

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

April 17, 2025

SILVER STRAND CAMPGROUND EXPANSION – DESIGN

Project No. 25-006-01

Project Manager: Rodrigo Garcia

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,500,000 to the California Department of Parks and Recreation to undertake the Silver Strand Campground Expansion – Design project, consisting of conducting planning and studies, and preparing designs, environmental review, and permit applications for increasing lower-cost accommodations at Silver Strand State Beach in San Diego County.

LOCATION: Silver Strand State Beach, Coronado, San Diego County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Silver Strand State Beach Lower-Cost Coastal Overnight Accommodations Study](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 4: [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 a grant of an amount not to exceed one million five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000) to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (“the grantee”) to undertake the Silver Strand Campground Expansion – Design project, consisting of conducting planning and studies, and preparing designs, environmental review, and permit applications for increasing lower-cost accommodations at Silver Strand State Beach in San Diego County.

Prior to commencement of the project, 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 the project.

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 10 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding Lower-Coast Coastal Accommodations.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a \$1,500,000 grant to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to undertake the Silver Strand Campground Expansion – Design project, consisting of conducting planning and studies, and preparing designs, environmental review, and permit applications for increasing lower-cost accommodations at Silver Strand State Beach in San Diego County.

One of the biggest barriers for low and middle-income Californians to accessing and enjoying the coast is the lack of affordable overnight options. Nearly 60% of Californians never spend the night when they visit the coast. For Californians earning less than \$25,000 per year, that figure leaps to 75% (“Explore the Coast Overnight – An Assessment of Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations,” State Coastal Conservancy, 2019).

In 2023, DPR completed the Silver Strand State Beach Lower-Cost Coastal Overnight Accommodations Study (see Exhibit 2) to identify alternative camping options at Silver Strand State Beach that are affordable and can be made available to low and middle-income families, youth-serving organizations, under-resourced populations, and others with limited opportunities to have an overnight camping experience along the California coast. The study conducted community engagement to identify the community’s needs and desires, tribal consultation, initial technical studies, and a study-level financial analysis. The proposed project was also identified in the Conservancy’s 2019 Explore the Coast Overnight Assessment (ETCO Assessment) as a high opportunity project.

The proposed project will help expand coastal camping in Southern California through the planning and design for the expansion of an existing Recreational Vehicle (RV) campground at Silver Strand State Beach in Coronado. Currently, Silver Strand State Beach offers camping for up to 120 self-contained RV’s/trailers and two group campsites that are available only to youth-oriented groups. The project will conduct the planning and design needed to expand this campground to provide a wider variety of overnight options with approximately 54 new lower-cost overnight accommodations including 20 camper trailers, 16 cottages, 16 tent sites, two hike and bike campsites, upgraded restrooms, and a new campground kiosk. Once constructed, these sites will be available to rent on DPR’s online reservation system, ReserveCalifornia.com,

and are expected to cost from \$50 – \$70/night for tent sites, \$99/night for the cottages, and \$179/night for the camper trailers. Existing RV sites range from \$65 – \$85/night.

The project includes community and tribal engagement, coordination with local agencies and neighboring cities, conducting additional financial and technical studies, preparing preliminary design plans and working drawings, conducting environmental review, and preparing permit applications.

Site Description: Silver Strand State Beach is located on the sand-spit that forms the outer edge of San Diego Bay between Coronado and Imperial Beach. The park features extensive stretches of beach on both the Pacific Ocean and San Diego Bay. Combined with the area’s mild climate, the beaches make Silver Strand a popular recreation destination for camping, swimming, surfing, kiteboarding, volleyball, picnicking, and fishing. Park facilities currently include 120 RV camping spots, two group campsites, four large parking lots, restrooms, showers, and fire rings.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: DPR has managed grant funds for different purposes including campground design and development throughout California. DPR operates numerous overnight accommodations including those at South Carlsbad State Beach Campground, San Elijo State Beach Campground, Angel Island, and Steep Ravine in Mount Tamalpais State Park. Long-term management and maintenance of the project will be handled by DPR as part of its on-going management responsibilities of the park.

