

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
April 23, 2026

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONSULTANT CONTRACT PHASE 3

Project No. 22-061-01
Project Manager: Lilly Allen

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$400,000 to augment the Conservancy's previously authorized contract for technical assistance with environmental documentation, permit applications, and project planning to support wildfire resilience project development across the Conservancy's Jurisdiction.

LOCATION: Statewide

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [2022 Project Staff Recommendation](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [2025 Project Staff Recommendation](#)
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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 four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) to augment the contract previously authorized by the Conservancy on September 22, 2022 and augmented on February 13, 2025, for a total authorized amount of one million eight hundred thousand dollars (\$1,800,000), for environmental documentation, permit applications, and project planning to provide technical support for wildfire resilience project development across the Conservancy's jurisdiction, subject to the conditions of the September 22, 2022 and February 13, 2025 authorizations.

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 recommended authorization is consistent with the current Conservancy Project

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of \$400,000 to augment the contract previously authorized by the Conservancy on September 22, 2022 (Exhibit 2) and augmented on February 13, 2025 (Exhibit 3), for a total authorized amount of \$1,800,000, for environmental documentation, permit applications, and project planning to provide technical support for wildfire resilience project development across the Conservancy's jurisdiction.

The Conservancy identified a need for technical assistance with environmental documentation to support implementation of wildfire resiliency projects. Under the 2022 authorization, the Conservancy retained a contractor, Montrose Environmental Solutions, Inc ("Montrose"), who has been providing technical assistance to grant recipients and potential grant recipients, including on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance, environmental documentation, and permit applications to implement wildfire resiliency projects within the Conservancy's jurisdiction. Conservancy staff determines which grant recipients and potential grant recipients will receive assistance from Montrose. Potential grant recipients are those who are eligible for Conservancy grants and whose wildfire resilience project(s) would likely be recommended for a Conservancy grant.

To date, Montrose has completed the following work pursuant to the Conservancy's contract:

- Advised 27 local government agencies and nonprofit partners regarding strategies for CEQA compliance on fire resilience projects, including CEQA documents, CEQA exemptions, and Governor's Emergency Order suspensions.
- Assisted five local government agency and nonprofit partners in preparing applications for Governor's Emergency Order suspension requests by preparing required Geographic Information System maps and providing strategic and technical advice.
- Prepared materials and made presentations to local agency and nonprofit partners regarding CEQA compliance, Governor's Executive Order suspensions, and disposal of biomass related to fire resilience projects.
- Prepared CalFIRE Vegetation Treatment Program-Program Environmental Impact Report Project Specific Analysis (VTP-PEIR PSA) for a 597-acre project area in Humboldt County, including required reconnaissance surveys.

Montrose is currently preparing the following environmental documentation under the Conservancy contract:

- CalFIRE VTP-PEIR PSA for 31,234-acre project area in Eastern Humboldt and Western Trinity Counties.

- CalFIRE VTP-PEIR PSA for all lands owned by the City of Santa Cruz.
- Public Works Plan for coastal San Luis Obispo County, to streamline Coastal Act permitting of vegetation management projects within the County’s Coastal Zone.
- Biological and Cultural survey support for high-priority projects.

Overall, this contract has helped achieve environmental compliance for wildfire resilience work on over 100,000 acres.

Planned work includes preparing a CalFIRE VTP-PEIR PSA for a 3,200-acre project area in Santa Cruz County. Future work will include providing consulting, advice, surveys and document preparation for fire resilience projects selected by the Conservancy.

Conservancy staff see an increased need for such technical assistance from grant recipients and potential grant recipients. To date, \$1,073,081 has been authorized in the contractor work program and further projects for technical assistance are being developed. Future technical assistance may relate to shaded fuel breaks, forest health measures, prescribed and cultural burns, mechanical and manual treatments, forest thinning, native plant restoration to improve wildfire resilience, prescribed herbivory (including infrastructure improvements), and other actions designed to improve overall resiliency to wildfire.

Site Description: The consultant will provide technical assistance to support projects within coastal watersheds statewide and the nine bay area counties (Exhibit 1).

Contractor Qualifications: Montrose was selected for this contract following State of California guidelines and processes. Montrose has extensive experience in preparing environmental documentation for compliance with CEQA, and assisting with regulatory permitting, including in connection with wildfire projects, and has demonstrated communication skills. Montrose has demonstrated success at tasks assigned to them under the contract thus far.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

In selecting entities to receive technical assistance from Montrose, the Conservancy chooses those whose project(s) meets the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy (current authorization)	\$400,000
Coastal Conservancy (2025 authorization)	\$500,000
Coastal Conservancy (2022 authorization)	\$900,000
Project Total	\$1,800,000

Funds for this project are expected to come from a block grant of \$20.28 million to the Coastal Conservancy from the Department of Conservation under its Regional Forest and Fire Capacity Program (RFFCP). The Conservancy is one of nine recipients of RFFCP block grants. The goal of the RFFCP is to increase regional capacity to prioritize, develop, and implement projects that

improve forest health and fire resiliency. Projects funded by the RFFCP block grant typically include training and education to increase local capacity to undertake wildfire resilience projects; regional planning, coordination, and data gathering activities to support development of wildfire resilience projects; and support for local entities in the environmental review and permitting process. Using these funds to provide technical assistance to grantees and potential grantees will support public entities in the environmental review and permitting process and therefore is appropriate use of the RFFCP block grant.

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 recommended authorization remains consistent with the Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation as described in the September 22, 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

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

Consistent with **Goal 4.2 Wildfire Resilience**, the recommended authorization will provide technical assistance that supports implementation of wildfire resilience projects within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

Providing technical assistance with environmental review and permitting wildfire resilience projects is statutorily and categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under California Code of Regulations sections 15262 and 15306, respectively. Section 15262 exempts planning and feasibility studies for possible future actions that have not been approved, adopted, or funded. Section 15306 exempts basic data collection and resource evaluation activities that do not result in a major disturbance to an environmental resource. The contractor will only assist with planning for projects that have not yet been approved and with data collection and resource evaluation activities that will not result in disturbance to the environment.