

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
April 23, 2026

PETALUMA RIVER PARK ADVANCED PLANNING

Project No. 22-084-01
Project Manager: Virgilio Cuasay

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$2,000,000 to the Petaluma River Park Foundation to augment Conservancy grants totaling \$3,050,200 to expand the scope of the Petaluma River Park Advanced Planning Project (formerly the Petaluma River Park Planning Project), consisting of advanced park planning and designs, environmental review, permit applications, and Coastal Stories interpretive material designs associated with development of Petaluma River Park in Petaluma, Sonoma County.

LOCATION: Petaluma River Park, Petaluma, Sonoma County

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Figures and Photos](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)
- Exhibit 4: [December 1, 2022 Petaluma River Park Planning Project Staff Recommendation](#)
- Exhibit 5: [November 21, 2024 Coastal Stories Grant Program Staff Recommendation](#)
- Exhibit 6: [February 19, 2026 Petaluma River Park Planning Project Augmentation Staff Recommendation](#)

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 two million dollars (\$2,000,000) to the Petaluma River Park Foundation (the “grantee”) to augment Conservancy grants totaling \$3,050,200 to expand the scope of the Petaluma River Park Advanced Planning Project (formerly the Petaluma River Park Planning Project), consisting of

community engagement, park plan development, specific project designs, research and design of interpretive materials under the Coastal Stories Grant Program, environmental review and permitting, and completion of final designs and construction drawings associated with development of Petaluma River Park in Petaluma, Sonoma County, subject to the conditions of the December 1, 2022, November 21, 2024, and February 19, 2026, 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 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Program.
2. The proposed project remains consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Petaluma River Park Foundation is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize up to \$2,000,000 to augment Conservancy grants totaling \$3,050,200 to the Petaluma River Park Foundation (PRPF) to expand the scope of the Petaluma River Park Advanced Planning Project (formerly the Petaluma River Park Planning Project), consisting of community engagement, park plan development, specific project designs, research and design of interpretive materials under the Coastal Stories Grant Program (Coastal Stories), environmental review and permitting, and completion of final designs and construction drawings associated with development of Petaluma River Park (River Park) in Petaluma, Sonoma County (the project). See Exhibit 1 for the project location.

The River Park is a 35-acre riverfront park in downtown Petaluma that, once complete, will feature restored and enhanced habitat, community-focused and culturally relevant amenities, and nature-forward public access, including internal trails and access to the Petaluma River (Exhibit 2). The Conservancy authorized the original grant of \$1,395,800 on December 1, 2022 (Exhibit 4) for the project, consisting of community engagement, park plan development, specific project designs, and environmental review. Shortly after the authorization, PRPF utilized private funding to acquire the adjacent 500 Hopper Street (Exhibit 2) property that contained 11 acres that were suitable for park development. This acquisition added acreage for amenities, open space, and habitat restoration and enhancement, but also increased complexity in connecting the two waterway-separated parcels.

Since the original 2022 authorization, the Conservancy authorized \$57,120 (Exhibit 5) on November 21, 2024 to fund the research and design of interpretive materials under Coastal Stories, and the Executive Officer augmented the grant by \$148,880 on December 3, 2024 to support increased costs associated with park expansion. Due to the cost of finalizing 30%

schematic designs that address the complexities of park expansion, the Conservancy authorized \$1,448,400 on February 19, 2026 (Exhibit 6) to resolve a funding gap.

As of March 2026, PRPF fully completed a community-led engagement process, the Petaluma River Park Concept Plan, initial resource assessments and site investigations, and 30% designs. PRPF partially completed its Equitable Development Plan, and research for interpretive materials under Coastal Stories—these tasks will continue under the project. The project, as expanded, will complete advance designs from 30% to 100%, preparing it for construction. The project’s major tasks include:

- Completion of 60% design development,
- Engineering and technical design of the proposed pedestrian and bicycle bridge, connecting the Peninsula Property and Hopper Property parcels,
- Geotechnical investigations and related technical studies,
- Preparation of permit applications,
- Completion of final design package, including construction drawings and specifications at 100% design level, utility coordination, and PG&E permit preparation, and
- Engagement of a general contractor during design to provide pre-construction services, including cost estimating at key milestones, constructability review, logistics planning, and reconciliation with the design team’s estimates.

The project originally included preparation of environmental review documents. However, now that the project has received funding from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire, Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, the project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as described in “CEQA COMPLIANCE” section, below. A portion of the grant funds originally allocated for environmental review are redirected towards advancing project designs and City of Petaluma’s Site Plan & Architectural Review process fees.

These proposed activities represent the final steps required to transition the project from planning to construction.

Site Description: Petaluma River Park is owned by the Petaluma River Park Foundation. It is approximately 35 acres and is located across two sites, the McNear Peninsula and 500 Hopper Street, in the City of Petaluma in Sonoma County. The entire park will be built in phases and will feature a wide range of recreational and cultural amenities, restored and enhanced habitat, and a pedestrian bridge to connect the two sites (See Exhibit 6 for a full site description).

Grant Applicant Qualifications: PRPF is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that formed in 2019 with the intent of acquiring the Peninsula Property to transform it into a public park. While the organization is new, PRPF executive staff have decades of combined experience in nonprofit management, project delivery, branding, and philanthropic campaigns. The PRPF board consists of a diverse set of individuals who bring a range of cultures, backgrounds, and skills, including art, sustainability planning, and accounting to inform its decisions. To help guide its decisions,

the PRPF has consulted with industry professionals with experience in parks, placemaking, land and habitat conservation, and community engagement.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria as described in the December 1, 2022 (Exhibit 4), November 21, 2024 (Exhibit 5), and February 19, 2026 (Exhibit 6) staff recommendations.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy (<i>this authorization</i>)	\$2,000,000
Coastal Conservancy (<i>previous authorizations</i>)	\$3,050,200
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$1,287,000
Creative Work Fund	\$50,000
Private philanthropic funding, including Peter E. Haas, Jr. Family Fund and other donors	\$2,343,406
Project Total	\$8,730,606

Conservancy funding is anticipated to come from the Fiscal Year 2025/26 appropriation to the Conservancy from the General Fund (Budget Act of 2025, Chapter 4, Statutes of 2025 (SB 101), as amended by Chapter 5, Statutes of 2026 (AB 107)). The Budget Act of 2025, as amended, appropriated \$2,000,000 to the Conservancy in local assistance funds specifically for Petaluma River Park support. The project is consistent with the anticipated funding source because the project will advance planning for the Petaluma River Park.

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 December 1, 2022 (Exhibit 4) and November 21, 2024 (Exhibit 5) authorizations.

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

The recommended authorization remains consistent with the Conservancy’s 2023-2027 Strategic Plan as described in the December 1, 2022 (Exhibit 4), November 21, 2024 (Exhibit 5), and February 19, 2026 (Exhibit 6) authorizations.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The project is statutorily exempt from environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Section 21080.57 of the Public Resources Code, which exempts any activity or approval necessary for or incidental to planning, design, site acquisition, construction, operation, or maintenance of public park, or nonmotorized recreational trail facilities funded in whole or in part by the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (2024 Climate Bond). The project is consistent with Section 21080.57 because it will plan for design and development of a public park and nonmotorized recreational trail facilities and has received funding, in part, from the 2024 Climate Bond through a grant authorized by the Conservancy on February 19, 2026.

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