

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
April 17, 2025

POINT MOLATE BAY TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

Project No. 25-010-01
Project Manager: Virgilio Cuasay

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$2,646,000 to the East Bay Regional Park District to undertake the Point Molate Bay Trail Construction Project, consisting of constructing 1.25 miles of the San Francisco Bay Trail from the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Trail eastern landing to the City of Richmond’s Point Molate Beach Park in Contra Costa County.

LOCATION: City of Richmond, Contra Costa County

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Map of the Point Molate Bay Trail Segments](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [Project Photos](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [February 3, 2022, San Francisco Bay Trail: Point Molate Trail Construction Staff Recommendation](#)
 - Exhibit 5: [March 25, 2021, City of Richmond Point Molate Bay Trail PCA Grant Staff Recommendation](#)
 - Exhibit 6: [San Francisco Bay Trail at Point Molate Final Initial Study / Mitigated Negative Declaration](#)
 - Exhibit 7: [Project Letters](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommend 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 two million six hundred forty-six thousand dollars (\$2,646,000) to the East Bay Regional Park District (“the grantee”) to undertake the Point Molate Bay Trail Construction Project, consisting of

constructing 1.25 miles of the San Francisco Bay Trail from the San Rafael Bridge Trail landing to the City of Richmond's Point Molate Beach Park in Contra Costa 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.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding and Proposition 68 as the source of that funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the project.

In addition, to the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Coastal Access Project Standards'.

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 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the improvement of public access to, within, and around the bay, coast, ridgetops and urban open spaces of the San Francisco Bay area.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a grant of up to \$2,646,000 to the East Bay Regional Park District (the District) to undertake the Point Molate Bay Trail Construction Project (project), consisting of construction of 1.25 miles of the San Francisco Bay Trail from the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Trail eastern landing to the City of Richmond's Point Molate Beach Park in Contra Costa County (Exhibit 1, Figure 1). The project includes restoration of 0.26 acres of wetland-upland transition and other Baylands habitat, as well as habitat enhancement through removal of debris and invasive plants.

The project is one of two segments of a planned 2.5-mile trail. The first segment extends 1.25 miles from the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Trail eastern landing to Point Molate Beach Park (Segment A), and the second segment extends 1.25 miles from Point Molate Beach Park to the Winehaven Historic District (Segment B) (Exhibit 1, Figure 2). The project is Segment A, for which the District owns an easement from the Chevron Corporation for most of the alignment; a small portion (0.15 miles) of Segment A is on the Point Molate Beach Park property owned by the City of Richmond, for which the District has entered into a license agreement to construct, maintain, and operate the Bay Trail. Segment B is located entirely on City of Richmond

property. The District and the City of Richmond have separately raised funds for the segment on their property. Working collaboratively, the District prepared plans, certified a CEQA document (Exhibit 6), and secured permits for the District's Segment A and the City of Richmond's Segment B. The District will build both segments concurrently. Segment A will be operated and maintained by the District.

In February 2022, the Conservancy authorized the Association of Bay Area Governments to disburse up to \$300,000 of Conservancy funds previously authorized through San Francisco Bay Trail Block Grant #6 in the following manner: up to \$150,000 to the District to construct Segment A, and up to \$150,000 to the City of Richmond to construct Segment B (Exhibit 4). Prior to that, in March 2021, the Conservancy authorized a grant of \$1,000,000 to the City of Richmond to construct Segment B (Exhibit 5). The District intended to construct Segments A and B in 2022, but the project was delayed due to permitting challenges, cost increases, and the need to raise additional funds. The Conservancy's grant funds to the City of Richmond will be used to reimburse the District for construction of Segment B.

The full 2.5-mile trail will provide access to a previously inaccessible stretch of the San Francisco Bay shoreline, transforming an isolated stretch of shoreline into an attractive recreational area for walking, bicycling, fishing, kayaking, and public enjoyment of a sandy beach San Francisco Bay shoreline park. There is currently not a safe access route for either pedestrians or cyclists to Point Molate Beach Park (Exhibit 2, Figure 1), which is approximately four miles from Richmond's city center (Exhibit 1, Figure 3). These new connected trail segments will make it possible for residents of Richmond's severely disadvantaged communities (Exhibit 1, Figure 4) to access Point Molate Beach Park safely, providing the recreational benefits of a non-motorized trail. Although there are limited opportunities for large-scale habitat restoration in this region, because of the extensive development, there are still opportunities for small-scale restoration and living shoreline elements (Exhibit 3, Figure 1).

The project consists of the following elements:

Public Access & Education

- **Construct a 1.25-mile segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail** along the San Pablo Peninsula shoreline, with connections to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge to the south and a 1.25-mile City of Richmond segment of Bay Trail to the north.
- **Install interpretive educational panels** to engage the public. The panels will feature information about the site history and previous uses and highlight the importance of Bay habitats.

