

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 30, 2023

MAPPING YELAMU'S HISTORICAL LANDSCAPE

Project No. 23-076-01
Project Manager: Sara Haugen

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$446,400 to the San Francisco Estuary Institute for the Mapping Yelamu's Historical Landscape project, consisting of conducting an ecological and ethnographic study of San Francisco in partnership with the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone and development of cultural and ecological landscape maps that can be used for interpretive programs and capital project planning.

LOCATION: City and County of San Francisco

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [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 four hundred forty-six thousand four hundred dollars (\$446,400) to the San Francisco Estuary Institute ("the grantee") to conduct an ecological and ethnographic study of San Francisco in partnership with the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone, develop cultural and ecological landscape maps of San Francisco that can be used for interpretive programs and capital project planning, and conduct outreach activities to inform educators, public entities, and the public about the study and maps.

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.

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 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The San Francisco Estuary Institute 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 \$446,400 grant to the San Francisco Estuary Institute (“SFEI”) to conduct an ecological and ethnographic study of San Francisco in partnership with the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone, develop cultural and ecological landscape maps of San Francisco that can be used for interpretive programs and capital project planning, and conduct outreach activities to inform educators, public entities, and the public about the study and maps (Exhibit 1).

The project will produce accurate maps of historical ecology and cultural resources to aid in planning and designing capital projects that may include habitat enhancement or restoration, nature-based solutions to climate change impacts, and/or protection of cultural resources. The maps will also aid in the development of interpretive programs for stakeholder and public engagement activities. Existing maps (described below) were developed in isolation on a project-by-project basis, and often contain conflicting, outdated, or incomplete information. The proposed project will build upon previous efforts led by SFEI and others, which mapped the historical watersheds of all 47 square miles of San Francisco (the City) and the historical ecological resources of 28 square miles of the City (Exhibit 1). These products were developed in 2021 for the Hidden Nature in San Francisco project and have been used to develop design guidance and inform several climate adaptation projects: Next Generation Urban Greening Projects (2021), Ecological Horticulture at the Presidio (2022), the seven adaptation strategies of the Port of San Francisco’s Waterfront Resilience Program (2022), and the Exploratorium’s Buried History project. The proposed project will improve the level of ecological details included in the previous mapping effort and complete the ecological and ethnographic mapping for the remaining 19 square miles of the City in the same level of detail.

There is also a need to center the voices and concerns of tribes in environmental planning to protect and preserve their cultural resources. Tribes are increasingly at risk of losing cultural resources due to climate change impacts, such as sea level rise inundating important landscape features, because of how deeply rooted their culture is in the natural environment. A key component of the proposed project is the partnership with the Association of Ramaytush

Ohlone (ARO) (Exhibit 2), who are descendants of the native peoples of the San Francisco Peninsula. The ARO and SFEI will collaborate in developing an ethnographic account of the Yelamu Tribe, who once lived in the current footprint of the City before colonization. The Yelamu were an independent Tribe of the Ramaytush Ohlone people, i.e., Ohlone people speaking the Ramaytush dialect, and telling the history of the Yelamu is integral to today's Ramaytush Ohlone people. The existing scholarship of the Yelamu is incomplete without the connection to the historical landscape. The mapping of historical landscape features and ecological resources will allow for a more detailed and accurate account of villages, trade routes, and other cultural sites and resources in all 47 square miles of the project area.

The project team plans to develop publicly accessible historical landscape maps and detailed reports describing ecological and cultural resources and promote their use as tools in the planning and design of capital projects around the City and the design of interpretive programs. The project includes the following tasks:

1. Archival data collection and analysis: Analysis of historical maps, photos, text, and botanical records of the project area. The information will be used to inform the mapping efforts and reconstruct historical landscape features in Tasks 2 and 3 below.
2. Historical Ecological Mapping: Create maps of historical watershed extents, shoreline, topography, creeks and channels, and habitat types. These are crucial elements to planning and designing capital projects because they dictate what natural features and plant communities are best supported in specific areas or have shifted over time. Historical land uses and land management information from Task 3 below will provide additional information relevant to the ecological make-up of the landscape to both previously mapped and newly mapped areas.
3. Cultural Resource Mapping and Descriptive Synthesis: The historical landscape features will help determine probable locations of the Yelamu's villages, trail routes, and other cultural sites and resources. ARO will work with SFEI to identify those features and sites based on previous ethnohistorical research and narratives of the Yelamu. SFEI will build a map of this information. Any culturally sensitive areas that are identified in the process will be kept confidential and a buffer will be used in the final, public-facing product. ARO will also work with SFEI and the Exploratorium to develop an ethnohistorical report and educational content on the history of the Yelamu, traditional ecological knowledge, and the impact of colonization on native people of the San Francisco Peninsula.
4. Stakeholder and Public Engagement:
 - a. Printed Products and Website: Printed products will include a graphically designed ethnohistorical report for print and distribution to stakeholders and approximately 1,000 printed posters illustrating the cultural-ecological mapping to be on public display at the Exploratorium. The *Hidden Nature San Francisco* website will host publicly accessible and downloadable reports and data.