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 proposed project is a good investment of state resources because it directly supports the Outdoors for All strategy by the California Natural Resources Agency and furthers the goals outlined in the Conservancy’s ETCO Assessment by planning for expanding affordable coastal accommodations within close proximity to the California coast. It addresses the significant demand identified in the assessment, particularly in regions like San Diego where there is high unmet need.

3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.

See the “Community Engagement” section below.

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

Silver Strand State Beach is among nine park units in the San Diego Coast District Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment completed January 2024. DPR, in collaboration with the nonprofit Coastal Quest, conducted a sea level rise vulnerability assessment and developed adaptation pathways to inform future coastal resilience projects and planning, including the proposed project. Some adaptation vision and goals for Silver Strand State Beach and Campground include maintaining beach-width, especially in front of campground and parking lot through beneficial use of local dredged materials; minimizing landscape and habitat disturbances; maintaining beach-oriented recreational activities in a natural setting; and preserving the larger coastal ecosystem and habitat through sediment management and natural dune restoration.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

Identified as a high priority project in the Conservancy’s ETCO Assessment, the proposed project will facilitate future provision of new opportunities for low-to-moderate income individuals and families to afford camping along the California coast. In addition, the project’s location provides visitors direct access to the Bayshore Bikeway, connecting visitors to other popular areas of San Diego Bay.

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

The project will build on the results of an outreach and engagement process that began with in-person and virtual meetings with internal stakeholders (DPR, California Coastal Commission, and State Coastal Conservancy) and representatives from the San Diego Bayshore Bike Camp Project, Parks California, and Thrive Outside San Diego/The San Diego Foundation. This was followed by meetings with the Campo Band of Diegueno Mission Indians, Jamul Indian Village, the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians, and other partner organizations. With the support of these partner organizations, a total of 887 people responded to a survey designed to gather input on the proposed project. A Community Beach Day was also held at Silver Strand State Beach, drawing 122 attendees. Attendees toured a proposed camper trailer, and a cottage, and provided their opinion on preferred overnight options. As part of the proposed project, DPR will continue to conduct community engagement throughout the planning and design of the campground.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,500,000
California Department of Parks and Recreation	\$1,000,000
Project Total	\$2,500,000

The expected source of funds for this project is a FY 2022/2023 appropriation from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68, Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 80000-80173). Chapter 9 of Proposition 68 (Sections 80120-80121) allocates funds to the Conservancy to enhance and

protect coastal and ocean resources, and, in particular, to grant funds to public agencies and nonprofits organizations to develop lower-cost coastal accommodations (PRC Section 80120(b)).

Consistent with the purposes of this funding source, the proposed project consists of developing plans to expand the campground at Silver Strand State Beach to increase the number of lower-cost overnight accommodations.

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 is consistent with Chapter 10 of Division 21 of the PRC, Sections 31411-31414. Pursuant to PRC Section 31412(a), the Conservancy may award grants and undertake projects as part of its Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations Program (Explore the Coast Overnight) to facilitate the development of lower-cost accommodations within one- and one-half miles of the coast.

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Explore the Coast Overnight program because it will plan the expansion of an existing campground and associated amenities at Silver Strand State Beach in San Diego County.

Pursuant to Section 31413, the Conservancy’s implementation of the Explore the Coast Overnight program must be guided by a lower-cost accommodations assessment. The Conservancy completed the ETCO Assessment on March 14, 2019. The proposed project, identified in the assessment as a high priority project, will provide an increase of overnight options in the City of Coronado, San Diego County, a location identified in the Assessment as having low concentration of lower-cost coastal accommodations in a county with high occupancy rate for coastal accommodations.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2.5 Recreation Facilities & Amenities**, the proposed project will plan the expansion of an existing campground to enhance coastal recreational opportunities.

Consistent with **Goal 2.7 Explore the Coast Overnight**, the proposed project will plan the expansion of an existing campground to increase the supply of lower-cost overnight accommodations.

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

only planning studies and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved or funded. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection and resource evaluation activities. Environmental factors will be considered in the studies undertaken pursuant to this authorization.

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