Restoration Elements

- **Restore seasonal wetlands** to offset the impacts of the trail construction, resulting in an expansion of seasonal wetlands for a net gain of seasonal wetland habitat.
- **Daylight a culverted ephemeral stream.** The project includes removing a culvert and replacing it with a gravel bed to daylight drainage. The work also includes installing native plants and constructing a boardwalk (Exhibit 3, Figure 2) over the riparian habitat to preserve and protect the habitat elements.

- **Remove or cap contaminants.** The project will remove or cap contaminated soils, remove creosote railroad ties, and remove contaminated railroad ballast. Some of the soil at the project site has contaminants from when the railroad used arsenic to manage vegetation along the rail corridor. These soils will either be excavated and hauled to a disposal site or capped in place so that the contaminants will not harm the public or pollute Bay waters.
- **Remove invasive plants.** The project area is dominated by invasive plants. The project includes clearing the invasive vegetation within the 20-foot trail corridor that runs the entire 1.25-mile length of the trail. Targeted invasives identified in the biological resources assessment include French broom, pampas grass, ice plant, Himalayan blackberry, and fennel.
- **Remove debris.** The project will collect and remove marine debris along the bay shoreline, which has not been done in decades, thereby enhancing beaches, coastal grassland, and scrub habitats.
- **Install protective fencing.** The project will install fencing to protect wetland and coastal prairie and wetland habitats and to prevent shoreline erosion. The fencing along the trail will be the District's standard two-rail wooden fence that is wildlife friendly. It will prevent erosion by keeping trail users on the trail and dissuading them from trampling sensitive natural resources near the trail and accessing the water in areas susceptible to erosion.

Green and Grey Shoreline Stabilization

- **Install rock revetments.** The project will install rock revetments to stabilize the shoreline and protect it from erosion.
- **Plant native plants.** The project will plant strategically located native plants to safeguard the shoreline habitat, shielding it from potential harm caused by the increasingly severe winter storms associated with climate change.

Site Description: The Chevron Corporation, which owns most of the project site, provided the District with a surface easement in 2009 for the construction and maintenance of the trail and to restore adjacent shoreline habitat. The trail will be constructed along the San Pablo peninsula starting near Stenmark Drive on the north side of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge (I-580) and extending through Chevron's property to the Point Molate Beach Park in the City of Richmond. The trail will be constructed in a previously disturbed area (Exhibit 2, Figure 2) that coincides with or is adjacent to the old Richmond Belt Railway corridor (Exhibit 2, Figure 3). This portion of the Chevron property includes the former railway corridor, access roads for maintenance (Exhibit 2, Figure 4) of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, and coastal areas. Approximately 1.1-mile of the trail will be constructed within an easement granted by Chevron to the District for construction, operation, and maintenance of the trail, and an additional 0.15-mile segment will be constructed by the District within the City of Richmond's property as the trail approaches Point Molate Beach Park. Some of the structures from past uses remain, but the site is largely undeveloped and includes natural bay and shoreline, expansive vistas of Mount Tamalpais and the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, grasslands and open space, and

shoreline and terrestrial habitats. The 2.5-mile trail will eventually connect to a regional shoreline park on land adjacent to the City-owned Segment B. The Conservancy authorized a grant to the District for the Point Molate acquisition in November 2024.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The District manages 73 parks in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, managing over 125,000 acres of land, over 1,300 miles of trails, and 55 miles of shoreline. The District is a critical partner in the implementation and maintenance of the San Francisco Bay Trail, and has substantial experience in managing many types of projects funded by grants from state and regional public agencies, including planning, design and building Class I Bay Trail projects. Examples include the recently completed Pinole Shores to Bayfront Park section of the Bay Trail in Pinole, and the Albany to Buchanan portion of the Bay Trail in Albany. Over the long term, the project team will evaluate post-construction success by implementing a monitoring plan with both quantitative and qualitative performance standards. These standards will include assessing the health and vigor of plant materials, the effectiveness of slope protection, the frequency of trash and debris removal, and the methods of weed control. Annual monitoring will track the success of restoration and maintenance efforts, identifying areas where intervention may be needed to meet performance goals. Long-term operations and maintenance will be handled by District staff and funded through the Park District's General Fund. Additionally, a Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Plan (MMRP) was developed during the CEQA compliance process. The implementation of MMRP mitigation measures and regulatory permit requirements will be among the first steps in ensuring the project's success.

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.

With help of project partners, the District has secured the additional funds (see Project Financing section below) and the project is ready to proceed on award of Conservancy funding. The District has secured regulatory permits and completed final site designs, plans, and specifications. The District plans to publish bid documents, review applicants, award a contract, and begin construction in July of 2025. The project leverages additional state funding as well as funding from local government sources (see Project Financing).

