

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

**RESTORING THE SHORELINE FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE**

Project No. 26-001-01

Project Manager: Alexis Barrera

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$312,200 to Grassroots Ecology to undertake the Restoring the Shoreline for People and Wildlife Project, consisting of community engagement, workforce development training, a vegetation survey and ecological report, and restoration and maintenance of 2 acres of upland transition zone habitat and 5.3 acres of grassland habitat at Shoreline Regional Park in Santa Clara County.

**LOCATION:** Shoreline Regional Park, Mountain View, Santa Clara County

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Site Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

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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 a grant of an amount not to exceed three hundred twelve thousand two hundred dollars (\$312,200) to Grassroots Ecology (the “grantee”) to undertake the Restoring the Shoreline for People and Wildlife Project, consisting of community engagement, workforce development training, a vegetation survey and ecological report, and restoration and maintenance of 2 acres of upland transition zone habitat and 5.3 acres of grassland habitat at Shoreline Regional Park in Santa Clara 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, including a plan for signage, to the extent practicable, informing the public that the project received funding from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024.
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.
6. Prior to commencing the project, the grantee shall enter into and record an agreement pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31116(d) sufficient to protect the public interest in the improvements or developments.

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 Conservancy Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. Grassroots Ecology 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 a grant up to \$312,200 to Grassroots Ecology for the Restoring the Shoreline for People and Wildlife Project, consisting of community engagement, workforce development training, a vegetation survey and ecological report, and restoration and maintenance of 2 acres of upland transition zone habitat and 5.3 acres of grassland habitat at Shoreline Regional Park in Santa Clara County (the project). The project, located within San Francisco Bay Area (Exhibit 1), will improve habitat for native wildlife and foster long-lasting stewardship of natural areas.

Shoreline Regional Park in Mountain View is a 750-acre park that supports a variety of recreational activities as well natural areas that include tidal marsh with surrounding wetland-upland transitional habitat and grassland habitat (Exhibit 1, Figure 2). While the tidal marsh habitat supports mostly native vegetation, much of the transitional upland and grassland habitat in the park is dominated by invasive species and lacks native vegetation. The dominance of invasive vegetation reduces the amount of high tide refugia and nesting habitat for marsh-

dependent species, such as the Ridgway's rail, California black rail, and salt marsh harvest mouse, as well as nesting and over-wintering habitat for species, such as the monarch butterfly and burrowing owl.

To restore these degraded habitats and improve conditions for wildlife, the project will remove invasive vegetation, install approximately 1,000 native plants, and conduct 2 years of maintenance. The project will restore and maintain approximately 6.4 acres and maintain an additional 0.9-acre of previously restored habitat. The project will plant vegetation that is resilient to the effects of climate change, providing sustainable habitat for wildlife into the future; provide supplemental drip-irrigation for the first two summers to help the plants acclimate; and will not remove healthy, mature, scenic trees. This restoration will be conducted within two areas of the park (Exhibit 1, Figure 2), totaling 6.4 acres. The project will conduct a pre-project vegetation survey to identify culturally significant species and communicate findings to its California Native American tribal partners. The project will also monitor vegetation and wildlife, track ecological outcomes, and prepare a report to inform future management of the project site.

Grassroots Ecology employs a community-engaged restoration model and maintains strong partnerships with the City of Mountain View (the City). Additional long-standing community partners include Bioblitz.club (a community science nonprofit) and the Mountain View Los Altos High School college-readiness program. The project will conduct outreach that focuses on local schools and programs serving Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and low-income youth to ensure equitable participation in the project. Community volunteers will participate in approximately 48 restoration workdays, removing invasive plants, planting native species, spreading mulch, and helping with plant establishment through seasonal weeding and hand-watering. The project will also offer approximately 18 public educational events, including guided walks and ecology-focused workshops, to teach participants about shoreline habitats, native plant communities, and climate resilience. In addition, Grassroots Ecology will partner with Bioblitz.club to host community science events, where participants document biodiversity, using tools such as iNaturalist. Local schools and youth groups will also engage in hands-on stewardship activities that do not involve paid participation.