- b. **Public Engagement:** SFEI and ARO will collaborate with the Exploratorium on public engagement. The Exploratorium is an educational museum located on San Francisco's Embarcadero. Exploratorium staff will assist the project team in developing their content into a workshop for members of the public and educators to learn about the historical cultural and ecological landscape of the City. The team will host workshops at the Exploratorium and "pop-up" sites, which are estimated to reach thousands of people over the course of the grant period. The Exploratorium will also distribute copies of the graphically designed ethnohistorical report.
- c. **Stakeholder Engagement:** SFEI and ARO will reach out to local, state, and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and community-based organizations to share their products and describe how they can be used as a tool for in the development of capital projects. These agencies and organizations include, but are not limited to San Francisco Planning Department, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, Presidio Trust, National Park Service (Golden Gate National Recreation Area), California Department of Parks and Recreation, American Indian Cultural District, California Native Plant Society's Yerba Buena Chapter, and Nature in the City.
- d. **Engagement of Project Planners:** The project team will consult with the key decision-makers from several ongoing projects into which the proposed project deliverables could be incorporated or for which the tools could be useful to guide remaining planning: Ramaytush Ohlone Waterfront Trail, Presidio Tunnel Tops Project Phase 2, Sunset Natural Resilience Project, interior interpretive display for the Mission Bay Project, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts' public arts project.

Site Description:

The proposed project area is the San Francisco Peninsula, encompassing the land within the boundary of the City and County of San Francisco. This area is comprised of 47 square miles. The proposed project will build upon previous studies and maps, such as the historical watersheds map of the City and the historical habitats map of the northern and southeastern parts of the City, which covered about 28 square miles. The proposed project will add more detail to the previous ecological mapping efforts by incorporating information from the ethnographic study, such as land use or management practices. The remaining 19 square miles in need of historical ecological mapping in San Francisco includes the City's southwestern portion (toward the ocean), the City's center, and the east central boundary (toward the bay). This new area will be mapped to the same scale of landscape and ecological detail as the previously mapped 28 square-mile area. Finally, the mapping of cultural resources will be done for the entire project area (47 square miles) where possible. The cultural mapping detail will be

constructed based on the available historical accounts of the literature and narratives of the Yelamu.

Grant Applicant Qualifications:

SFEI is a Bay Area regional non-profit whose specialty is aquatic and ecosystem science research of the San Francisco Bay and the California Delta. The non-profit provides scientific support, tools, and communications to support decision making to improve the health of the environment. SFEI has over 25 years of experience managing state contracts and has completed similar multi-year interdisciplinary projects that integrate historical ecology. In each project, SFEI staff have worked in partnership with state and local agencies and collaborated on key components with non-profits, tribes, and research scientists. In 2021, SFEI completed its historical ecology study titled *Hidden Nature SF*, which laid the foundation for this collaborative project with the ARO and Exploratorium. Through this project, scientists at SFEI led the reconstruction of a portion of San Francisco's historical landscape from before the peninsula was settled and colonized by Euro-Americans. SFEI has partnered or collaborated with the ARO in multiple capacities (Sunset Natural Resilience Project, Ramaytush Ohlone Waterfront Trail Project) and the ARO has chosen to partner with them again for the proposed project.

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.

The proposed project will aid future capital projects in advancing two key objectives of the state's 30x30 Executive Order. The project helps to advance Objective 1, to "Protect and restore biodiversity," because the proposed project will help identify areas of biocultural significance and account for the interconnected nature of people and places and aid in habitat enhancement or restoration. The project helps to advance Objective 3, to "Mitigate and build resilience to climate change," because the products will be a tool for urban greening, improving long-term habitat connectivity by accounting for climate-related habitat range shifts, and other climate adaptation strategies.

For these same reasons, the proposed project is also consistent with Key Action 6.3 for carrying out Principle 6 ("Implement and Learn from Coastal Resilience Projects") of the State Agency Sea-Level Rise Action Plan for California:

Plan, implement, and fund nature-based solutions, strategies, and actions to increase coastal resiliency through flood reduction, habitat restoration, and protection of cultural

resources and public access infrastructure, especially at the most vulnerable coastal recreational facilities.

Also, the September 2022 Regional Water Needs Assessment for the San Francisco Bay Area, prepared by the San Francisco Estuary Partnership, included a focused section on Tribal Needs in which five tribes and the California Indian Environmental Alliance identified five top environmental priorities, one of which was “cultural resources, land stewardship, and traditional lands.” The proposed project will empower the ARO to be a key partner in environmental planning efforts around the City by helping to center tribal resource management and traditional ecological knowledge in planning efforts.