The Bay Trail is specifically recognized in the California Recreational Trail Plan, as well as numerous regional and local plans including the San Francisco Bay Area's Plan Bay Area 2040 as a Priority Conservation Area, all nine Bay Area County General or Master Trail Plans, and the public access policies in the San Francisco Bay Plan.

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

The project is designed, and will be maintained, to be sustainable and resilient to a changing environment. The proposed project will be located above 2050 sea level rise projections. (See Exhibit 4 for details.)

4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

This project provides a critical connection to a sandy San Francisco Bay beach for all Bay Trail users, but particularly for residents of the City of Richmond who have no safe non-vehicular means of accessing this park. (See Exhibit 4 for details.)

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

The City of Richmond’s Point Molate Community Advisory Committee provided the primary forum for public review of project design. Its membership included a representative cross section of Richmond residents, including some who are leaders of Trails for Richmond Action Committee, the California Native Plant Society, and Citizens for a Sustainable Point Molate. (See Exhibit 4 for details.) In addition to the above effort, the project receives continued support by elected officials of the State Legislature, Rich City Rides, Urban Tilth, and Yes Nature to Neighborhoods (Exhibit 7).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$2,646,000
CA Natural Resources Agency	\$1,202,830
CA Department of Parks and Recreation	\$900,000
Metropolitan Transportation Commission	\$1,000,000
East Bay Regional Park District	\$1,993,570
Project Total	\$7,742,400

Conservancy funding is anticipated to come from a fiscal year 2018/2019 appropriation to the Conservancy from the “California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018” (Prop 68, Public Resources Code Division 46, Chapters 1-13, Sections 80000-80173). Chapter 8 of Prop 68 allocates funds to the Conservancy for projects to restore San Francisco Bay in accordance with the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority (SFBRA) Act (Public Resources Code section 80110(b)(10)). The SFBRA Act authorizes grants for projects that will restore, protect, or enhance tidal wetlands, managed ponds, or natural habitats on the shoreline in the San Francisco Bay area and shoreline access and recreational amenity projects that are part of a habitat restoration project; and such grants can be used for all phases of such projects, including construction, monitoring, operation, and maintenance. (Gov. Code section 66704.5.) The proposed project is consistent with the SFBRA Act (Gov. Code sections 66700 – 66706) because it will construct San Francisco Bay Trail as part of a project to restore and enhance tidal and seasonal wetlands on the shoreline of San Francisco Bay. Accordingly, the proposed project is an appropriate use of Proposition 68 funds allocated for restoration of San Francisco Bay consistent with the SFBRA Act.

In February 2022, the Conservancy authorized disbursement of funding that had been previously authorized via a San Francisco Bay Trail Block Grant #6 to the Association of Bay Area Governments (Exhibit 4). However, the contract for the block grant expired in February 2025, and the funds will revert to the Conservancy. Funding from the California Natural Resources Agency comes from their Trails and Greenways Program. Funding from the California Department of Parks and Recreation comes from their Recreational Trails Program. Funding from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission comes from their Priority Conservation Areas Program.

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 authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165 regarding San Francisco Bay Area projects. The proposed authorization is consistent with Section 31162(a) because it will help achieve the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program goal of improving public access to and around the bay through completion of the Bay Trail, the Ridge Trail, and the connecting regional trail system. The proposed project will complete a segment of the Bay Trail. (See Exhibit 4 for details.)

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

Consistent with **Goal 2.4: Build Trails**, the proposed project will construct 1.25 miles of the San Francisco Bay Trail from the San Rafael Bridge Trail landing to the City of Richmond’s Point Molate Beach Park. The proposed project will construct a regionally significant public trail that will link the Bay Trail and the Water Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 3.2: Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the proposed project will restore approximately 0.26 acres of wetland-upland transition habitat and other Baylands habitats and will enhance additional habitat through removal of debris and invasive plants.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

On May 1, 2018, the District adopted the San Francisco Bay Trail at Point Molate Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) (Exhibit 6). The IS/MND addresses the entirety of the 2.5 miles of trail - both the 1.25-mile segment of Bay Trail located on City of Richmond property – Segment B (Exhibit 5) and the 1.25-mile segment of Bay Trail located (mostly) on District property – Segment A. Although the IS/MND addresses the entire 2.5-mile trail, the Conservancy adopted findings regarding the environmental effects of Segment B when it authorized a grant for Segment B in March 2021 (Exhibit 5). The Conservancy adopted findings regarding the environmental effects of Segment A when it authorized a grant for Segment A in February 2022 (Exhibit 4).

The Conservancy staff previously filed a Notice of Determination for Segment A. Segment A has not changed, and there is no new information or changed circumstances that would trigger the

need for additional CEQA review for Segment A. No additional actions under CEQA are required.