

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
April 17, 2025

PEDRO POINT COASTAL TRAIL PLANNING

Project No. 03-060-03
Project Manager: Erin Gravley

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,000,000 to contract for services to conduct community engagement and to prepare designs, environmental review documents, and permit applications for development of the approximately 1.3-mile long Pedro Point Headlands segment of the California Coastal Trail in San Mateo County.

LOCATION: Pedro Point Headlands, San Mateo County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

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

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the Executive Officer to disburse an amount not to exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to contract for services to conduct community engagement and to prepare designs, environmental review documents, and permit applications for development of the approximately 1.3-mile long Pedro Point Headlands segment of the California Coastal Trail in San Mateo County.

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 a System of Public Accessways.

2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize the Executive Officer to disburse up to \$1,000,000 to contract for services to conduct community engagement and to prepare designs, environmental review documents, and permit applications for development of the Pedro Point Headlands segment of the California Coastal Trail in San Mateo County (the project). The proposed Pedro Point Coastal Trail will fill an approximately 1.3-mile gap in the California Coastal Trail, linking the urban community of the City of Pacifica to adjacent open space and recreational trails. The Conservancy and the City of Pacifica own the open space area of Pedro Point Headlands and staff recommends that the Conservancy directly contract for the services needed to plan the Pedro Point Coastal Trail.

The Pedro Point Coastal Trail has been conceptualized for over 30 years since the Pedro Point Headlands property was acquired as open space in the early 1990s. The concept for the Pedro Point Coastal Trail is for it to be a Class 1 (off-highway) trail for pedestrians and bicyclists linking the popular Pacifica State Beach in the City of Pacifica to the north, to Devil's Slide County Park to the south. Currently, this gap is one of the Conservancy's highest priorities to complete in San Mateo County. Completing this segment would connect over 7 miles of existing Coastal Trail, including connecting an urban population center and state beach to existing popular recreational trails. It will also improve access to open space and trails at Pedro Point Headlands and Devil's Slide County Park, which can be challenging to access due to limited parking. The Pedro Point Coastal Trail would allow for non-motorized transportation from the City of Pacifica to access these coastal recreational areas. The trail will also provide a safer alternative to Highway 1, which is a dangerous, steep, and narrow section not suitable for bicyclists or pedestrians.

In 2020, the Conservancy funded a conceptual study which successfully identified a preferred alignment and conceptual design for the Pedro Point Coastal Trail. This effort included a robust community engagement process and oversight from a Project Advisory Committee consisting of the City of Pacifica, National Park Service, County of San Mateo Parks Department, California Coastal Commission, Caltrans, Pacifica Land Trust, and the Peninsula Open Space Trust. The proposed project builds on past work and will include technical data collection, community engagement, continued Project Advisory Team facilitation, development of designs, preparation of environmental review documents, and completion of permit applications. The proposed project will also include tasks to determine if any additional right-of-way property rights are needed, such as negotiations, appraisals, and surveying.

Undertaking planning for this segment of Coastal Trail will also assist in advancing a long-term goal of the Conservancy, which is to transfer Conservancy-owned Pedro Point Headlands to a long-term landowner that is better equipped to manage the property's natural and recreational resources. Recently, the National Park Service has expressed interest in acquiring Pedro Point Headlands as part of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). GGNRA staff has

indicated that completion of the Pedro Point Coastal Trail segment would help address one of their key transfer concerns and facilitate a future transfer. Therefore, in addition to furthering progress on completion of a high-priority Coastal Trail gap in San Mateo County, advancing planning of the proposed trail will aid in the Conservancy's long-term property conveyance efforts of Pedro Point Headlands.

Site Description: Pedro Point Headlands is a prominent rock headland located at the southern edge of the City of Pacifica in coastal San Mateo County, 15 miles south of San Francisco (Exhibit 1). Pedro Point Headlands rises almost vertically from the ocean to a height of 625 feet, where the bluff-tops provide a spectacular view on clear days of the coastline north to Point Reyes, south to the adjoining Devil's Slide County Park, and east to Montara Mountain. It is a local and regional landmark, forming the gateway between urbanized and rugged regions of San Mateo County. While a small portion of Pedro Point Headlands is privately owned and developed with houses, the remaining 266 acres is publicly-owned open space. The Conservancy owns approximately 98 acres and the City of Pacifica owns an adjacent 157 acres at Pedro Point Headlands, which it purchased with Conservancy funding (Exhibit 1). Pedro Point Headlands holds regional significance for its scenic and recreational opportunities and native habitat. The Association of Bay Area Governments designated Pedro Point Headlands and the California Coastal Trail both as Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) of Plan Bay Area in 2015. Pedro Point Headlands is also an important location locally, serving as a symbol of the community and has an active group of locals dedicated to stewardship efforts through the Pacifica Land Trust.

