

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

February 19, 2026

BAYSHORE BIKEWAY RESILIENCY PROJECT AUGMENTATION

Project No. 23-038-001

Project Manager: Kellan Warner

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$2,700,000 to augment the Conservancy's previously authorized grant to the City of Imperial Beach for the Bayshore Bikeway Resiliency Project, consisting of conducting outreach and planning as well as preparing designs, environmental compliance documents, and permit applications needed to retrofit a 1.2-mile segment of the Bayshore Bikeway into a multi-benefit community flood protection and ecosystem resilience corridor in Imperial Beach, San Diego County.

LOCATION: Bayshore Bikeway, Imperial Beach, San Diego County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [September 14, 2023 Staff Recommendation](#)

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 disbursement of up to two million seven hundred thousand dollars (\$2,700,000) to the City of Imperial Beach (the "grantee") to augment the Conservancy grant authorized on September 14, 2023 of \$2,141,205, for a total authorized amount of \$4,841,205 for the Bayshore Bikeway Resiliency Project, consisting of conducting outreach and planning as well as preparing designs, environmental compliance documents, and permit applications needed to retrofit a 1.2-mile segment of the Bayshore Bikeway into a multi-benefit community flood protection and ecosystem resilience corridor in

Imperial Beach, San Diego County; subject to the same conditions as the September 14, 2023 authorization.

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 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Climate Ready Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$2,700,000 to the City of Imperial Beach (the City) to augment a Conservancy grant authorized on September 14, 2023 of \$2,141,205 (Exhibit 2), for a total authorized amount of \$4,841,205, to undertake the Bayshore Bikeway Resiliency Project (the project), which consists of conducting outreach and planning as well as preparing designs, environmental compliance documents, and permit applications needed to retrofit a 1.2-mile segment of the Bayshore Bikeway into a multi-benefit community flood protection and ecosystem resilience corridor in Imperial Beach, San Diego County.

The City requires additional funding to complete the project. The project includes: (1) the preparation of engineering design for the living levee and multi-purposed detention basin; (2) landscape designs for the living levee, bike path, and access nodes; (3) technical studies, including but not limited to Geotechnical Analysis, Electrical Engineering, Sampling and Analysis Plan, Wetland Delineation Studies, Public Access Plan, and Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment; (4) California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) supporting studies, including air quality, greenhouse gases, cultural/archaeology, traffic, energy, and noise; (5) Permitting as needed, which could include Federal Emergency Management Agency Letter of Map Revision, California Coastal Commission Coastal Development Permit, US Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit, Regional Water Quality Control Board 401 Certification, Section 7 Consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service, and California Department of Fish and Wildlife Streambed Alteration permit.

Project costs increased for three primary reasons: (1) regulatory agencies' requests for additional information on restoration areas, including additional or more detailed technical studies primarily related to biology and cultural data, as well as levee accreditation; (2) direction from the City of Imperial Beach—following input from the City Council, advisory groups, the public, and tribes—to incorporate design changes and additional design considerations based on extensive public outreach; and (3) the added labor and resources needed to complete the regulatory-agency requested technical studies and permitting for design and engineering activities. Additionally, inflation has substantially increased labor rates and capital costs since project inception.

The City has made significant progress towards completing the project. It has completed public outreach that included 35 community and tribal events with over 2,000 participants. The project team completed numerous technical studies including cultural and paleontological, biological resources, wetland delineation, rare plant surveys, hydraulic and hydrology, soils analyses plans, and a geotechnical survey. The City and US Fish and Wildlife Service posted the Notice of Intent as required by NEPA and the Notice of Preparation as required by CEQA and the environmental compliance team has finished existing conditions. The engineering and landscape design teams have reached 30% design and engineering plans and are on track to complete 60% design by May 2026. Overall, Phase 1 public outreach, design engineering, permitting, and environmental compliance is approximately 45% complete.

The project is needed primarily to address flooding during extreme tides (Exhibit 3). The segment of the City that abuts south San Diego Bay, known as the Bayside neighborhood, is a disadvantaged community that already experiences coastal and stormwater flooding. Bay waters episodically flood the residential area, including the Bayside Elementary School. Previous City-led coastal flooding vulnerability assessments identified that sea-level rise threatens to dramatically increase the frequency and severity of flooding in this area. Increased water levels in San Diego Bay will also threaten to drown marsh fringe habitat due to the steep slopes that exist along the local shoreline. The location of the Bayshore Bikeway, which is enjoyed by thousands of users each week for recreation and bike-commuting, has been identified as suitable for use as both a bikeway and a flood control structure. Retrofitting the bikeway to a living levee will protect vulnerable communities in the City against flooding, enhance coastal public access, and provide adequate space for wetland habitats to move upslope as sea-levels rise.

Site Description: The project focuses on a 1.2-mile section of the Bayshore Bikeway, a heavily used recreational corridor that lies adjacent to the shoreline of San Diego Bay along the coastal communities of National City, Chula Vista, San Diego, Coronado, and Imperial Beach. The Bikeway along the project site lies at the intersection of the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which consists of wetland habitat, and the Bayside residential community, which is prone to flooding during extreme tides (Exhibit 3).

