

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
April 18, 2024

CARPINTERIA LIVING SHORELINE PLANNING

Project No. 24-006-01
Project Manager: Erin Gravley/Tim Duff

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,620,000 to the City of Carpinteria to undertake the Carpinteria Living Shoreline Planning project, consisting of community engagement and preparation of plans, designs, technical analyses, and environmental review documents for a living shoreline solution along Carpinteria City Beach to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise and climate change-driven coastal hazards in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara County.

LOCATION: Carpinteria City Beach, Carpinteria, Santa Barbara County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Site Diagrams](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 4: [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 one million six hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$1,620,000) to the City of Carpinteria (“the grantee”) to undertake the Carpinteria Living Shoreline Planning project, consisting of community engagement and preparation of plans, designs, technical analyses, and environmental review documents for a living shoreline solution along Carpinteria City Beach and surrounding public beaches to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise and other climate change-drive coastal hazards in Carpinteria, Santa Barbara 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 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding addressing impacts and potential impacts of climate change.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a grant of up to \$1,620,000 to the City of Carpinteria (“City”) to undertake the Carpinteria Living Shoreline Project Planning project. The project consists of community engagement and preparation of plans, designs, technical analyses, and environmental review documents for a living shoreline solution along Carpinteria City Beach and surrounding public beaches to mitigate the impacts of sea level rise and other climate change-driven coastal hazards (Exhibit 1).

Much of the City of Carpinteria, including Carpinteria State Beach, the surrounding beach neighborhood, and downtown lie at low elevations behind an unarmored coast. As part of the City’s Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan, the western portion of the City was identified as potentially vulnerable to coastal hazards associated with sea level rise. The region’s low elevation, unarmored shoreline, and flood hazards from the region’s three major creeks (Carpinteria Creek, Franklin Creek, and Santa Monica Creek), make the City increasingly vulnerable to damage from sea level rise.

Loss of naturally occurring beach and dune systems in the project area stem from decades of development in these areas, as well as ongoing reductions in sediment supplies due to stream channelization, installation of sediment debris basins, construction of the Santa Barbara Harbor, and coastal armoring. Declines in natural sand supplies as a result of this development contribute to the narrowing of beaches in and near the City resulting in increased exposure to coastal hazards. In response, each winter for the past 20 years the City has implemented measures to reduce these impacts, including a winter sand berm, a temporary protective sand berm constructed each fall and removed each spring. This work requires costly biological monitoring, permitting, and surveying at both the construction and removal stages. In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find and transport beach-quality sediments from debris basins or other sources to eroding beaches as a means of improving coastal resiliency.

The Carpinteria Living Shoreline Project has been identified in the Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan as a potential adaptation strategy to mitigate existing and future coastal hazards, including coastal flooding, coastal erosion, tidal inundation, and sea level rise. The need to address these hazards was highlighted again in January 2023 when the

Carpinteria coastline experienced a combination of storm surges and high tide events, causing severe coastal erosion and coastal flooding that required the City to conduct emergency repairs on the temporary winter berm. Such events are expected to become more frequent as sea-level rise and other effects of climate change intensify.

Construction of a living shoreline would transition the temporary winter berm program to a dune system that will protect the landward resources from severe storms, coastal erosion, and tidal inundation. Historic dunes along Carpinteria's City Beach and parts of the adjacent Santa Barbara County and State Park beaches will be restored by importing sand, cobblestones, and native vegetation that will be maintained with regular sediment nourishment from local debris basins owned by the County of Santa Barbara. It is expected the new dune system would require less frequent maintenance than the seasonal berm that requires maintenance throughout the winter due to storm damage. A long-term monitoring plan would replace the current biological monitoring. Building up and maintaining the area's popular sandy beaches will ensure coastal access and recreational opportunities will continue to attract visitors to this tourism-dependent beach town.

The project also includes designing modifications to enhance access for sediment deposition. The modifications would include upgrading the public right-of-way at two city street ends at the beach to improve truck access for sediment deposition as well as removal of an existing retaining wall and relocation of a lifeguard tower. The City will coordinate with the County of Santa Barbara to study the potential for Carpinteria City Beach to become a receiver site for materials from the debris basins within Carpinteria watersheds.

Key project tasks include community engagement, coastal engineering and design, surveying, geotechnical analysis, and completion of environmental review documents. Community engagement will be multi-faceted and will include workshops for the local community in both Spanish and English, as well as coordination with adjacent property owners and interested tribes. City staff will work with local community organizations, such as the Promotores, to help reach Spanish-speaking members of the community. The City will also complete a cost analysis for a subsequent phase of project planning, which would include final engineered design plans and finalizing agreements with adjacent property owners to allow the project to move forward. The design and cost analysis produced by this project will lay the groundwork for a subsequent phase of planning and future implementation of the project.

Site Description: The project area is divided into four segments referred to as "Reaches" (see Exhibit 2). The first segment (Reach 1) is the most western segment, which includes nearly 0.5 miles of Santa Barbara County beach backed by a large-scale rock revetment and homes located within the unincorporated Sandyland Cove neighborhood between Sand Point and Ash Avenue. To the east, the second segment (Reach 2) consists of Carpinteria City Beach, which extends 0.3 miles from the south end of Ash Avenue to Linden Avenue and is owned and maintained by the City. Landward of Carpinteria City Beach lies the Beach Neighborhood, which primarily supports a mix of multiple- and single-family residential uses. The third study segment (Reach 3; north of the Carpinteria Creek outlet) and fourth study segment (Reach 4; south of the Carpinteria Creek outlet) are along Carpinteria State Beach and stretch for 0.7 miles along

the shoreline. Carpinteria City Beach and Carpinteria State Beach extend for over 1 mile and are known for their gentle sandy slope and relatively calm conditions.

