

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
September 14, 2023

**HAMMOND'S MEADOW RESTORATION**

Project No. 21-013-01  
Project Manager: Rachel Couch and Lexi Caruthers

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$200,000 to the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden to protect Chumash cultural resources and restore and maintain 2.25 acres of native habitat at Hammond's Meadow County Open Space in southern Santa Barbara County, and adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

**LOCATION:** Santa Barbara County

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EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Photos](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Addendum for the Ocean Meadows Development Plan \(DVP\) Amendment Project, Case No. 19AMD-00000-00002 \("EIR Addendum"\) and Attachments B1, B2, and B3 to the April 9, 2019 Montecito Planning Commission, Coastal Zone Staff Report for Hammond's Meadow Plan \(Ocean Meadows Development Plan Amendment\), which are incorporated by reference into the EIR Addendum.](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)
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**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 two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden ("the grantee") to protect cultural resources and restore and maintain 2.25 acres of native habitat at Hammond's Meadow County Open Space in Santa Barbara County.

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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 work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain 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 Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding coastal resource enhancement.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.
4. The Conservancy has independently reviewed the April 9, 2019 Addendum for the Ocean Meadows Development Plan (DVP) Amendment Project, Case No. 19AMD-00000-00002, considered by the County of Santa Barbara Montecito Planning Commission on April 18, 2019, attached to this staff recommendation as Exhibit 3. The Conservancy finds that the project as designed avoids, reduces, or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects to a less-than significant level, and there is no substantial evidence based on the record as a whole that the project may have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 Cal. Code Regulations Section 15382.

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a \$200,000 grant to the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (SBBG) to protect cultural resources and restore and maintain 2.25 acres of native habitat at Hammond's Meadow County Open Space (the "Meadow") located in the Montecito area of Santa Barbara County. The presence of non-native weeds and gophers in the meadow and the surrounding shoreline area have caused increased coastal erosion and damage to archaeological and cultural resources buried at the site.

Hammond's Meadow is part of *Shalawa*, a Chumash village site dating back to 1080 A.D. It is a Chumash heritage site, state-registered archaeological site, and on the National Register of

Historic Places. The property was dedicated to the County of Santa Barbara for open space nearly 40 years ago. Today, the site is used for Chumash ceremonies and other passive recreation. In addition, a public access trail runs through the meadow to Hammond's Beach, a popular beach and surf spot.

Hammond's Meadow is currently overrun with gophers which have exposed and damaged valuable archeological resources by bringing them to the surface. The site is also overgrown with non-native, invasive plants. Tribal members and the local community have led a grassroots effort to restore the meadow and protect the archaeological and cultural resources of the site for over a decade. SBBG regularly meets with the California Indian Advisory Committee and hosted two community meetings at the meadow, gathering input on the project design from over 40 neighbors and Chumash Tribe members.

The proposed project will protect the site's cultural resources from further damage by placing a protective layer over them and restoring 2.25 acres of native habitats. To do this SBBG will mow the site to control invasive weeds and treat the site with carbon-monoxide to reduce the gopher population. SBBG will place a protective layer over the native soil to effectively secure archeological and cultural resources. This protective layer will include Geogrid, a synthetic material to reinforce the soil, chicken wire, and eight inches of new fill soils. This protective layer will prevent human vandalism and prevent gophers from further impacting the subsurface cultural resources. The soil layer will facilitate establishment of native species. In areas where perennial weeds are known to occur, SBBG will also place an organic biodegradable weed barrier under the Geogrid to reduce weed competition during seedling establishment.

Once the subsurface resources are protected, the proposed project will plant 26 species of native grasses and herbaceous plants to restore the coastal habitat. In addition, the public access trail to Hammond's beach will be re-established. Once the project is complete, Chumash descendants will be able to continue using the site for ceremonies.

Following the initial site-preparation, infrastructure and planting phase, the project will include post-restoration maintenance of Hammond's Meadow by paying for an SBBG contractor to be onsite up to 20 hours per week during the first two years of the restoration period to conduct site and plant maintenance, coordinate volunteer work, and interact with the public. At the beginning of the third year, County of Santa Barbara Parks Department personnel will either take over maintenance or designate an ongoing maintenance partner at the site. Regular removal of non-native weeds will continue in perpetuity. The funding plan for the proposed project includes a permanent endowment that has been established at the Santa Barbara Foundation. The endowment currently stands at approximately \$570,000. The endowment is expected to provide a minimum of \$20,000 per year for ongoing maintenance.

