

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 5, 2024

**'O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION AND
INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION:
AUGMENTATION**

Project No. 14-055-04
Project Manager: Su Corbaley

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$3,370,000, comprising \$2,870,000 in funds received by the Conservancy from the Wildlife Conservation Board and \$500,000 of Conservancy funds, to Save the Redwoods League to augment the Conservancy grant authorized on March 24, 2022 of \$794,000, and expansion of the project scope, to construct public access improvements and visitor amenities for the 'O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project (formerly the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project), at the former Orick Mill A site in Humboldt County.

LOCATION: 1.5 miles north of Orick, Humboldt County

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project Phase 3 Implementation and Initial Trails Gateway Construction staff recommendation dated March 24, 2022](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Public Access Infrastructure and Amenities](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project Phase 3 Implementation and Initial Trails Gateway Construction staff recommendation dated June 1, 2023](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

'O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION AND INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION: AUGMENTATION

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes augmentation of the grant to Save the Redwoods League (“the grantee”) authorized on March 24, 2022 by an amount not to exceed \$3,370,000 (three million three hundred seventy thousand dollars), comprising \$2,870,000 in funds received by the Conservancy from the Wildlife Conservation Board and \$500,000 of Conservancy funds, and expansion of the project scope, for construction of public access improvements and visitor amenities for the ‘O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project (formerly the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project), at the former Orick Mill A site in Humboldt County (“the project”).

This authorization is subject to all of the conditions imposed upon the grantee through the March 24, 2022 Conservancy authorization (Exhibit 3) for this project. In addition, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) a plan for installation of signage informing the public that the project received funds from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access For All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68).

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.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. Save the Redwoods League 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 disbursement of up to \$3,370,000, comprising \$2,870,000 in funds received by the Conservancy from the Wildlife Conservation Board and \$500,000 of Conservancy funds, to Save the Redwoods League (the “League”) to augment the Conservancy grant authorized on March 24, 2022 of \$794,000 in funds received by the Conservancy from the Wildlife Conservation Board Public Access Program and to expand the scope of the project to construct public access improvements and visitor amenities (the “project”) for the ‘O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project (formerly the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project), at the former Orick Mill A site in Humboldt County (Exhibit 1).

On March 24, 2022, the Conservancy authorized a grant to the League to construct initial public access improvements and visitor amenities for a new trail gateway, including an entry road off Bald Hills Road, parking for 30 standard size vehicles, and a pedestrian plaza with benches and

‘O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION AND INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION: AUGMENTATION

way finding kiosks, at the site of a former mill, north of Orick in Humboldt County (Exhibit 2). The project is a component of the 5-year multi-phased ‘O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project (formerly the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project) that also includes restoring one mile of lower Prairie Creek and 29 acres of riparian and wetland habitat at the former mill site. Due to a need to coordinate the construction of the gateway with the concurrent sitewide habitat restoration construction, the initial improvements authorized on March 24, 2022 have not been constructed. Construction is now scheduled for 2025 and the project is expanded to include the full suite of access infrastructure and visitor amenities planned for the site, described below and shown in Exhibit 3.

The recommended augmentation is for an expanded project scope that includes constructing all of the planned public access improvements and visitor amenities at the site; the expanded project remains consistent with the purposes and goals of the previous authorization. The existing grant awarded \$794,000 in funds received by the Conservancy from the Wildlife Conservation Board Public Access Program to the League to construct initial public access improvements and visitor amenities. After this augmentation, the total grant amount authorized by the Conservancy for the trail gateway will be \$4,164,000. This augmentation will provide the League with the funding needed to fully construct the gateway, including the access improvements and visitor amenities previously authorized, as well as construction of restroom facilities; a large vehicle parking area; 0.71 miles of trails, including 0.21 miles of ADA compliant trail and a 0.5 mile wetland trail that will immerse visitors in the restored floodplain; and fabrication and installation of inclusive, engaging interpretive exhibits across the project site developed by the Yurok Tribe’s Culture Committee. The project also includes the construction of stormwater drainage systems (catch basins) for the newly paved areas, and revegetation of the gateway area with locally native plants. In addition, the project includes direct support for Yurok Tribal staff to design and develop the onsite interpretive content and programming.

