

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 21, 2024

**BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT GRANT**

Project No. 24-057-01
Project Manager: Bryce Keyes

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$300,000 of funds granted to the Conservancy by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission to implement its Coastal Zone Management Program.

LOCATION: Nine-County San Francisco Bay Area

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 three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) of funds granted to the Conservancy by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (“the grantee”) to implement its Coastal Zone Management Program.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that the proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, including assisting the implementation of the policies and programs of the San Francisco Bay Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000) of funds granted to the Conservancy by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) to implement its Coastal Zone Management Program. The California Coastal Commission (CCC), BCDC, and the Conservancy together administer California's federally approved Coastal Zone Management Program in accordance with the federal Coastal Zone Management Act. All three agencies receive annual grant funds, administered by NOAA's Coastal Zone Management Program. For the past 10 years, the Conservancy has received grant funds from NOAA to implement the Coastal Zone Management Program. The Conservancy uses that money for staff time working on public access projects and provides information about that award to the Board in its annual financial report. In the past two years, NOAA has made an additional \$1.8 million available to the three agencies through two separate non-competitive grant programs. The three agencies agreed to divide these funds equally, so each agency will receive \$600,000. The CCC applied for \$900,000 in 2023 and re-granted \$300,000 to BCDC. The Conservancy applied for \$900,000 in 2024 with the intent to re-grant \$300,000 to BCDC.

The 2024 NOAA grant award received by the Conservancy provides \$600,000 to support Conservancy staff and \$300,000 to be re-granted to BCDC for their staff. The funding for the Conservancy staff will support our external grants coordinator, staff time on tribal engagement, and staff time working on beneficial use of sediment.

BCDC will use the NOAA grant funds to identify priority training needs and develop a training plan to increase staff capacity to plan, permit, and implement Coastal Zone Management projects in its jurisdiction. BCDC will assess training needs and prioritize topics as part of the project. It is expected that training could cover topics such as: wetland restoration, nature-based solutions, and conservation for climate adaptation. Staff training is a high priority for BCDC because of recent staff turnover.

BCDC also anticipates using the grant funds to reduce barriers to timely permitting, to make BCDC's regulatory program easier to navigate, and to incentivize effective climate adaptation projects. BCDC has already identified some potential regulatory improvements to allow for more efficient processing of habitat restoration and climate adaptation projects such as: developing regionwide permits for small restoration projects and expanding the definition of minor repairs or improvements.

Site Description: San Francisco Bay's shoreline constitutes about 1/3 of the entire California coastline, but the Bay Area will incur 2/3 of the harmful economic impacts caused by rising sea level — threatening the most ecologically significant estuary on the West Coast, one of the largest economies in the world, and hundreds of culturally and socially diverse communities that call the Bay Area home.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: Established in 1965, BCDC's mission is to protect and enhance San Francisco Bay and encourage the Bay's responsible and productive use for this and future

generations. BCDC is one of the three agencies that administer California’s federally approved Coastal Zone Management Program.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (via a grant to the Conservancy)	\$300,000
Project Total	\$300,000

Funding from this project will come from a grant to the Coastal Conservancy from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration specifically to be re-granted to BCDC.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The recommended project would be undertaken pursuant to Section 31162 of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which authorizes the Conservancy to undertake projects and award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help achieve the goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, including assisting the implementation of the policies and programs the San Francisco Bay Plan. The McAteer-Petris Act designates BCDC as the agency responsible for maintaining and carrying out the provisions of the San Francisco Bay Plan. The recommended project will support BCDC staff to accomplish that work.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The Conservancy’s action to pass through grant funds to BCDC is not a project because it involves the creation of government funding mechanisms or other government fiscal activities, which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. See 14 California Code of Regulations section 15378(b)(4). Nonetheless, the Conservancy’s action to pass through grant funds to BCDC is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations section 15308 for actions by Regulatory Agencies for Protection of the Environment. The grant to BCDC is to implement the Coastal Zone Management Program and is therefore exempt as an action by a regulatory agency to implement a State program to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or protection of the environment where the regulatory process involves procedures for protection of the environment.

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