**Site Description:** The 2.25-acre Hammond's Meadow is a coastal site located adjacent to Hammond's Beach in Montecito, an unincorporated area of southern Santa Barbara County (Exhibit 1). The site is owned by Santa Barbara County and managed by the Parks Department as a public open space. The meadow is a recorded State and County archaeological site and is the last remaining portion of the Chumash village of *Shalawa*, which dates to 1080 A.D. The meadow is regularly used for ceremonies by Chumash descendants of the village site. The open space is accessible from up and down coast through access points at Butterfly and Miramar

beaches and via foot trails from Eucalyptus Lane and through the residential development surrounding the site.

Due to a lack of maintenance, the meadow has become overgrown with weeds and non-native vegetation. No funds were initially designated for maintenance or restoration and the only regular maintenance that has occurred is twice-a-year weed reduction. Gophers continue to damage archaeological resources that lie 2-3 feet below the soil surface and promote the growth of the weeds. There is a patch of non-native common ice plant on the western edge of the property that will remain in place to provide a buffer to neighboring properties. There is also an area of native plants along the bluff edge which also will be preserved. As described above, there is also a public access trail that runs through the site to the beach.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:** The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden has 97 years of experience managing native plants and gardens. SBBG has received multiple \$100,000+ grants and contracts from state and federal government sources, successfully managing projects and grants of this scope and scale. SBBG completed a similar project in 2015 that involved successfully capping an archaeological site on its property. Many of SBBG's projects are undertaken in partnership with other organizations. On this project, SBBG will be working with Channel Islands Restoration (CIR), a non-profit that has a 20-year history of successful ecological restoration projects in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. CIR has been working at the project site for over a decade under a Memorandum of Agreement with the County of Santa Barbara Parks Department and will lead the project installation and management. SBBG and CIR have access to a committed crew of staff, volunteers and community members that assist in habitat restoration and trail maintenance projects in the area.

**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.**

Providing funds to the Hammond's Meadow project is a good investment of state resources because it will restore the native coastal habitat and protect valuable cultural and archaeological resources. The project is supported by many community and tribal members who will be benefited by the project's execution. The Conservancy's \$200,000 contribution would be leveraged by more than \$570,000 from local and private fund sources.

**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.**

As described above, the proposed project is the result of more than a decade of community planning including extensive engagement with the Chumash community. Project proponents have met with the local California Indian Advisory Committee (CIAC) on several occasions, with numerous modifications to the plan being suggested and incorporated. Three direct and two indirect genealogical descendants of *Shalawa* have been involved in those discussions. The project archaeologist consulted with Chumash representatives on numerous occasions. In May 2018, two community meetings were held at the Hammond's site with over forty participants, about one-third of whom were from the Chumash community. A follow-up meeting was held with Chumash elders and representatives the following month. A meeting with tribal representatives was held in August 2023 to receive input on restoration plans. Several modifications to the plans were suggested at these meetings with those changes incorporated into restoration project plans.

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

The proposed project will install a stabilizing material, a wire layer, and a protective layer of soil above the native soil. These additions will provide long term protection for the cultural resources within the soil. Additionally, the project will utilize low maintenance native plants and is designed to be primarily self-sustaining after the initial implementation and monitoring. Finally, project proponents have created a maintenance endowment to ensure long-term maintenance of the project improvements.

**5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.**

The meadow restoration will reduce erosion and fire potential of the property. In addition to restoring the coastal habitat, the project will continue to allow public access through the site to Hammond's beach. The project also protects archaeological and cultural resources and improves the aesthetic of the cultural heritage site, which is used by members of the Chumash community for ceremonies.

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

Over the past ten years, the Hammond's Meadow restoration team has hosted numerous community meetings at the meadow to solicit input from many local stakeholders including members of the Chumash community. With the input they have received, the team has created several drafts of the plan to accommodate issues and concerns raised by community members. In addition to the Chumash community, the Hammond's Meadow restoration team has engaged and received support from many local agencies, nonprofits, and neighborhood associations. These organizations include Barbareño Band of Chumash Indians, Montecito Fire Protection District, Montecito Association, County of Santa Barbara Parks Department, Montecito Water District, and Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>
Hutton Parker & Bower Foundation	\$51,000
Lennox Foundation	\$100,000
Individual Donations (\$160,000 secured)	\$260,000
Santa Barbara Foundation	\$75,000
Channel Islands Restoration	\$25,000
Private Foundations (projected)	\$60,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$771,000</b>

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for the project is an appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of climate resilience (Budget Act 2022, SB 154). These funds are available for the purposes set forth in Section 52 of SB 155, Chapter 258, Statutes of 2021, which include projects that protect and restore coastal habitats and uplands. The proposed project is consistent with this funding source because it will restore native coastal meadow habitat in the Hammond's Meadow site, which is a property on the coast of Montecito in Santa Barbara County. Restoring native species will stabilize the bluff and reduce erosion risk from storm surge and sea level rise, thereby making the site and surrounding area more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

Conservancy funding would be leveraged by approximately \$570,000 from local and private sources as listed above. This substantial contribution from the local community reflects the importance of the project to the community.