The project's development footprint encompasses land and water areas under different jurisdictional authorities. The agencies with water and land use authority include the City of Imperial Beach, City of San Diego, City of Coronado, San Diego Unified Port District, San Diego-Arizona Eastern Railway Company/Metropolitan Transit Board, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and South Bay Union School District. At this phase, all agencies have been in continuous engagement and are supportive of the proposed project.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The City has a long history of successfully administering grant funds, including the following relevant and recent grants: Ocean Protection Council's Prop 68 Grant for an earlier planning phase of the Bayshore Bikeway Resiliency Project (30% designs), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Coastal Resilience Fund Grant for Creating a Community Resilience Plan, and State Coastal Conservancy Grant for the Tijuana River Valley Sediment Management Work Plan and Monitoring Program. The project's consulting team has vast

experience with similar coastal engineering projects such as the Bayshore Bikeway Resiliency Project, Phase 1: Feasibility and Conceptual Design; Cardiff State Beach Living Shoreline Project; Pillar Point Harbor West Trail Living Shoreline Project; Humboldt Bay Natural Shoreline Infrastructure Project; and White Slough Sea Level Rise Resiliency and Tidal Marsh Restoration. For this project, the City intends to implement a coordinating consultant model whereby the consultant in conjunction with City staff will provide oversight to ensure that the project schedule and milestones are completed.

Post-implementation management, maintenance, and monitoring of the project will be completed by the City of Imperial Beach Public Works staff, including the inspection of levees, tidal gates, path lighting, and impacts to existing or planted vegetation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The recommended authorization is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria last updated on September 23, 2021, as described in the September 14, 2023 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$2,700,000
Ocean Protection Council	\$1,158,500
Previously awarded Coastal Conservancy Grant (09/13/2023)	\$2,141,205
Project Total	\$5,999,705

Conservancy funding is anticipated to come from a Fiscal Year 2023/24 appropriation from the General Fund to the Conservancy to address "urgent sea-level rise adaptation and coastal resilience needs using nature-based solutions or other strategies" (The Budget Act of 2023, Chapter 38, Statutes of 2023 (AB 102)). The project is consistent with this funding source because it will protect communities and natural resources from sea level rise by designing a living levee system that will protect the adjacent disadvantaged community and provide transitional habitat for wetland migration. Transitional habitats ensure sea level rise resiliency, which is an environmental benefit to the State.

Conservancy funding is also anticipated to come from an appropriation to the Conservancy from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84, Public Resources Code sections 75001 et seq.). This funding source is available to the Conservancy for projects that are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code and that protect coastal waters and watersheds, protect and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters and lands, and/or promote access to and enjoyment of coastal resources. (Section 75060(b).) Proposition 84 authorizes funding specifically for projects that protect San Diego Bay and adjacent watersheds (Section 75060(f).) For purposes of Proposition 84, "San Diego Bay and adjacent watersheds" includes the coastal and bay watersheds within San Diego County. (Section 75072.6.) The project is an appropriate

use of Proposition 84 funds because it will protect San Diego Bay by providing transitional habitat for wetland migration in San Diego County.

The previous phase of this project, a stakeholder-driven feasibility study (Exhibit 3), was funded by a Prop 68 planning grant from the Ocean Protection Council (OPC). The current phase of the project was awarded a second OPC Prop 68 planning grant to continue the stakeholder-driven design process.

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 will be undertaken pursuant to Section 31113 of Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which authorizes the Conservancy to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction (Section 31113(a)). Sections 31113(b) and (c) authorize the Conservancy to award grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to undertake projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address extreme weather events, sea level rise, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. The Conservancy must, to the extent allowed, prioritize projects that maximize public benefits and accomplish one of several purposes, including reducing flood risk and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat.

Consistent with these requirements, the proposed project will help develop sea level rise adaptation strategies utilizing the Bikeway shoreline infrastructure to reduce the threat of sea level rise for the community of Imperial Beach.

Section 31113 also requires the Conservancy to prioritize projects that use natural infrastructure to help coastal communities adapt to climate change and projects that provide multiple public benefits, including, but not limited to, protection of communities, natural resources, and recreational opportunities. See Section 31113(d)(1). As discussed above, the proposed project will help develop future nature-based adaptation measures to protect public access and community infrastructure.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S 2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN:

Consistent with **Goal 4.1 Sea Level Rise Adaptation Projects**, the recommended grant is for planning and designing a project that will increase resiliency by adapting ecosystems to protect communities, public access infrastructure, and natural resources from sea level rise.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The recommended authorization to fund outreach, planning, design, environmental review, and preparation of permit applications is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act

pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Sections 15262 and 15306 because these activities involve only data gathering, resource evaluation, planning, and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved. Consistent with Section 15262, the project will consider environmental factors. Consistent with Section 15306, the data collection and resource evaluation components of the project will not cause major or serious disturbance to the environment.

Conservancy staff filed a Notice of Exemption (State Clearinghouse number 2023100239) for its 2023 grant authorization for the project, which was published on October 9, 2023.