In addition to community engagement, the project provides workforce development opportunities for youth and young adults. These include paid internships for 30 high school students from underserved communities, as well as training opportunities for AmeriCorps members and 3 workdays with the San Jose Conservation Corps. This hands-on experience with restoration will teach participants about the local ecology, restoration practices, and long-term stewardship, resulting in knowledge and practical skills that can lead to careers in green jobs.

The project supports the City's Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan, which addresses habitat degradation and the need for ecological and community benefits through park stewardship. The project also complements regional efforts to enhance shoreline resilience to climate change and maintain biodiversity because of its proximity to the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project (SBSRP) north of the project site. The SBSRP is restoring 710 acres of tidal marsh along the shoreline of Mountain View, and the project will enhance that habitat by providing upland transitional habitat connected to the ponds that are being restored.

**Site Description:**

Formerly a landfill, Shoreline Regional Park, owned and managed by the City, now serves as a multi-use recreation and wildlife area. The restoration and maintenance component of the project encompasses 7.3 acres at two separate locations within Shoreline Regional Park.

The first restoration and maintenance location is on the north side of Mountain View Tidal Marsh, adjacent to the 0.9-acre upland transition area previously restored by Grassroots Ecology and next to former salt ponds, known as A1 and A2W, which are being restored to tidal marsh as part of the SBSRP (Exhibit 2, Figure 1). The first location has a gentle slope and a wide marsh-upland transition zone suitable for native plant establishment. Vegetation is currently dominated by non-native, annual grasses and invasive plants, including Russian thistle, short-pod mustard, stinkwort, and smilo grass.

The second restoration and maintenance location is located southwest of Shoreline Lake, in an area designated as a pollinator migration zone, and is a former constructed pond that has been drained and set aside for preservation and grassland restoration (Exhibit 2, Figure 2). The City identified the second location as potentially suitable: (1) foraging habitat for pollinators and grassland associated species, including burrowing owls and common yellowthroat; and (2) as a monarch butterfly migration stopover. Existing vegetation is dominated by non-native grasses and wild fennel.

The community engagement events will take place at the restoration and maintenance locations of Shoreline Regional Park, described above, as well as on the Bay Trail.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:**

Grassroots Ecology has extensive experience managing state and regional agency grants and completing similar shoreline restoration projects, including the Mountain View Tidal Marsh Restoration Pilot Project (pilot project) adjacent to the proposed project site. The pilot project is described in more detail below. Grassroots Ecology operates its own native plant nursery, employs skilled restoration staff, and regularly partners with AmeriCorps and Conservation Corps crews on its restoration projects. For long-term management (beyond the 2 years of project maintenance), the City, as landowner and project partner, will maintain irrigation and monitoring, while Grassroots Ecology will conduct vegetation surveys and community science events. These commitments ensure the site will be maintained and monitored beyond the grant term.

**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:

**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 is feasible and cost-effective. Grassroots Ecology's adjacent pilot project provided a solid understanding of local site conditions, access logistics, and planting and watering methods needed for successful restoration at Shoreline Regional Park. Since 2023, staff and hundreds of volunteers have restored portions of the upland transition zone by removing non-native vegetation and installing native shrubs and perennials, with more than 650 linear feet already revegetated. Restoration of the remaining areas is ongoing. Through the pilot project, Grassroots Ecology identified which native species thrive in the unique shoreline environment, such as hardy shrubs and rhizomatous perennials; and refined effective establishment techniques, including the need for consistent hand watering during the first one to two dry seasons. The pilot project also strengthened the team's operational knowledge of how to safely move volunteers, equipment, and plants throughout the pilot project's site at Shoreline Regional Park, ensuring smooth access even in areas adjacent to public recreation.

Grassroots Ecology estimates approximately \$115,000 in in-kind services, consisting of \$88,000 in volunteer labor, \$27,000 in unrestricted donations that the organization is applying directly toward project activities, and additional nursery and staff contributions. These in-kind services are separate from the non-state cash contributions listed in the Financing section, which total \$89,000 (from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Laurel Foundation, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the City of Mountain View). Combined, the in-kind contributions and non-state cash support total approximately \$204,000 in leveraged non-state resources. The project also includes the San Jose Conservation Corps, a long-standing partner to Grassroots Ecology, that regularly supports on-site skills development and restoration activities. This collaboration between two experienced organizations strengthens project capacity and supports successful implementation.

