

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
April 23, 2026

**HUNTINGTON HARBOR PORTOFINO COVE MANAGEMENT**

Project No. 06-105-05  
Project Manager: Danh Lai

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$20,000 to Orange County Coastkeeper to manage the Conservancy’s public access easement at Portofino Cove in Huntington Harbor in the City of Huntington Beach, Orange County.

**LOCATION:** Huntington Harbor, City of Huntington Beach, Orange County

---

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Images](#)

---

**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 twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000) to Orange County Coastkeeper (the “grantee”) to manage the Conservancy’s public access easement at Portofino Cove in Huntington Harbor in the City of Huntington Beach, Orange County (the “project”).

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.

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.
  3. The Orange County Coastkeeper is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.
- 

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

### PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization to disburse up to \$20,000 to Orange County Coastkeeper (OCCK) to manage the Conservancy's public access easement at Portofino Cove in Huntington Harbor in the City of Huntington Beach, Orange County (the project).

On February 28, 2006, the Conservancy accepted the Irrevocable Offer to Dedicate Public Access Easement and Declaration of Restrictions, recorded as Instrument No.: 85-098543 (public access easement), for an accessway at Portofino Cove. While most of Huntington Harbor is inaccessible to the public because it is surrounded by private residences and boat docks, this public access easement provides an opportunity for the public to walk along the harbor.

Since 2007, OCCK, who serves as a steward for fresh- and saltwater ecosystems, has managed this public access easement. OCCK has continued to express interest in managing the accessway. The project will fund the next five years of management, including regular trash pickup, and repair and replacement of the benches, signs, trash cans, and gates as needed.

**Site Description:** The public access easement is approximately 500 feet long and runs the periphery of a small peninsula within Huntington Harbor (Exhibits 1 and 2). The public access easement provides public access within the gated area of Huntington Harbor. Private boat docks extend along nearly the entire length of the public access easement, and private residences line the inland side. Seabridge Park, a city park, is adjacent to the easement, and the easement extends to the public parking lot that serves the park. The homeowners' associations hold the underlying fee title of the easement area and have installed two gates across the sidewalk at the location of the accessway, benches, trash cans, and signs to indicate public access. The two gates have timed, automatic locks so they are open for public access to the walkway easement during daylight hours.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:** OCCK has received more than one hundred grants over its 25-year history, several of which were awarded by the Conservancy. OCCK has a well-established and proven accounting and grant management business systems to ensure efficient and accurate grant management and reporting. The Conservancy has awarded OCCK numerous grants for river education, coastal access management, and marine research and restoration projects that have produced successful and beneficial results. Further, OCCK has a demonstrated record of long-term management, maintenance, and monitoring of grant-funded projects.

**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 project will manage and facilitate public access to the Portofino Cove accessway, an area largely inaccessible to the public.

**5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.**

The Portofino Cove accessway provides a unique scenic view of Huntington Harbor that is not available elsewhere due to private residences and boat docks. Consistent with the scenic overlooks standard, this accessway is accessible to those with physical disabilities.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>

The anticipated source of Conservancy funding is the Fiscal Year 2020/2021 appropriation from the Coastal Access Account, codified at Section 30620.2 of the Public Resources Code. The Coastal Access Account makes funds available to the Conservancy, upon appropriation by the Legislature, “for grants to private . . . nonprofit entities or organizations for the development, maintenance, and operation of . . . existing facilities that provide public access to the shoreline of the sea, as defined in Section 30115” (Section 30620.2). “‘Sea’ means the Pacific Ocean and all harbors, bays, channels, estuaries, salt marshes, sloughs, and other areas subject to tidal action through any connection with the Pacific Ocean, excluding [areas within San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission jurisdiction and] nonestuarine rivers, streams, tributaries, creeks, and flood control and drainage channels” (Section 30115).

The project is consistent with the funding source because the proposed authorization is an award to a nonprofit organization to manage an existing accessway that provides public access to Portofino Cove in Huntington Harbor, which is a harbor subject to tidal action through a connection with the Pacific Ocean.

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 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline for public access and enjoyment of coastal resources.

The Conservancy may award grants to nonprofit organizations to manage lands for public access purposes to and along the coast (Section 31400.1). The project is consistent with Section 31400.1 because OCCK is a nonprofit organization, and the project will manage the Portofino Cove accessway for public access and enjoyment of coastal resources.

The Conservancy may provide assistance as required to aid nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of Division 21 (Section 31400.3). The project is consistent with 31400.3 because public coastal accessway maintenance is a related function that is necessary to meet the objectives of Division 21, including the objective for the Conservancy to serve as a repository for lands, including easements (Section 31104.1).

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

Consistent with **Goal 2.3.1 Expand Accessibility**, the project will continue to provide access to a waterfront adjacent to private property that would not be accessible otherwise.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act review, pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 15301(c), (g) (Existing Facilities), which exempts operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use, including existing sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities as well as "[n]ew copy on existing on and off-premise signs." The project is consistent with Section 15301 because the project site that will be managed is an existing public facility, akin to those discussed above; management will involve negligible or no expansion of existing or former use; and management may include regular trash removal and repair of signage, benches, garbage cans, and gates.

Upon Conservancy approval, Staff will file a Notice of Exemption.