

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

February 15, 2024

TORREY PINES LIVING SHORELINE FEASIBILITY STUDY AND PRELIMINARY DESIGN

Project No. 23-087-01

Project Manager: Kellan Warner

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$850,000 dollars to the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation to develop feasible strategies, concepts, and preliminary engineering designs of nature-based solutions to build resiliency to sea level rise and coastal hazards for a 0.6-mile section of Torrey Pines State Beach, including the Torrey Pines South Beach Parking Lot, and the adjacent public parking along Highway 101 in San Diego County.

LOCATION: Torrey Pines State Beach, San Diego County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Site 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 eight hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$850,000) to the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation (“the grantee”) to develop feasible strategies, concepts, and preliminary engineering designs of nature-based solutions to build resiliency to sea level rise and coastal hazards for a 0.6-mile section of Torrey Pines State Beach , including the Torrey Pines South Beach Parking Lot, and the adjacent public parking along Highway 101 in San Diego 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 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.

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 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Climate Ready Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation 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 \$850,000 grant to Los Peñasquitos Lagoon Foundation (LPLF) to develop feasible strategies, concepts, and preliminary engineering designs of nature-based solutions to build resiliency to sea level rise and coastal hazards for a 0.6-mile section of Torrey Pines State Beach (TPSB) , including the Torrey Pines South Beach Parking Lot, and the adjacent public parking along Highway 101 (the “project”) in San Diego County (Exhibit 1).

Located within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve, TPSB is a valued and historic public resource that receives over 2 million annual visitors. The project will address an urgent need to protect and preserve public access and use of a 0.6-mile stretch of beach and public parking along Highway 101 that is vulnerable to coastal hazards that will only worsen with sea level rise. Recent large wave events in January 2023 exposed the vulnerability of this stretch of coastline, with waves and storm surge over-topping coastal access points and parking areas. Erosion undercutting Highway 101 at the project site has greatly worsened over time with sections of parking spaces literally falling onto the beach. The project will address these issues and provide nature-based solutions needed to protect the long-term use of TPSB and viability of one of the few areas that provides both free and paid parking opportunities steps away from the sand.

The project will develop feasible strategies, concepts, and preliminary engineering designs for nature-based solutions to preserve and protect Highway 101 and associated parking and public access of TPSB from coastal flooding. A nature-based, sea-level rise adaptation project at this site will leverage existing research, long-term monitoring, and natural resources (existing cobble on the beach) and provide insight on design considerations for other living shorelines in California that incorporate existing cobble. The project includes conducting a site assessment and feasibility study to determine the opportunities and constraints associated with a cobble-based, nature-based feature and potential realignment of existing infrastructure. Design concepts will have the goal of protecting and enhancing the co-benefits that TBSP provides, including ecological, educational, and recreational opportunities. The feasibility study will result

in a selected alternative that will be designed to the 30% design level. The 30% conceptual design will be sufficient for permit applications, CEQA analysis, and construction cost estimate.

The project includes engaging with stakeholders and incorporating their input in the draft design concept alternatives and feasibility study. Key stakeholders engaged will include tribes, landowners, local municipalities, local businesses, resource agencies, park patrons, local nonprofits, local communities and their planning boards, and schools located within the watershed. The community engagement process will occur throughout the project in the form of presentations, meetings, and workshops open to the public. Signage with QR codes and hyperlinks will be posted within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve and at the free public parking facilities along Highway 101 to direct park patrons to online content and virtual meetings to improve outreach to user groups that include those that may not be affiliated with known stakeholder groups. Tribal engagement is discussed below.

Site Description: The project site is a 0.6-mile stretch of TPSB that extends south from the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon inlet to the southernmost end of Torrey Pines South Beach Parking Lot. The beach portion of the site is comprised of sand and cobbles bordered by 10-12 feet high coastal bluffs. The project eastern boundary consists of the western edge of the North Torrey Pines Road segment of Highway 101. The project site encompasses a free public parking area along Highway 101, and the paid South Lot that provides public amenities and direct access to TPSB and trail networks within Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: Since 1983, LPLF has improved communication and coordination between state and federal agencies, landowners, local municipalities, and other key stakeholder groups for the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. LPLF's Board of Directors is comprised of representatives from key stakeholder groups that include community members, experts in coastal policy and environmental protection, wetland scientists, the City of San Diego, and State Parks – the primary landowner. LPLF's work is guided by a Technical Advisory Committee comprised of experts in coastal engineering and wetland scientists from the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve and Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Since its inception, LPLF has worked closely with State Parks and the Conservancy to develop and fund many important projects.