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 Pedro Point Coastal Trail gap was identified as a priority project in the report, *Completing the California Coastal Trail* (2003), and as a top tier project in the *Caltrans San Francisco Bay Area Bike Plan* (2018). The proposed project will build on prior State and local investments for public access at Pedro Point Headlands, including prior acquisition and planning efforts. Once built, the Pedro Point Coastal Trail will connect with over 7 miles of California Coastal Trail to the north and south, creating a newly continuous stretch of Coastal Trail, linking a population center and State Beach to existing popular recreational trails.

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

The Pedro Point Coastal Trail will be designed to be sustainable and resilient in order to reduce maintenance and repair costs over the expected lifetime of the trail. The conceptual design for the trail completed in the prior phase of the project identified elements to increase longevity for the trail, such as maintaining a trail slope of less than 10% for a majority of the trail in order to reduce potential water drainage issues, which has been an issue on other trails in the region. The material used to build the trail will be determined during the proposed planning project, but is expected to be one that balances durability, ease of repair and maintenance, and cost.

4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The Pedro Point Coastal Trail will complete a key gap in the California Coastal Trail in San Mateo County. The proposed trail will deliver multiple benefits including connecting urban neighborhoods in the City of Pacifica to adjacent open space, increasing access to open space at Pedro Point Headlands and Devils Slide County Park which currently has limited parking, providing opportunities for non-motorized transportation, and enhancing safety by providing an alternative to Highway 1 for bicyclists and pedestrians.

5. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

The Conservancy’s previous conceptual planning effort for the Pedro Point Coastal Trail completed in 2020 received a high level of interest from the community, engaging approximately 1,000 people. The proposed project will continue to include community engagement as the conceptual design goes through more detailed planning and environmental review. This project was identified as a top tier priority in the Caltrans San Francisco Bay Area Bike Plan, which was developed with community engagement. Public agencies including the City of Pacifica, National Park Service, County of San Mateo Parks Department, California Coastal Commission, and Caltrans, together with local nonprofits including Pacifica Land Trust and the Peninsula Open Space Trust are supportive of the project and will continue to serve on the project’s Advisory Team (Exhibit 3).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,000,000
Project Total	\$1,000,000

The Conservancy funds for the project are expected to come from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (“Proposition 68”), codified at Public Resource Code (PRC) Sections 8000-80173. Pursuant to Section 80120(c), the Conservancy may provide grants for the “protection of beaches, bays, wetlands, and coastal watershed resources” in accordance with Division 21 of the PRC. The Proposition 68 definition of “protection” includes “actions to improve access to public open-space areas” (PRC Section 80002(l)). The proposed project is eligible for Proposition 68 funding under Section 80120(c) as the project will improve access to coastal Pedro Point Headlands and serve as a segment of the California Coastal Trail. The proposed project is consistent with the funding

guidelines for expenditure of Proposition 68 adopted by the Conservancy on December 6, 2018 as described in various sections of this staff recommendation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31410) related to public accessways. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy shall have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. Sections 31400.2 and 31400.3 authorize the Conservancy to provide up to the total costs for initial development of public accessways by public agencies and nonprofit organizations and to provide such assistance as is required to aid such entities in establishing a system of public coastal accessways and related functions. Consistent with these sections, the Conservancy will contract for the planning work necessary to close a gap in the Coastal Trail on land owned by the Conservancy and the City of Pacifica, which will assist the City of Pacifica, National Park Service, and County of San Mateo Parks Department in achieving goals for public access at Pedro Point Headlands along the San Mateo County coast. Consistent with Section 31400.2, the following factors were considered in determining the amount of Conservancy funding for this project: the total amount of funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the urgency of the project, and the Conservancy's project selection criteria, as described in the "Consistency With Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria" section above.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2.4 Build Trails**, the proposed project will conduct planning of 1.3 miles of Coastal Trail in San Mateo County.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15262 because it involves planning studies and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved or funded, and it will include consideration of environmental factors. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15306, because it also involves basic data collection and resource evaluation activities that will not result in disturbance to an environmental resource.

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