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 proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation regarding coastal resource enhancement projects (Public Resources Code Sections 31251-31270). Pursuant to Section 31251, the Conservancy may award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations for the purpose of enhancement of coastal resources that, because of indiscriminate dredging or filling, improper location of improvements, natural or human-induced events, or incompatible land uses, have suffered loss of natural and scenic values. The project will protect archaeological resources from human- and gopher-impacts and restore native plant species that have been adversely impacted by the spread of non-native weeds. Section 31252 requires that all areas proposed for resource enhancement by a state agency, local public agency, or nonprofit organization pursuant to Chapter 6 shall be identified

in a certified local coastal plan or program (or certain other local plans) as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems. Section 4.4 of the Santa Barbara County Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP) identifies Hammond's Meadow as of special concern because it offers diverse recreational and cultural opportunities. The CLUP calls for the County to take measures as necessary to protect archaeological resources within the site. As described above, the proposed project is designed to protect the archaeological resources on the site and is therefore consistent with this policy. Pursuant to Section 31253, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of any coastal resource enhancement project. Consistent with Section 31253, the following factors were considered in determining the amount of Conservancy funding for this project: the total amount of funding available for coastal resource enhancement projects, the fiscal resources of the applicant, the urgency of the project, and the Conservancy's project selection criteria, as described in the "Consistency With Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria" section above.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN](#):**

Consistent with **Goal 1.1 Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**, the proposed project will protect a Chumash heritage site and allow for continued Chumash use of the property.

Consistent with **Goal 3.2 Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the proposed project will restore 2.25 acres of coastal habitat.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

Potential environmental impacts of the proposed project are addressed in the April 9, 2019 Addendum for the Ocean Meadows Development Plan (DVP) Amendment Project, Case No. 19AMD-00000-00002 ("EIR Addendum"), considered by the County of Santa Barbara Montecito Planning Commission on April 18, 2019 (Exhibit 3). As discussed in the EIR Addendum, the EIR prepared for the Ocean Meadows DVP and Tract Map, Case Nos. 84-DP-54 and TPM 13,416, certified by the County in 1985, included analysis of Hammond's Meadow as a dedicated public open space but did not include analysis relating to the landscape restoration of the Meadow. The County prepared the EIR Addendum pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15164, which applies when only some changes or additions are necessary but none of the conditions in Section 15162 of the State CEQA Guidelines calling for preparation of a subsequent EIR have occurred.

The County determined that the proposed project would not create any new significant effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects on the environment nor present new information of substantial importance pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines Section 15162. Implementation of the proposed project would result in short-term impacts to environmental resources with regards to Noise and Archaeological/Cultural Resources. Implementation of mitigation measures identified in the original EIR would ensure these impacts would be less than significant. Each of these areas is discussed below.

Noise

The proposed project would involve the use of haul trucks which could result in temporary noise impacts. Mitigation measures would include the use of mufflers, which are included on all haul trucks as a standard feature today, and restriction of construction hours to 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. as set by the Montecito Community Plan Development Standard N-M-1.1.1.

Archaeological/Cultural Resources

The proposed project is located on a unique and sensitive archaeological site. The project design includes several measures to ensure that the project does not adversely impact the archaeological/cultural resources. As a result, the EIR Addendum determined that all of the relevant EIR mitigation measures were already incorporated into the project design. These mitigation measures include using non-chemically active soil for the imported fill; seeding with shallow root vegetation to preserve archaeological deposits, reduce visibility, and eliminate the potential for illicit artifact collection; having a County-approved archaeologist and Native American monitor on site during any soil import and soil dispersal; use of hand tools (including wheel barrows) for vegetation removal/plantings and soil dispersal; not driving haul trucks over the site; developing a landscape plan that includes plant species that will stabilize the bluff and discourage artifact collection by providing stabilizing ground cover; and Native American observers would be present during construction in accordance with standard monitoring protocol.

Staff has independently evaluated the EIR Addendum, including the mitigation measures adopted by the County in 1985 and incorporated into the project, and concurs that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the project as mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by Title 14 of the California Code Regulations Section 15382.

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