

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
June 1, 2023

POINT ARENA LIGHTHOUSE RESILIENCE STUDY

Project No. 23-034-01
Project Manager: Michael Bowen

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$60,000 to the Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers, Inc. to conduct a geologic study of the Point Arena Bluff underlying the Point Arena Lighthouse to assess the site’s resilience to future storms and the overall safety of the Point Arena Lighthouse, in Mendocino County.

LOCATION: Point Arena, Mendocino County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to the Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers Inc. (“the grantee”) to conduct a geologic study of the Point Arena Bluff underlying the Point Arena Lighthouse to assess the site’s resilience to future storms and the overall safety of the Point Arena Lighthouse, in Mendocino County.

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) the following:

1. A detailed revised work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Section 31113 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding addressing climate change and potential climate change impacts.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers, Inc. is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a grant of up to \$60,000 to the Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers Inc. (PALKI) to conduct a geologic study of the Point Arena Bluff underlying the Point Arena Lighthouse to assess the site's resilience to future storms and the overall safety of the Point Arena Lighthouse, in Mendocino County. This study is necessary to determine whether any actions are needed to safeguard or adapt the Point Arena Lighthouse and associated facilities to climate change, if feasible.

The stability of the Point Arena Bluff and Peninsula is threatened by coastal erosion. The bluff and peninsula support a complex of facilities, referred to as the Light Station, that include the 1908 115-foot Lighthouse Tower, 1896 Fog Signal Building Museum, the Coast Guard Helipad, Caltrans radio transmitters, Further Reach Wi-Fi antennas, art installations, and the Lighthouse Keepers Cottages, which are overnight accommodations available to the public. These facilities are important for historic preservation, public access and recreation, and for navigation safety. A geological investigation of the sea caves and bluffs around the lighthouse peninsula is necessary to enable development of a long-term management plan that maintains safe public access and function of these facilities.

The project consists of a study that will provide a detailed understanding of the potential geologic hazards that may exist on Point Arena Bluff underlying the Light Station and outline possible mitigation strategies if geologic features represent a danger to the buildings and structures. Of particular interest will be any potential risks to the Fog Signal Building Museum and/or Lighthouse Tower, both of which are on the National Register of Historic Places and are a major tourist attraction on the Mendocino coast.

Specific tasks of the project include a topographic survey of the top of the bluff, a ground survey to locate the horizontal position of the bluff's underlying sea caves, a topographic survey of the sea caves on the south and north sides of the peninsula, and preparation of an engineering geologic investigation report of the area, including a hazards assessment of the caves and a description of mitigation measures that may be needed in specific areas.

Site Description: A fixture on the Mendocino Coast, the Point Arena Lighthouse and facilities are a beautiful and popular site at the tip of Point Arena. Rebuilt in 1908 following the Great San Francisco Earthquake, the facilities serve as a popular museum and rental cottages. The site receives over 30,000 visitors annually.

In 1984, PALKI acquired the Light Station as part of a 25-year land lease from the Coast Guard and U.S. Department of Transportation. In November 2000, PALKI became the owners of the fee title to the 23-acre property due to their diligent historic preservation and educational efforts. The Grant Deed transferred ownership of the Light Station and all its buildings and structures, except the USCG fueling facilities, equipment and helipad, from the United States Coast Guard and the United States Department of Transportation to PALKI. PALKI then spearheaded the restoration of the Lighthouse Tower and 1896 Fog Signal Building in 2008 – 2010.

