

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
September 5, 2024

**TAMIEN NATION CULTURAL FIRE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM PHASE 2**

Project No. 23-030-01  
Project Manager: Shalini Kannan

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$1,238,120 to Tamien Nation to undertake phase two of the Tamien Nation Cultural Fire Stewardship Program, continuing to build capacity and equip a native fire crew to steward tribal territory, and implement prescribed fire and fuel reduction work at Henry W. Coe State Park in Santa Clara County.

**LOCATION:** Henry W. Coe State Park, Santa Clara County

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EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)  
Exhibit 2: [Project Site Maps](#)  
Exhibit 3: [June 1, 2023 Staff Recommendation](#)
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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 one million two hundred thirty-eight thousand one hundred twenty dollars (\$1,238,120) to Tamien Nation (“the grantee”) to undertake phase two of the Tamien Nation Cultural Fire Stewardship Program, to build capacity and equip a native fire crew to steward tribal territory and implement prescribed fire and fuel reduction work at Henry W. Coe State Park in Santa Clara 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.
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 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 Tamien Nation is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a \$1,238,120 grant to Tamien Nation to undertake phase two of the Tamien Nation Cultural Fire Stewardship Program, to build capacity and equip a native fire crew to steward tribal territory and implement prescribed fire and fuel reduction work at Henry W. Coe State Park in Santa Clara County (Exhibit 1).

The Tamien Nation Cultural Fire Stewardship Program is a multi-partner cooperative capacity-building and implementation project to restore cultural burning and wildfire resilience on Tamien Nation's tribal ancestral lands in Santa Clara County. Cultural fire use builds wildfire and climate resilience for communities and enhances and protects tribal cultural resources and ecological functions. It is informed by tribal ancestral practices and is based on traditional ecological knowledge, though in the modern day, it also requires extensive fire and prescribed fire trainings and certifications, permitting and environmental regulation compliance.

The proposed project builds upon the accomplishments of the phase one project, described in the June 2023 Staff Recommendation (Exhibit 2), and this authorization will augment the current grant with additional funds to expand the crew, continue training, and implement additional work. The proposed grant will fund equipment purchases for additional crew members and two ATVs to navigate more difficult terrain than their current vehicles allow.

Phase one has been successful thus far, with work nearing completion in Fall 2024. Under phase one, Tamien Nation partnered with California State Parks, CALFIRE, local fire agencies, and traditional ecological knowledge practitioners. Tamien Nation formed the inaugural Tamien Nation Cultural Fire Burn Crew with four native members, and provided the crew with several key trainings – on wilderness first aid, chainsaw safety, field observation, fire effects monitoring, production of incident maps and status summaries for fire incidents, wildland

firefighting, fire behavior, cultural burning protocols, GIS trainings for data management and analysis, and more. They also purchased equipment, including essential vehicles, trailers, and other field operation equipment, personal protective equipment for crew members, and camping supplies. On approximately 115 acres along Hobbs Road and in the Ponderosa Prescribed Burn Complex (Exhibit 3), the crew worked on vegetation management, hazard tree removal pile burning, plot preparation, and GIS data collection before and after treatments. Furthermore, the phase one grant supported Tamien Nation administrative capacity by allowing them to hire an accountant and Human Resources service to manage the fire crew as their own employees, and to seamlessly meet administrative needs of their government grants.

This project builds Tamien Nation's capacity to steward lands in their ancestral territory, as well as assist agencies and other tribes with prescribed burn projects and during wildfire emergencies. The crew's growing expertise combines California Certified Burn Boss qualifications with traditional cultural and indigenous knowledge. With upcoming plans for Tamien Nation to reacquire 235 acres of their ancestral land in the South Bay, the tribe is gaining skills that will allow them to steward their own lands within cultural, safety, and legal protocols. Moving into the future, Tamien Nation envisions that its crew could work as contractors part-time to fund their own work instead of relying on grant cycles indefinitely.

**Site Description:** The project will take place in two locations at Henry W. Coe State Park as shown in Exhibit 3. The land is owned and managed by California State Parks (State Parks), a key partner on this project who is working with Tamien Nation in the field, as well as on environmental compliance, planning, and permitting.

The Hobbs Road Maintenance and Fuel Reduction Project aims to improve habitat health along the 5.2 mile road, extending from Manzanita Point Road to Blue Ridge Road. Hobbs Road is a control line for several prescribed burn plots and is also used for access by State Parks' staff, volunteers, emergency service vehicles, and inholders with legal access rights. The vegetation along the road is generally very dense, due to decades of deferred maintenance, and includes ponderosa pine forest, blue oak woodland, mixed pine/oak forest, big berry manzanita, and oak savannah. The dense vegetation creates significant issues relating to fire management and prescribed fire as well as increasing the risk of habitat loss due to severe fire intensity. The project will assist with vegetation management activities within 50 meters of either side of Hobbs Road, covering 192 acres.

