

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
November 21, 2024

**POINT SAINT GEORGE COASTAL TRAIL IMPLEMENTATION –  
CULTURAL RESOURCES STABILIZATION**

Project No. 05-048-04  
Project Manager: Peter Jaraus

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$1,412,307 as an augmentation of the Conservancy grant authorized on February 15, 2024 of \$1,500,000 to the Smith River Alliance to conduct the Point Saint George Coastal Trail Implementation Project (“the Project”), consisting of implementation of cultural resource protections and construction of 1.25 miles of the California Coastal Trail, new restrooms, interpretive signage, and improvements to the main trailhead parking area at Point Saint George in Del Norte County. The augmented amount will be granted to the California Department of Parks and Recreation to implement the cultural resource protections component of the Project.

**LOCATION:** Point Saint George, Del Norte County.

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EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Point Saint George Coastal Trail Implementation](#) (February 15, 2024 Staff Recommendation)
- Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)
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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 disbursement of an amount not to exceed one million four hundred and twelve thousand three hundred and seven dollars (\$1,412,307 ) as an augmentation of the Conservancy grant authorized on February 15, 2024 of \$1,500,000 to the Smith River Alliance to conduct the Point Saint George Coastal Trail Implementation Project (“the Project”), consisting of implementation of cultural resource protections and construction of 1.25 miles of the California Coastal Trail, new restrooms, interpretive signage, and

improvements to the main trailhead parking area at Point Saint George in Del Norte County. The augmented amount will be granted to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (“State Parks”) to implement the cultural resource protections component of the Project.

Prior to commencing the cultural resources protection component of the Project, State Parks (“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 this Project component.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement this Project component have been obtained.
5. As applicable, evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain this Project component.

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 Project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$1,412,307 as an augmentation of the Conservancy grant authorized on February 15, 2024 of \$1,500,000 to the Smith River Alliance to conduct the Point Saint George Coastal Trail Implementation Project (“the Project”), consisting of implementation of cultural resource protections and construction of 1.25 miles of the California Coastal Trail, new restrooms, interpretive signage, and improvements to the main trailhead parking area at Point Saint George in Del Norte County. The augmented amount will be granted to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (“State Parks”) to implement the cultural resource protections component of the Project.

State Parks will lead implementation of cultural resource protections by protecting significant cultural resources at Point Saint George that are sensitive and at risk of exposure and/or damage. State Parks staff oversaw the initial contract to prepare the cultural resources study and site stabilization plan. These plans were developed as part of the Point Saint George Management Area Trail and Parking Lot Project Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration. The consultants, Far Western Anthropological Research Group and Sustain Environmental,

outlined the necessary steps, which include: (1) “armoring” of near surface deposits; (2) cap/fill of eroded deposits; and (3) revegetation of filled areas. Approximately 76,500 square feet of the area will need to be treated. While the stabilization plans were developed during the CEQA process they are not mitigation but a key component of the overall effort. Once these cultural resources are protected, the remainder of the Project can move forward and safely increase public use of the area.

Point Saint George, or Taa-ghii~-'a~, is significant to both the Tolowa people as well as, to our understanding, of the early history and settlement of California. People have lived in the area for more than 2,000 years and intensively used the marine and terrestrial resources. Today, portions of the site are eroding due to natural causes and social trails that cross over sensitive areas. This has exposed cultural resource areas, which people should not visit or disturb. The Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation and the Elk Valley Rancheria have been involved in the Project since the public acquisition of the 339-acre Point Saint George property, and one of their top management goals has been and remains protection of cultural and natural resources. Initial efforts to protect the area included education and training, a partnership with the Del Norte County Sheriff's office, and installation of signs educating the public on the importance of the area and cautioning them not to disturb the sensitive and/or cultural resources. Nevertheless, as the popularity of Point Saint George slowly increases, so too has the damage to these resources.

At the time of the February 15, 2024 Conservancy grant authorization for the Project, Smith River Alliance anticipated raising an additional \$2.5 million for the total project costs. The Point Saint George Steering Committee—made up of representatives from the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, Elk Valley Rancheria, County of Del Norte, State Parks, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Smith River Alliance, and the Conservancy—continue to actively fundraise for implementation funding. This recommended augmentation is for the cultural resource protection component of the Project and will enable this Project component to be fully implemented. The Conservancy's initial grant amount will be used for the other Project components: construction of 1.25 miles of the California Coastal Trail, new restrooms, interpretive signage, and improvements to the main trailhead parking area at Point Saint George in Del Norte County. Construction is expected to start in summer of 2025 and take approximately two to three years to complete.

The Project will provide multiple benefits. It will fill a gap in the coastal trail, providing a continuous reach of coastal trail from Pebble Beach. Approximately 0.4 miles of the new trail will be accessible to people who use wheelchairs or have reduced mobility. The Project will reduce impacts from informal trails on sensitive, natural resources by closing those trails and, instead, designating one formal trail. It will reduce unsafe use of the parking area after hours by adding a gate, limiting use of the site to dawn to dusk hours, demarcating a one-way route of travel, and adding a speed table and curbs. The Project will add a restroom and picnic area and provide interpretive content, allowing visitors to learn about the cultural significance of the site to the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, as well as the site's recent history and natural resources.