Currently, the Light Station boasts at least 19 different features that highlight the natural and changing landscape, such as art installations including a Labyrinth and a Druid's Circle, a native plant garden, as well as the Coast Guard Helipad, the 1908 post-earthquake lighthouse tower, the 1896 Fog Signal Building, the lighthouse keeper's and assistant lighthouse keepers' houses turned vacation rental cottages, and the 1870s water system catchment basin. There are three different walking trails that connect the signed features allowing guests to experience the coastal terrain, showing the majesty of the lighthouse with access to coastal views, providing opportunities for whale and bird watching, and providing access to local art exhibits in the Whale Watch Room of the Fog Signal Building and the original first order Fresnel lens. The 23-acre property underlying the Light Station is located on the Point Arena Bluff, which extends from Highway One to the tip of the peninsula underlying the Light Station. This property is adjacent to the Point Arena-Stornetta Unit of the California Coastal National Monument and marine protected area, collectively providing a rich and diverse coastal access opportunity for the public.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: PALKI has a proven track record of raising and managing funds for the benefit of the Light Station. In 2006 and 2008 PALKI procured a total of \$1.644 million in grant funds from the California Cultural and Historic Endowment and raised an additional \$475,000 in donations to fund the restoration of the Lighthouse Tower and Fog Signal Building, renovate the South and North Oil Storage Buildings and construct new public restrooms. With this grant, significant restoration and construction work was performed between 2008 and 2010.

PALKI is undertaking this project in collaboration with Brunsing and Associates, Inc. (BAI). BAI was selected to conduct this study because of its long history of projects on the Mendocino Coast in both geological/geotechnical survey capabilities and mitigation projects. BAI conducted a previous geological/geotechnical survey for PALKI providing baseline data to provide a preliminary understanding of the challenges associated with the property. Notable BAI projects include Point Cabrillo Lighthouse Preserve bluff study for the State of California, Van Damme State Park, Bodega Bay East Shore board walk for Sonoma County Regional Parks, bluff stairway for beach access for the community of Westport, Glass Beach bluff trail and bluff stairway for the City of Fort Bragg, and Georgia Pacific Property bluffs. BAI has worked on a dozen or more bluff projects involving sea cave exploration and geologic evaluation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

Selection Criteria

1. Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.

See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Strategic Plan" section below.

2. Project is a good investment of state resources.

Significant federal, state, and private funds have been invested to make the Point Arena Lighthouse a world-class destination on the Mendocino Coast. A modest investment in state resources is requested to determine how best to protect this historic navigational aid and visitor-serving facility for the future.

3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.

PALKI has a constructive relationship with the local Bokeya band of the Pomo Tribe. Through PALKI "Discover our Lands" visitor programs, PALKI has a long-standing relationship with the local band in providing cultural and historical insights and storytelling. COVID interrupted this programming, but it is expected to resume in 2023/2024.

This phase of the project consists of a study to understand the scope of the problem the sea caves pose to the integrity and safety of the Point Arena Lighthouse Tower and other buildings. Long term management planning in the next phase of the project will require input from Tribes.

4. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.

This study will be used to help prepare a plan to enhance the site's resilience.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The project will facilitate the protection and increased resilience of a site that provides multiple benefits, including public access and recreation, education, historic preservation, and aids to navigation. The site's importance for public access and recreation increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the importance of accessible outdoor space.

6. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

PALKI is not including additional stakeholders in this initial study phase, but important stakeholders for the next phase may include the U. S. Coast Guard which continues to operate a Helipad and refueling station on the property as well as maintaining the current VLB-44 beacon mounted on the Lighthouse Tower that serves as the active light on the peninsula. The Light Station property is bordered by the Point Arena-Stornetta Unit of the California Coastal National Monument managed by the Bureau of Land Management, which could be a potential stakeholder for mitigation and conservation strategies necessary for the unique and fragile

coastal bluffs. PALKI has a solid community network and routinely engages various stakeholders to incorporate insights into program and site improvements.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$60,000
Point Arena Lighthouse Keepers, Inc.	\$4,000
Project Total	\$64,000

Conservancy funds will derive from a Fiscal Year 2022/2023 appropriation of Greenhouse Gas Reduction funds (GGRF) to the Conservancy for the Climate Ready Program to protect communities and natural resources from sea level rise, with a focus on the adaptation of public infrastructure along the coast including urban waterfronts, ports, and ecosystems. (Budget Act of 2022, as amended by AB 178, Chapter 45, Statutes of 2022). These funds will be used for the geological study that will determine what future adaptation actions are necessary to protect the Point Arena Light Station from the impacts of sea level rise and other climate change impacts.