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 advance implementation of sea level rise adaptation strategies to protect public coastal access from sea level rise and reduce or eliminate existing and projected flooding. The scope of work for the recommended grant is feasible, the budget is reasonable, and the LPLF is well qualified to manage the project.

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.

LPLF will coordinate with State Park's San Diego Coast District's Archaeologist and Tribal Liaison to engage local tribes and bands of the Kumeyaay Nation. Informal consultations will be conducted during the onset of the project to engage tribal members to gauge tribal interest in the project and inform design as it relates to preserving and protecting cultural resources located within or near the project footprint. Meetings with tribal members will be held upon request to ensure their input is received and documented.

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

All design concepts developed will incorporate guidance from state documents (Ocean Protection Council Principles for Aligned State Action, Ocean Protection Council Sea Level Rise Guidance, California Coastal Commission Sea Level Rise Policy Guidance) to align with recommended statewide principles for sea level rise planning. LPLF and its project partners will work collaboratively with coastal experts from Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) to integrate the best available science into project planning and preliminary design. Building upon decades of data sets generated at TPSB, scientists from SIO are currently conducting studies at TPSB to better understand seasonal beach morphology and dynamics of cobble on the beach, as well as how climate change will affect coastal processes along this stretch of beach. The design concepts will plan for sea level rise flood and erosion protection and include comprehensive long term adaptation planning approaches.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The project will generate multiple benefits, including sea level rise flood and erosion protection, enhanced accessibility to active transportation routes, enhancement and protection of coastal access, increased educational and interpretive opportunities, and the recovery, protection, and preservation of coastal strand habitat.

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

The proposed project is the first phase of planning. The community engagement process will occur throughout the project in the form of presentations, meetings, and workshops open to the public with outreach efforts targeting key user groups that include local communities adjacent to the lagoon and within the watershed. Signage with QR codes and hyperlinks will be posted within the Torrey Pines State Natural Reserve and at the free public parking facilities along Highway 101 to direct park patrons to online content and virtual meetings to improve outreach to user groups that include those that may not be affiliated with known stakeholder groups.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$850,000
Project Total	\$850,000

Conservancy funding is anticipated to come from a Fiscal Year 2023/24 appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy to address "urgent sea-level rise adaptation and coastal resilience needs using nature-based solutions or other strategies" (The Budget Act of 2023, Chapter 38, Statutes of 2023 (AB 102)). The project is consistent with this funding source because the project will plan nature-based solutions, strategies, and actions for a living shoreline project that will increase resiliency and protect public access. The project area is an area of geographic vulnerability because it is an area that is already vulnerable to flooding (Exhibit 2). While not located within or adjacent to a disadvantaged community, TPSB is a popular destination and receives 2 million visitors every year. It is important to preserve this heavily-used public access point and beach for all who want to utilize the resource, both now and in the future.

Additional funding for this project has been provided by California State Parks with \$22,500 of in-kind services.

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 Section 31113 of Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which authorizes the Conservancy to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy's jurisdiction (Section 31113(a)). This project is within the Conservancy's jurisdiction because it is within the Coastal Zone as defined by Public Resource Code section 31006.

Section 31113(b) and (c) authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to undertake projects that reduce greenhouse gases and/or address extreme weather events, sea level rise, storm surge, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. The Conservancy must, to the extent allowed, prioritize projects that maximize public benefits and accomplish one of several purposes, including preserving and enhancing natural lands, reducing flood risk, and providing recreational activities. Consistent with this section, the proposed authorization awards grants to a nonprofit organization to undertake the projects described in the "Project Summary" section, which maximize public benefits by protecting public access using nature-based solutions to reduce flood risk.

Section 31113(d)(1)(A) requires the Conservancy to prioritize projects that use natural infrastructure in coastal communities to help adapt to climate change and section

31113(d)(1)(B) requires the Conservancy to prioritize projects that provide multiple public benefits, including, but not limited to, protection of communities, natural resources, and recreational opportunities. This project is consistent with both of this section because it will use a nature-based solution to reduce flood risk to a coastal community caused by climate change while protecting recreational opportunities.

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

Consistent with **Goal 4.1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Projects**, the recommended grant is for planning a project that will increase resiliency by adapting ecosystems to protect communities, public access infrastructure, and natural resources from sea level rise.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The recommended authorization to fund development of feasible strategies, concepts, and preliminary engineering designs of nature-based solutions to build resiliency to sea level rise and coastal hazards for a 0.6-mile section of Torrey Pines State Beach and the adjacent public parking and Highway 101 is exempt from CEQA pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Sections 15262 and 15306 because these activities involve only data gathering, resource evaluation, planning, and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved. 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.

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