**Site Description:** Point Saint George is a scenic windswept headland located just northwest of Crescent City in Del Norte County, approximately fifteen miles south of the California-Oregon

border. Del Norte is California's northernmost county, with a population of just under 30,000 people, most of whom reside in the Crescent City area. Acquired by the County in 2002 in part with Coastal Conservancy funds, the 339-acre coastal terrace with its steep cliffs, offshore sea stacks, and crashing surf is increasingly appreciated and used by local people and Redwood Coast visitors. Ownership of Point Saint George is split between four landowners, three public and one private. The County of Del Norte owns the largest portion followed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Wildlife Conservation Board. A small private inholding consisting of a primary residence and several small structures exists just west of the principal parking lot at the terminus of Radio Road (Exhibit 1).

The prominence of Point Saint George on the northwest coast was not lost on the indigenous people of the area, the Tolowa tribe. For centuries before the arrival of Europeans, ancestors of the present-day Tolowa made use of the headland. Archaeological surveys and radiocarbon dating of artifacts suggest that the site was used since roughly 310 B.C., placing it among the earliest occupied sites in the region.

The dramatic interaction of the ocean and rocky shore is exceptional at Point Saint George. The headland's steep bluffs drop to rocky pocket beaches and intertidal shelves, some accessible by trail, others enclosed by towering cliffs and sea. The coastal terrace itself features a vast panorama: to the north, across Pelican Bay and its lonely expanse of sandy beach, lie the coastal mountains of southern Oregon; to the west, six miles offshore on the seemingly open sea, is the Saint George Reef Light Station, a critical beacon for navigation since 1892; to the south is Castle Rock, the biggest coastal island north of the Farallon Islands, the many sea stacks offshore of Crescent City's Pebble Beach, and the forested cliffs of the Redwood Coast; and to the east, the forests and snowy peaks of California's Siskiyou Mountains. Inland and to the east of the bluffs, the land slopes gently to the southeast with the lowest elevations being in the vicinity of the airport. This area contains a large depression that collects water during the rainy season and slowly dries as the seasonal drought proceeds. Among the several unusual plant species found here is the increasingly rare western lily, which is listed as endangered under the federal and California Endangered Species Acts. Western lily is one of several species that benefit from periodic management to control competitive vegetation that in former times was grazed by wild animals and burned by indigenous people. A 1991 survey found the Yontocket ringlet butterfly, the Wolf's evening primrose, the black crowberry, and the Arctic starflower, all rare species. The rocky coast snail and the sand dune phacelia were also found at Point Saint George. Over 100 different bird species have been sighted at Point Saint George.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:** The State Parks North Coast Redwoods District is well qualified to take on the cultural resource protection component of the Project. Their cultural resource staff actively manage resources on over 130,000 acres of land within 22 park units that span across Humboldt, Mendocino, and Del Norte Counties. This includes projects ranging from the conservation of cultural and historic resources to helping ensure that the many other restoration and public access projects undertaken by the district are done without damaging resources. This is all done in close consultation with tribes in these three counties. Park staff have contributed many hours towards the Project and are uniquely qualified to undertake the work at Point Saint George.

**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 February 15, 2024, staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$1,412,307</b>
<i>Previous Conservancy authorization</i>	\$1,500,000
California Department of Parks and Recreation	\$1,000,000
Funds to be raised	\$1,000,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$4,912,307</b>

Conservancy funding for the recommended 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 using nature-based solutions or other strategies” (Budget Act 2022, SB 154 as amended by Budget Act of 2023, SB 101). The coastal resilience funds are available as described in Section 52 of Chapter 258 of the Statutes of 2021, which sets forth a detailed description of the purposes of the coastal resilience funds, including nonmotorized trails of statewide significance. The Project is consistent with this funding source because it will construct a section of the California Coastal Trail and associated facilities that will close a significant gap in the trail, which is a nonmotorized trail of statewide significance.

State Parks has committed to funding the accessible section of trail on the portion of Point Saint George under their ownership. This is through a special fund administered by State Parks for improving accessibility within State Parks and the value of this portion of the Project is \$1,000,000.

The remaining funds will be raised through grants which specifically target interpretation and public access. A grant application is pending with the Wildlife Conservation Board.

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 Project remains consistent with Division 21 as described in the February 15, 2024 staff recommendation.

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

The Project remains consistent with the Conservancy's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan as described in the February 15, 2024 staff recommendation.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

On April 6, 2023, the Conservancy adopted findings based on the "Point St. George Management Area Trail and Parking Lot Project Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration", which was adopted by the County of Del Norte on May 1, 2013, and authorized a grant for the Point Saint George Coastal Trail Implementation Project ("the Project"); and on February 15, 2024, the Conservancy authorized a second grant for the Project. The Project remains substantially unchanged from its description in the Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration, and no new environmental information or change in circumstances requires a re-evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the Project. Accordingly, no additional CEQA documentation is required.