Finally, the San Francisco General Plan includes a focus on broad and effective management of natural resources (Objective 2), including Policy 2.3 to “Provide environmental education programs to increase public understanding and appreciation of our natural surroundings.” The proposed project will produce publicly accessible and downloadable reports and data that could be incorporated into the City’s environmental education programs. In addition, through the reach of the Exploratorium’s programming to share the products of this project, thousands of people will have the opportunity to learn more about ecological and ethnographic history of the City.

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.

The proposed project is a partnership between SFEI and the ARO, a local Tribe that traces its ancestry to the present-day San Francisco Peninsula. For the proposed project, ARO will lead the ethnographic study of the Yelamu and work with SFEI to map culturally relevant sites and resources. For more information see “Project Description” and “Project Site” sections above.

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

The products from the proposed project will serve as a public resource to environmental planners, policy makers, and educators who design for and engage communities in restoration, urban greening, and climate adaptation projects. The tool comes at a crucial time, as many planning and capital projects are preparing to address climate change impacts and need accurate, up-to-date, and complete historical ecological and cultural information. The project products can be updated and improved over time as new techniques or information become available. The project products will be publicly available, and the project team will engage key stakeholders on on-going projects that would benefit from the products (see the “Project Description” section above).

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The project increases the City’s ability to plan for future climate change impacts on the landscape, ecological communities and resources, and cultural resources. The interpretive products will also help to educate the public on the native population of the San Francisco

Peninsula and how their ancestors shaped the City's pre-colonial landscape, and traditional ecological knowledge. Sharing educational materials about the Yelamu is integral to teaching a more complete history of the Ramaytush Ohlone and the City. See more details in "Project Description", and "Project includes serious effort to engage Tribes" sections above for more information.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$446,400
Far Western Anthropological Research Group	\$10,000
Project Total	\$456,400

Conservancy funding is anticipated to come from a Fiscal Year 2022/23 appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of "urgent sea-level rise adaptation and coastal resilience needs" (Budget Act 2022, SB 154 as amended by the Budget Act of 2023, SB 101). The coastal resilience funds are available for the purposes set forth in Section 52 of Chapter 258 of the Statutes of 2021, which sets forth a detailed description of the purposes of the coastal resilience funds and includes projects for the purpose of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program established pursuant to Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 31160) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. The proposed project is a coastal resilience project consistent with this funding source because it is located within the geographic boundary of the San Francisco Bay Area and supports the goals of the San Francisco Bay Program (see Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation section, below). Further, in selecting this project for a grant, the Conservancy has considered its Strategic Plan, the State Agency Sea Level Rise Action Plan, geographic areas of vulnerability, disadvantaged communities, and opportunities for federal financial support.

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 is consistent with Section 31162 of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which authorizes projects located within the San Francisco Bay Area that will help achieve certain goals, including the following:

Section 31162 Subsection (b) to "protect, restore, and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance" by providing a tool that can be used to develop and implement projects that will enhance habitat, improve habitat connectivity, and protect key areas for wildlife diversity protection.

Section 31162 Subsection (c) to "assist in the implementation of the policies and programs of the California Coastal Act of 1976 (Division 20 (commencing with Section 30000)), the San Francisco Bay Plan, and the adopted plans of local governments and special districts." The project would produce publicly accessible and downloadable reports and data that can be

incorporated into environmental education programs, thereby furthering environmental education goals and policies such as those included in the San Francisco General Plan.

The proposed project is also consistent with Section 31165 of Chapter 4.5, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants for activities that “facilitate environmental education,” including “exhibits or events emphasizing coastal, watershed, or ocean resources education, or maritime history, or the development of amenities and infrastructure,” to benefit the San Francisco Bay region. As discussed in this staff recommendation, products from the proposed project will serve as a public resource to environmental planners, policy makers, and educators who design for and engage communities in restoration, urban greening, and climate adaptation projects in San Francisco.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1.1 Commit Funding to Benefit Systematically Excluded Communities**, the proposed project will center the voices and concerns of tribes in environmental planning to protect and preserve their cultural resources and develop culturally relevant interpretive materials for a tribe.

Consistent with **Goal 3.2 Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the proposed project will provide tools for environmental planning and design of capital projects that may enhance or restore habitats or use nature-based approaches to mitigate climate impacts in the urban environment.

Consistent with **Goal 4.3 Multi-Benefit Nature-Based Climate Adaptation**, the proposed project will provide tools for planning and design of capital projects and interpretive materials related to tribal history that will allow for the preservation of biodiversity and cultural resources.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is categorically exempt from CEQA under Title 14 of the California Code Regulations Section 15306 for information collection because it consists of basic data collection and resource evaluation activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. The proposed project is a study that can be used as a tool to inform the planning and design of future projects.

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