

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
February 15, 2024

Moat Creek Public Access Management

Project No. 23-094-01
Project Manager: Peter Jarausch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$41,000 to the Mendocino Land Trust to operate and maintain public access improvements at Moat Creek Beach and along the Moat Creek segment of the California Coastal Trail in Mendocino County.

LOCATION: Moat Creek, Mendocino County.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [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 forty-one thousand dollars (\$41,000) to the Mendocino Land Trust (“the grantee”) to operate and maintain public access improvements at Moat Creek Beach and along the Moat Creek segment of the California Coastal Trail 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 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 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access to the coast.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Mendocino Land Trust 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 \$41,000 to the Mendocino Land Trust (“MLT”), a nonprofit organization, to operate and maintain public access improvements at the Conservancy-owned Moat Creek Beach and along the Moat Creek segment of the California Coastal Trail in Mendocino County.

MLT will use the grant funds to operate and maintain public access improvements to Moat Creek Beach for three years, including a restroom, parking lot, and access trail, and the Moat Creek to Ross Creek loop trail. MLT’s operation and maintenance activities will include garbage removal, seasonal vegetation clearance, septic tank pump-out, restroom cleaning and stocking, and all repairs of the improvements that may become necessary. MLT will rely on both volunteer labor as well as contractors for such things as garbage removal, septic tank maintenance, and any grading of the parking area.

MLT is taking on stewardship of the site previously provided by the Moat Creek Managing Agency (“MCMA”). MCMA opened the site to the public, and has been maintaining it for more than 20 years. MCMA recently completed accessibility improvements to the trail, parking lot, and restroom. MCMA is an all-volunteer organization and has decided that it is time to pass on management of the site to MLT.

Site Description:

The existing Moat Creek Beach public access area consists of approximately 3 acres of coastal property owned by the Conservancy and located two and half miles south of the town of Point Arena in Mendocino County (Exhibit 1). The property includes a beach, bluffs, and two creeks that flow directly to the ocean: Moat Creek and Ross Creek. The property offers visitors an access trail to Moat Creek Beach, an accessible single-unit restroom, a 15-space gravel parking lot, and a scenic half-mile loop trail along the coastal bluff between Moat and Ross Creeks. The trail between Moat and Ross Creeks is a segment of the California Coastal Trail. The Conservancy will enter into a license and management agreement with MLT, giving MLT the

authority to establish and manage public access on the Conservancy's Moat Creek Beach property.

The Point Arena area has a number of visitor-drawing features in addition to the historic town, such as the Point Arena Lighthouse, the Stornetta Brothers Public Lands National Coastal Monument, purchased in part with Conservancy funds, and Manchester State Beach. The Moat Creek segment of the California Coastal Trail will eventually be linked to other segments in the Point Arena Area.

Grant Applicant Qualifications:

MLT stewards small parks and public access points throughout coastal Mendocino County, including Pelican Bluffs, located just 1 mile north of the Moat Creek accessway, making MLT a logical manager for the Conservancy's property. MLT specializes in public access projects and trail development in the region; the organization previously worked on a number of trail development projects with Conservancy funding, such as constructing new coastal trail adjacent to the Ten Mile River Estuary, the Pelican Bluffs property, and Hare Creek Beach, as well as the Peter Douglas Coastal Trail in the Sinkyone Wilderness. MLT's board and staff represents segments of the community throughout Mendocino County and has agreed to be responsible for the long-term maintenance of the trail and to steward the new trail and the surrounding lands.

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 is a good investment of state resources as it contributes to the State's objective to maintain access to the California Coast. The proposed project has a reasonable budget necessary to operate the restroom, maintain the trails, and provide access to the beach.

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

The proposed project will be sustainable and resilient over the project lifespan. The operations and maintenance funding will cover all of the needed activities for three years. This will also

prevent significant future costs by enabling the grantee to maintain facilities, extending their useful life.

4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The project provides multiple benefits and has a significant positive impact to both tourists enjoying the California coast as well as local residents who frequent the beach. Moat Creek is one of many small beaches in southern Mendocino which collectively provide recreation for visitors who in turn support the local economy. Tourism is one of the strongest economic sectors in Point Arena, which is a disadvantaged community according to State Park’s Community Factfinder.

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

The project has well over 20 years of positive support from the community. Establishment of a parking lot, bathroom and trail were all driven by the community in and around Point Arena. Their priority was to provide a spot where surfers, residents, and tourists could enjoy the coast.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$41,000
Project Total	\$41,000

Conservancy funds for this project are expected to derive from the Conservancy’s FY2022/23 appropriation from the Coastal Access Account in the State Coastal Conservancy Fund. Pursuant to Public Resources Code section 30620.2, these funds are appropriated to the Conservancy for “grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations for the development, maintenance, and operation of new or existing facilities that provide public access to the shoreline of the sea...” The proposed project consists of the operation and maintenance of existing facilities (restroom, parking area, trails) that provide public access to the beach, ocean, and coastal trails at Moat Creek Beach. The proposed project will be carried out by a nonprofit organization. Thus, the proposed project is an appropriate use of these funds.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed funding authorization is consistent with Chapter 9 (Section 31400 et seq.) of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the implementation of a system of public access ways to and along the state’s coastline. Under Section 31400, the Legislature has charged the Conservancy with a principal role in the implementation of a system of accessways to and along the state’s coastline. Consistent with this section, the proposed authorization will support operations and maintenance of a bluff top trail and beach access trail, which were constructed with funds from the Conservancy.

Pursuant to Section 31400.1, the Conservancy may award grants to any nonprofit organization to operate and manage lands for public access purposes to and along the coast. The proposed authorization will enable MLT, a nonprofit organization, to operate and maintain a restroom, a parking area, and trails to the beach and bluffs at Moat Creek Beach. Thus, the proposed authorization will enable MLT to operate and manage lands for public access purposes to and along the coast.

Pursuant to Section 31400.3, the Conservancy may provide such assistance as is required to aid nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways and related functions. The proposed authorization will enable MLT to maintain and improve trails, parking and a restroom at Moat Creek Beach to ensure safe access to the beach and bluff top. Thus, the proposed authorization will assist MLT in providing a function related to establishment of a public coastal accessway, consisting of the operation and maintenance of a coastal accessway.

Section 31408 charges the Conservancy, in consultation with the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the California Coastal Commission, with coordination of the development of the Coastal Trail. The proposed authorization will enable MLT to operate and maintain a section of the California Coastal Trail, consistent with this section.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1.1, Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**, the project will maintain a recreation facility within a disadvantaged community.

Consistent with **Goal 2.5 Recreation Facilities and Amenities**, the proposed project will maintain a recreation facility at Moat Creek Beach.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project consists of operation, maintenance, and repair of existing public facilities that will not expand the existing use. Accordingly, the proposed project is categorically exempt from the requirement to prepare environmental documents pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15301. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for the project.