The Tamien Nation will also continue work on the Ponderosa Prescribed Burn Complex which includes nine plots along Manzanita Point, Pine Ridge, and Middle Ridge. The project consists of plot preparation, implementation of fire prescription, and any rehabilitation of fire line as needed to maintain the vegetation in the defined plots. Each plot contains significant Ponderosa pine populations as well as a variety of other vegetation types and public access amenities (such as campgrounds, bathrooms, trails). Ponderosa Pine forests are an iconic "island" habitat type found only on a few high ridges within the park, and the project targets their protection and longevity. Tamien Nation and State Parks are collecting data on species composition before and after treatment in subsequent years to understand vegetation response.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:** Tamien Nation is a California Native American Tribe with ancestral homelands in the Santa Clara Valley, that also operates as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Their vision is to acquire lands within their tribal territory to live their lifeways with dignity, peace, and prosperity. To this end, the tribe conducts several programs including the proposed project under their Cultural Fire Program. From phase one of the grant, Tamien Nation has a proven track record of successful project work, collaboration with partners, and grant management.

**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 funding because it is feasible, has a reasonable budget, and addresses a demonstrated need for wildfire resilience. The project implements many statewide wildfire and forest resiliency goals and is consistent with several state plans, described further in Exhibit 3. Investment in this project will allow the grantee to build their program, capacity, and expertise.

**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 project was developed and is being led by Tamien Nation leadership and citizens. The program consists of multi-partner cooperative capacity-building and project implementation focused on restoring cultural burning and wildfire resilience on Tamien Nation ancestral lands. Tamien Nation started this program to gain the training, equipment, and partnerships needed to safely and effectively manage their homeland with fire. The proposed grant will build the tribe's capacity to steward lands in their ancestral territory, which is a top priority for the tribe.

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

The proposed project will help increase fire resiliency at a state park in the context of anticipated climate change. Fire resilience is a critical issue due to increased average temperatures, reduced marine fog, and longer and more severe droughts. California is facing unprecedented fire risk due to climate change, a growing populace, and an increasing number of people living in high fire risk areas, including areas adjacent to wildlands. The project also supports the building of a long-term partnership between State Parks and Tamien Nation, and

State Parks is working to ensure their land management practices better align with Tamien Nation’s traditional cultural land stewardship practices.

Beyond the project sites, this project builds capacity and expertise for a tribal-led fire crew, that will continue to do fire management and stewardship work into the future, including on future tribal lands. Equipment purchased will be used to this end for many years to come.

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

The project will reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire that could impact infrastructure and communities, and protect and enhance native habitats, including Ponderosa pine forests which are of special significance in Henry W. Coe State Park. Furthermore, the project will build tribal capacity and expertise, promote tribe-agency collaboration, provide workforce training, and collect and analyze data that can inform and support future vegetation management.

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

While broad community engagement is not an intention of this project, the grantee works closely with California State Parks, CALFIRE, local fire agencies, and traditional ecological knowledge practitioners in a community of practice. Bringing these stakeholders together allows for cross-disciplinary collaboration and optimal outcomes for fire prevention, ecological stewardship, and tribal cultural resources.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

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|---|--------------------|
| <b>Coastal Conservancy (Phase 2)</b>      | <b>\$1,238,120</b> |
| Coastal Conservancy (Phase 1)             | \$565,208          |
| Governor’s Office of Planning & Research  | \$1,789,995        |
| California Energy Commission              | \$200,000          |
| Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District | \$50,000           |
| <b>Project Total</b>                      | <b>\$3,843,323</b> |

Conservancy funds for phase two of this project are expected to come from the FY 22/23 General Fund appropriation to the Conservancy for the purpose of wildfire risk reduction projects in the San Francisco Bay Area. The proposed project is consistent with this fund source because it will implement fuel treatments and help reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

The above budget includes funds for phases one and two. Additional funds for the project come from several state and local grants. The Governor’s Office of Planning and Research contributed a grant as part of their Regional Resilience Grant Program. California Energy Commission funds come from California’s Fifth Climate Change Assessment Tribal Research Grant Program. Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District funds were granted to help Tamien Nation build capacity for regional partnership with other tribes and agencies, as well as share data and lessons learned.

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 recommended 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)).

Pursuant to Section 31113(b), the Conservancy is authorized to award grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to undertake projects that address extreme weather events and other coastal hazards, such as severe wildfire, that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources.

Pursuant to Section 31113(c), the Conservancy must prioritize grants for projects that maximize public benefits and have one of several purposes, including reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and preserving natural lands.

Consistent with these sections, the proposed project will restore the health and resilience of California forests, grasslands, and/or natural lands and reduce fire risk to communities. The projects will help California’s natural lands to be more resilient to catastrophic wildfires which may ultimately reduce greenhouse gas emissions released from increased wildfires due to climate change.

The proposed project addresses the impacts of climate change on natural resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction because they will occur in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area (Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code) and/or will improve forests, grasslands, and other natural lands and reduce the risk of wildfire that would adversely impact water quality and habitat in coastal watersheds (Chapter 5.5).

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

Consistent with **Goal 1.2 Return Power to Tribes**, the project involves tribal co-management of lands and allows the grantee to practice cultural burns and traditional ecological knowledge.

Consistent with **Goal 1.4 Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects**, the project includes workforce development as a key component of the project.

Consistent with **Goal 4.2 Wildfire Resilience**, the proposed projects include four wildfire resilience planning projects and will implement wildfire resilience projects on approximately 473 acres.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land) which exempts minor alterations to the condition of vegetation without the removal of healthy, mature, or scenic trees. This project consists of management of existing native vegetation through the removal of dead, dying, and immature trees, thinning, prescribed fire, and other similar activities. These fuel management activities will not change the nature of the land or alter the basic character of the vegetation and habitat at the project sites.

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