The public beaches in the project area are maintained by the City, County, and State Parks and are heavily used with over one million visitors estimated annually. Carpinteria State Beach offers 200 tent and RV camp sites, restrooms, indoor and outdoor showers, and a visitor center that hosts learning activities, guided tours, and interpretive exhibits. A segment of the Coastal Trail extends through the area's coastal dunes. Carpinteria City Beach provides wide sandy beach use for sunbathers, recreational activities, and safe swimming access to local, regional, and national visitors.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The City has extensive experience administering state and federal grant funds, including a FEMA grant for the first phase of this project. The City successfully secured a \$2.4 million FEMA grant through the California Natural Resources Agency for construction of a major stormwater project. For the past 20 years, City staff have managed the construction of a temporary winter berm along the Carpinteria City Beach.

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 project will plan for a living shoreline solution at Carpinteria City Beach and surrounding public beaches, providing protection against flooding, sea-level rise, and other coastal hazards. This living shoreline solution will protect the beach itself, a valuable natural and economic resource, as well as the properties and neighborhoods behind it. It will allow the City to transition away from a temporary berm program to a more permanent dune system.

The project location was identified as a vulnerable area in the Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan. The project originated in the City of Carpinteria Dune and Shoreline Management Plan, which included a preliminary engineering feasibility analysis for the development of a living shoreline at Carpinteria City Beach and surrounding public beaches. The project also aligns with the State Agency Sea-Level Rise Action Plan for California in multiple ways, including Key Action 1.2 ("Develop an action plan for addressing rocky intertidal and beach habitat loss due to SLR"), Principle 4 ("Support Local Leadership and Address Local Conditions"), and Key Action 6.3 ("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.").

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

The project will produce designs for a living shoreline that would improve the City’s resilience to coastal hazards over the next 30 to 50 years (through 2050 or 2070), reduce threats to critical infrastructure, and restore historic dune habitats.

4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The project will serve to increase community-preparedness or resilience to future climate change impacts from floods, higher-intensity storm events and other climate-related impacts. The areas to be protected by the planned living shoreline include residential homes, public infrastructure including streets and sanitary sewer/potable water distribution systems, as well as publicly-accessible and popular beaches. Once implemented the project would reduce the frequency and cost of maintenance to keep the beaches open and usable.

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

The City will engage with local and regional communities to ensure that community needs and desires are incorporated into the living shoreline project design. The City has been working with stakeholders on the Carpinteria Living Shoreline Project since 2020 and plans to continue to hold regular stakeholder meetings throughout the environmental review and design phase, should funding be awarded.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	<u>\$1,620,000</u>
Project Total	\$1,620,000

Conservancy funding is anticipated to come from a FY 2022/23 appropriation to the Conservancy from the General Fund for the purpose of “urgent sea level rise adaptation and coastal resilience needs using nature-based solutions or other strategies” (Budget Act of 2022, SB 154 as amended by the Budget Act of 2023, SB 101). The coastal resilience funds are available for the purposes described in Section 52 of SB 155 (Chapter 258, Statutes of 2021), including for coastal resilience projects and projects that build resilience for coastal communities, public access, and critical infrastructure. The proposed project is consistent with this funding source because it will plan for nature-based coastal adaptations that will increase resilience to sea-level rise and storm surge thereby building resilience for a coastal community, public access, and critical infrastructure.

The City of Carpinteria was awarded a \$237,000 grant from the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for the previous phase of planning for this project. The City will provide in-kind staff services with an estimated value of \$40,000.

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:

Section 31113 of Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code establishes the Climate Ready Program and authorizes the Conservancy to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy's jurisdiction.

Pursuant to Section 31113(b) and 31113(c), the Conservancy is authorized to award grants to public agencies to undertake projects within the Conservancy's jurisdiction, "including, but not limited to, those that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address extreme weather events, sea level rise, storm surge, beach and bluff erosion, salt water intrusion, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources." Pursuant to Section 31113(c), the Conservancy must, to the extent allowed, prioritize projects that maximize public benefits and accomplish certain purposes, including reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, preserving and enhancing coastal wetlands and natural lands, and providing recreational opportunities.

Section 31113(d)(1) requires the Conservancy to prioritize projects that use natural infrastructure to help coastal communities adapt to climate change and projects that provide multiple public benefits, including, but not limited to, protection of communities, natural resources, and recreational opportunities.

Consistent with these sections, the proposed project will facilitate the development of nature-based shoreline infrastructure along the Carpinteria coastline, which is located within the coastal zone and therefore within the Conservancy's jurisdiction, to reduce the threat of sea level rise and enhance coastal dune and other habitats, where feasible.

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

Consistent with **Goal 4.1, Sea Level Rise Adaptation Projects**, the proposed project will plan for the protection of coastal resources and increase the resiliency of the natural and built environments to the impacts of sea level rise.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Title 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR), Section 15262, which exempts projects that involve only planning studies and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved or funded. The project is also categorically exempt under 14 CCR Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection, research, and resource evaluation activities that will not result in disturbance to an environmental resource. This project consists of preparing plans and conducting analyses, research, and resource evaluation for future work that has not been approved or funded. Environmental factors will be considered in the studies undertaken pursuant to this authorization.

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