in areas of hard substrate.

Conservancy staff has independently reviewed the EA/ND, and the comments received in response thereto, pursuant to its responsibilities under 14 CCR Section 15091, and concurs in the CSLC's findings. Staff recommends that the Conservancy, as a responsible agency, find that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment.

Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Determination for the project.

**Beach Cities Green Streets and
Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Capture**

The proposed Beach Cities Green Streets Project and the Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Capture Project are part of the Beach Cities Enhanced Watershed Management Plan (EWMP) and Ballona Creek EWMP, respectively. The Beach Cities and Ballona Creek EWMPs were considered along with ten other EWMPs in the *Los Angeles County Flood Control District Enhanced Watershed Management Programs Program Environmental Impact Report* (PEIR), which was certified by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District (LAFCD) on May 26, 2015. The PEIR and associated Mitigation, Monitoring and Reporting Program, Statement of Overriding Considerations, Findings of Fact, and NOD are available at <https://dpw.lacounty.gov/lacfd/ewmppeir/index.cfm>.

The PEIR described the EWMPs, assessed the potential environmental impacts associated with the implementation of specific categories of improvements proposed in the EWMPs and identified mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce these impacts to a less than significant level, where feasible.

The PEIR analyzes the potential effects of implementing the 12 EWMPs throughout the Los Angeles region, rather than the impacts of a single stormwater management project. The PEIR identifies mitigation measures that will be applied to reduce or avoid potential significant impacts. Responsible agencies may use the PEIR as a basis for “tiered” CEQA review and approval of individual projects under the EWMPs, including the Beach Cities Green Streets and Monteith Park and View Park Green Alley Stormwater Capture projects proposed by this staff recommendation.

A subsequent activity that follows under a programmatic environmental impact report must be examined in the light of that programmatic report to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared. If the agency proposing the later activity finds that the environmental impacts of the later activity and the required mitigation to reduce those impacts were already identified and considered under the programmatic environmental report, the activity can be approved with no further environmental documentation. (14 CCR Section 15168(c)). A written checklist can be used to document the evaluation of the activity to determine whether the environmental effects of that activity were covered in the programmatic environmental impact report (*Id.*).

The Conservancy has prepared a checklist (attached as Exhibit 6) for each of the two proposed projects, identifying the proposed project activities, assessing the potential impacts of the projects, identifying the required mitigation identified by the PEIR and determining if the proposed projects will involve any unavoidable impacts or additional impacts or more severe impacts than were identified by the PEIR and if any additional mitigation measures are needed to avoid or reduce those impacts. Based on this analysis, Conservancy staff has concluded that the PEIR fully considered the impacts associated with the proposed projects and that there are no unavoidable impacts, no new impacts or more severe impacts and that there are no additional

mitigation measures required. Conservancy staff recommends that the Conservancy adopt a finding to that effect.

Staff will file a Notice of Determination for each project upon approval.

Pure Water Demonstration

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the CEQA pursuant to 14 CCR Section 15301. Section 15301 exempts repair, maintenance and minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities and topographical features involving negligible or no expansion of use, including existing facilities of utilities used to provide public utility services, such as a water district facility. This project consists of minor alteration of an existing facility to accommodate new water treatment equipment and informational signage and exhibits for visitor tours and new landscaping to enhance a demonstration garden. As such, the project will alter an existing water utility facility with negligible or no expansion of use.

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