

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 21, 2024

CARR LAKE RESTORATION AND PARK CONSTRUCTION PHASE 2 – AUGMENTATION

Project No. 16-012-03
Project Manager: Hilary Hill

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$2,000,000 to the Big Sur Land Trust to augment the Conservancy funding previously authorized on April 18, 2024, to undertake the Carr Lake Restoration and Park Construction Project Phase 2, consisting of restoration of 66 acres of wetland and upland habitat and construction of public access improvements at Carr Lake in Monterey County.

LOCATION: Carr Lake, Salinas, Monterey County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [April 18, 2024 Staff Recommendation](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

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

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a disbursement of an additional two million dollars (\$2,000,000) to Big Sur Land Trust (“the grantee”) to augment the grant previously authorized by the Conservancy on April 18, 2024, for a total authorized amount of eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) to undertake the Carr Lake Restoration and Park Construction Project Phase 2, consisting of restoration of 66 acres of wetland and upland habitat and construction of public access improvements at Carr Lake in Monterey County.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization remains consistent with Chapter 5.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources Protection.

2. The proposed project remains consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a \$2 million augmentation to its existing grant to the Big Sur Land Trust (“BSLT”), for a new total grant amount of up to \$8 million, to implement the Carr Lake Restoration and Park Construction Project Phase 2 (project). The original grant amount was authorized by the Conservancy on April 18, 2024 (Exhibit 2). As described in Exhibit 2, the project will create a new multi-benefit public park and natural open space in the heart of the City of Salinas. The project, which is Phase 2 of the Carr Lake Project, will result in 66-acres of restored riparian fish and wildlife habitat, construction of stormwater treatment green infrastructure to improve water quality, and public access improvements to increase access to open space for a disadvantaged and park-poor community. Construction is expected to begin in 2025 if the necessary funding is secured. At the time of the Conservancy’s April 2024 authorization, there was an additional \$6 million funding gap for the project that BSLT intended to secure through other grant applications. The Wildlife Conservation Board is considering a \$4 million grant at its November 2024 board meeting to help close this funding gap. The recommended Conservancy augmentation will fill the remaining funding gap. There are no other changes to the project as described in the April 18, 2024 staff recommendation.

Site Description: See Exhibit 2.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: See Exhibit 2.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, as described in the April 18, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy (proposed authorization)	\$2,000,000
Coastal Conservancy (previous authorization)	\$6,000,000
Wildlife Conservation Board (pending)	\$4,000,000
California Natural Resources Agency Urban Greening Program	\$3,673,917
California Department of Water Resources Urban Streams Restoration Program	\$2,000,000
Project Total	\$17,673,917

Conservancy funding for this augmentation is anticipated to come from a Fiscal Year 2022/23 appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy for the purpose of “urgent sea level rise adaptation and coastal resilience needs” (The Budget Act of 2022, SB 154, as amended by the Budget Act of 2023, SB 101). The coastal resilience funds are available as described in Section 52 of Chapter 528 of the Statutes of 2021, which sets forth a detailed description of the purposes of the coastal resilience funds, including coastal resilience projects, restoration of coastal habitat and Climate Ready projects. The proposed project is a coastal resilience project that is consistent with this funding source as it will restore coastal watershed habitats within the project site and build resilience to the impacts of climate change for the City of Salinas and downstream properties.

BSLT has secured funding from the California Natural Resources Agency’s (CNRA’s) Urban Greening Program and California Department of Water Resources’ (DWR’s) Urban Streams Restoration Program. This financing table has been modified from the April 2024 staff recommendation version. DWR’s grant was originally shown to be contributing \$2.5 million but this has been changed to \$2 million after Conservancy staff learned that \$500,000 of that grant is for stewardship and is not going towards the project construction budget. The CNRA grant was listed as \$3,693,917 which has now been changed to \$3,673,917 to exactly reflect the grant total. The project total amount has increased from \$17,285,000 to \$17,673,917 to reflect updated project cost estimates. The final funding gap for the project is expected to be secured with the proposed augmentation of funding from the Conservancy, and with \$4,000,000 of funding considered by the Wildlife Conservation Board at its November 2024 meeting. BSLT has raised over \$1 million dollars for stewardship, which includes \$700,000 of private funds and \$500,000 from California Department of Water Resources.

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 remains consistent with the Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation as described in the April 18, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

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

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s 2023-2027 Strategic Pan as described in the April 18, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN/STATE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN:

The proposed project remains consistent with local watershed management plans and Water Quality Control Plan for the Central Coast Basin, as described in the April 18, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

In its April 18, 2024 authorization (Exhibit 2), the Conservancy adopted findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The project elements have not changed since the April 18, 2024, authorization, and there have been no changed circumstances or new information that triggers the requirement for additional documentation under CEQA. Therefore, no further review pursuant to CEQA is required.