When completed, the gateway ADA-accessible trail will connect directly with an ADA-accessible segment of California Coastal Trail to be developed on the same property that was separately authorized by the Conservancy in February 2024, which in turn will connect directly with a new trail being constructed by Redwood National Park (RNP) on its adjacent lands to convey hikers to old growth redwood groves within RNP.

The name change from the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project to the ‘O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project was made to honor the Yurok Tribe’s Native American site name of ‘O Rew and to honor the new vision that property ownership will transfer from the League to the Yurok Tribe in 2026 for co-stewardship with Redwood National and State Parks. The League intends to engage the Yurok Tribe to construct the project. The Yurok Tribe is currently constructing the Prairie Creek Floodplain Restoration Project at ‘O Rew.

Site Description: The 125-acre ‘O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project site was formerly the location of a sawmill (Orick Mill A) and contains the lower mile of Prairie Creek before it discharges to Redwood Creek, three miles upriver from the Pacific Ocean. The site has

**'O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION
AND INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION: AUGMENTATION**

been significantly altered by past operations, leaving the creek confined and lacking floodplain and riparian habitat, and leaving behind 21 acres of legacy asphalt and concrete mill foundations at the site. The site condition is more fully described in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The grantee is fully qualified to carry out the project, as discussed in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The project remains consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on September 23, 2021, as described in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

'O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PHASE 3 PROJECT FINANCING

Proposed 'O Rew Redwoods Gateway Project Augmentation

Coastal Conservancy	\$500,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (<i>via</i> a grant to the Conservancy)	\$2,870,000
Save the Redwoods League	\$413,601
Total Augmentation	\$3,783,601

Prior Phase 3 Authorizations

June 1, 2023 Authorization ('O Rew Prairie Creek Floodplain Restoration Phase 3 Project)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<i>via</i> a grant to the Conservancy)	\$980,000
Save the Redwoods League	\$367,257
Subtotal June 1, 2023 Authorization	\$1,347,257

March 24, 2022 Authorization ('O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Phase 3 Project)

Ocean Protection Council (<i>via</i> a grant to the Conservancy)	\$975,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (<i>via</i> a grant to the Conservancy)	\$5,921,136
Save the Redwoods League	\$1,084,000
Caltrout (<i>via</i> US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program Grant)	\$24,997
Subtotal March 24, 2022 Authorization	\$8,005,133

'O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Phase 3 Project Total \$13,135,991

'O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION AND INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION: AUGMENTATION

The above table represents the total funding only for Phase 3 of the 'O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project, a component of the larger 'O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project as it is described in detail in the March 24, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2), Funding for construction of the initial access improvements and visitor amenities that this authorization is amending is also discussed in Exhibit 2.

A portion of the Conservancy funding for this project is anticipated to come from a Fiscal Year 2023/24 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 2023, SB 101). The coastal resilience funds are available as described in Section 52 of SB 155 (Chapter 258, Statutes of 2021), which sets forth a detailed description of the purposes of the coastal resilience funds, including projects for non-motorized trails of statewide significance.

The proposed project is consistent with the funding purposes as it will develop a segment of the Coastal Trail, which is a trail of statewide significance.

A portion of the Conservancy funding for this project is anticipated to come from an FY 2023-24 appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68, Public Resources Code (PRC) Division 45, Chapters 1-13, Sections 80000-80173). These funds are available for projects that enhance and protect coastal and ocean resources, including through the protection of beaches, bays, wetlands, and coastal watershed. The definition of "protection" includes actions that improve access to public open-space areas and actions that allow for the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural, cultural, and historic resources, and includes site monitoring, acquisition, development, restoration, preservation, and interpretation (PRC Sections 80002(l) and 80120(c)).