The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Investment Plan and Communities Revitalization Act (Health and Safety Code (HSC) Sections 39710 – 39723) requires that GGRF funds be used to (1) facilitate the achievement of reductions of GHG emissions consistent with the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (HSC Sections 38500 et seq), and (2) to the extent feasible, achieve other co-benefits, such as maximizing economic, environmental and public health benefits and directing investment to disadvantaged communities (HSC 39712(b)). The Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 sets forth (among other things) certain GGRF funding priorities (HSC Section 38590.1). The California Legislature has also appropriated GGRF funds to the Conservancy to protect communities and natural resources from sea level rise (The Budget Act of 2022, as amended by AB 179, Chapter 249, Statutes of 2022).

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has adopted guidelines that establish program goals that agencies must achieve with their GGRF funds. Consistent with the CARB 2018 Funding Guidelines, the project will help the Conservancy meet its GGRF program goals because the project will:

- Facilitate GHG emission reductions (which includes carbon sequestration) and further the purposes of AB 32 and related statutes.
- Benefit Priority Populations (disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, or low-income households).
- Maximize economic, environmental, and public health co-benefits to the State.
- Foster job creation and job training, wherever possible.
- Avoid substantial burdens to disadvantaged communities and low-income communities.
- Leverage funds to provide multiple benefits and to maximize benefits.

The proposed project will meet these objectives by gathering data to plan for protection or adaptation of the Point Arena lighthouse and associated facilities to be resilient to coastal

erosion and sea-level rise, which will enable avoidance of infrastructure damage and the resulting GHG emissions from remediation and rebuilding. The project also benefits disadvantaged communities by facilitating protection and adaptation of an important tourist attraction and navigation aid in a disadvantaged community. The project will provide economic benefits to the State by facilitating protection of a tourist attraction thereby protecting jobs in the tourism industry.

The grantee will provide a cash match for survey work, as well as significant in-kind match in the form of public outreach meetings, coordination with the property owner and more.

Unless specifically identified as “Required Match,” the other sources of funding and in-kind contributions described above are estimates. The Conservancy does not typically require matching funds or in-kind services, nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders or of in-kind services. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete a project.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The project is consistent with the Climate Ready Program, Section 31113 of Ch. 3, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants for projects within its jurisdiction, that “reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address extreme weather events, sea level rise, storm surge, beach and bluff erosion...and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure and natural resources.” The Conservancy must, to the extent allowed, prioritize multiple benefit projects that accomplish certain goals, one of which is providing recreational opportunities. The project is consistent with section 31113 because it will provide a risk analysis for a popular recreation and education site along the Mendocino Coast including any potential risks related to sea level rise, storm surge, and beach and bluff erosion.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S [2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 2.6 Piers and Waterfronts**, the proposed project will collect geologic data necessary to develop a plan for protection and enhancement of the Point Arena Lighthouse and associated facilities, a tourist destination and recreational amenity on the Mendocino coast.

Consistent with **Section 4.1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Projects**, the proposed project will provide critical information necessary to direct and determine the feasibility of future resilience planning efforts. This project will be the necessary first step in determining how best to increase the resilience of the natural and built environment of the Lighthouse Grounds to the impacts of sea level rise, and whether such planning is even warranted. The information collected will address changing water surface level elevations and increased storm surges to determine how best to ensure future use and enjoyment of the highly visited and popular site.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed planning project consists of preparing only a geological study to determine what future actions are needed to safeguard the Point Arena Lighthouse. Thus, the proposed project involves only data gathering, resource evaluation, planning, and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved or funded. These activities are statutorily

exempt from review under CEQA pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations section 15262, which exempts planning and feasibility studies for possible future actions that have not yet been approved, adopted, or funded; and categorically exempt under Section 15306, which exempts data collection and resource evaluation activities that do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. Consistent with Section 15262, the project will consider environmental factors. Consistent with Section 15306, the data collection and resource evaluation components of the project will not cause major or serious disturbance to the environment.

Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval by the board.