Prop 68 finds that many Californians lack access to the outdoors and investments that create and/or improve parks, recreation areas, and trail networks help increase access to the outdoors (PRC Sections 80001(a)(3)-(4)). Prop 68 sets forth requirements and priorities for selecting projects. One of the priority areas is directing public agencies that receive funding, to the extent practicable, to "consider a range of actions" that derive from the Presidential Memorandum - Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Our National Parks, National Forests, and Other Public Lands and Waters, January 12, 2017 (PRC Sections 80001(b)(8)). These actions direct agencies, among other items, to conduct outreach to diverse populations, including to tribal communities; create new partnerships; and improve programs to increase access by diverse populations. These actions are consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, which identifies Environmental Equity and Justice as one of the global drivers of our work.

To the extent practicable, the Conservancy seeks to fund Prop 68 grants that:

- Create new partnerships with state, local, tribal, private, and nonprofit organizations to expand access for diverse populations (PRC section 80001(b)(8)(C)).

'O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION AND INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION: AUGMENTATION

- Identify and implement improvements to existing programs to increase visitation and access by diverse populations, particularly minority, low-income, and disabled populations, and tribal communities (PRC section 80001(b)(8)(D)).

Consistent with these Prop 68 priorities and requirements, this project will increase visitation and access to wetlands by persons with disabilities by constructing .21 miles of ADA accessible trail and an accessible pedestrian plaza, including restrooms and signage. The project includes outreach and inclusion of the Yurok Tribe and will thereby increase access for tribal populations. The project also strengthens a new partnership between State Parks, the Yurok Tribe, and the League. The source of funding for \$2,870,000 of the proposed authorization is a Wildlife Conservation Board Public Access Program grant awarded to the Conservancy.

With this authorization, the total funds awarded by the Conservancy for construction of the 'O Rew Redwood Gateway Project is \$4,164,000, and the total amount of League-derived leveraging for the gateway is \$997,601 (total project cost for the gateway is \$5,161,601). These amounts include funds previously authorized on March 24, 2022. The Project Total, above, is for the 'O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Phase 3 Implementation Project and includes \$7,794,390 in Conservancy grants that were authorized on March 24, 2022 and June 1, 2023 for habitat restoration of Prairie Creek. Those authorizations are described in the Exhibits 2 and 4, respectively.

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 Chapter 9 (Sections 31400 et seq.) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy has a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. The proposed project will construct a new segment of coastal trail that will provide the public with access to and along coast.

The proposed project is consistent with Section 31409, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants and provide assistance to establish and expand inland trail systems that may be linked to the California Coastal Trail. The project will connect directly with a segment of California Coastal Trail that is planned to be developed in 2025 and located on the same property, which also connects to the extensive trail networks within the Redwood National and State Parks which encompass both coastal and inland trails.

**'O REW REDWOODS GATEWAY AND RESTORATION PROJECT PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION
AND INITIAL TRAILS GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION: AUGMENTATION**

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

Consistent with **Goal 1.1 Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**, the project will provide economic benefits to the town of Orick from job and vendor supply opportunities during construction, and from tourists utilizing local services post construction.

Consistent with **Goal 1.2 Return Power to Tribes**, the interpretive content and programming was developed in partnership with the Yurok Tribe and supports work by the Yurok Tribe to implement the project and undertake future management and stewardship of the site.

Consistent with **Goal 1.4 Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects**, the project incorporates workforce development by providing opportunity to the all-Yurok construction crews to construct the project, under the supervision of experienced engineers, to train in field measurement / survey techniques.

Consistent with **Goal 2.4 Build Trails**, the project will construct of 0.71 miles of new Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 2.5 Recreation Facilities and Amenities**, the project will install picnic areas, restrooms, parking, trails, and interpretive signage to enhance coastal recreational opportunities.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

On September 3, 2020, the Conservancy adopted the "Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project" (IS/MND), adopted findings for the Redwood National and State Park Visitor Center and Restoration Project, now the 'O Rew Redwoods Gateway and Restoration Project ("Project"), and authorized funding for components of the Project. The Conservancy filed a Notice of Determination with the State Clearinghouse on September 8, 2020. The recommended grant augmentation will fund additional components of the Project. The Project remains substantially unchanged from its description in the IS/MND, and no new environmental information or change in circumstances require a re-evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the Project (Title 14 Cal Code. Regs. Section 15162(b)). Accordingly, the proposed authorization remains consistent with the CEQA findings adopted by the Conservancy in connection with the September 3, 2020 authorization.