**3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.**

Tribal consultation letters were sent in accordance with Conservancy policy; one response was received, requesting additional information. Conservancy staff and Grassroots Ecology have followed up promptly. Grassroots Ecology is actively working to build relationships with California Native American tribal communities through a partnership with Redbud Resource Group (RRG), a Native advocacy nonprofit organization. Grassroots Ecology has a written agreement with RRG to meet bi-monthly for consulting sessions, receive feedback on outreach and educational materials, and share resources and community contacts.

Conversations with California Native American tribal groups have identified a need for access to land for harvesting culturally significant plants. Grassroots Ecology piloted an approach under a separate grant to survey restoration areas for these plants and invite California Native American tribal communities to harvest them sustainably, with honorariums provided. For the project, Grassroots Ecology will begin to apply this approach by conducting a pre-project vegetation survey to identify culturally significant species and communicate findings to its

California Native American tribal partners. This effort lays the groundwork for sustained engagement and future opportunities for traditional stewardship and cultural practices.

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

The project is designed to remain resilient as climate change accelerates sea-level rise by restoring upland transition zone habitat that will serve as crucial high-tide refugia for marsh-dependent wildlife and function as future marsh habitat as lower-elevation areas become submerged. The restoration areas are in parts of Shoreline Regional Park that the City has already set aside for preservation, indicating the City's intention to maintain and manage the project site (two restoration locations within Shoreline Regional Park) as open space and habitat. Grassroots Ecology will strategically plant locally adapted native vegetation with demonstrated survivorship, as seen at the adjacent pilot project site.

Grassroots Ecology and the City will partner on the long-term monitoring and maintenance of the project (beyond the 2 years of project maintenance). The City will continue wildlife monitoring, maintain irrigation, limit human disturbance, and organize volunteer weeding events. Grassroots Ecology will conduct vegetation monitoring and host annual Bioblitz events with Bioblitz.club to track biodiversity, enabling the project site to be adaptively managed, beyond the project period.

Removing invasive plants and replacing them with diverse, locally adapted native species will support marsh migration, expand high-tide refugia, and improve overall ecological function across the transition zone. The new plants will be resilient to climate change because the project uses hardy, locally adapted, rhizomatous native species shown through the pilot project to have high survivorship under shoreline conditions.

Together, these two distinct restoration project areas form a complementary restoration landscape that advances regional ecological goals by improving marsh-upland transition habitat, expanding pollinator resources, enhancing wildlife movement between Shoreline Regional Park and the restored salt ponds, and engaging the community in hands-on shoreline stewardship.

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

The project will contribute ecological, climate, and community benefits at a regional scale. The project directly advances the Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals and California's 30x30 conservation goals by restoring upland transition zones that provide high-tide refugia, strengthening the resilience and connectivity of the South Bay shoreline in the face of accelerating sea-level rise. Additional benefits include expanding the biodiversity of native plant communities and increasing long-term carbon capture and storage across the project. Community benefits include meaningful hands-on experiences that build environmental literacy, create pathways into green careers through paid internships and workforce training for youth and young adults, foster a deeper connection to the natural world, and offer accessible opportunities for residents to learn new skills, contribute to restoration efforts, and engage directly with their local environment.

The project increases equity and environmental justice by providing direct and meaningful benefits to severely disadvantaged and vulnerable communities, including tribes, as defined by the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024. The project serves severely disadvantaged communities near the project site and beyond by intentionally engaging low-income, BIPOC, and first-generation students through the Mountain View Los Altos High School college-readiness program, providing paid micro-internships, free environmental programming, and green-skills workforce training to youth who face systemic barriers to environmental careers; partnering with San Jose Conservation Corps young adults who experience economic and educational inequities; and strengthening access for tribal communities seeking culturally significant plant harvesting.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$312,200</b>
David and Lucile Packard Foundation	\$15,000
The Laurel Foundation	\$15,000
Silicon Valley Community Foundation	\$9,000
City of Mountain View	\$50,000
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$516,200</b>

Conservancy funds are anticipated to come from the Fiscal Year 2025/26 appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (2024 Climate Bond or Proposition 4), codified at Public Resource Code Sections 90000-95015. The 2024 Climate Bond (Chapter 4) makes funds available to the Conservancy, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for coastal resilience projects, including grants and expenditures to protect, restore, and increase the resilience of beaches, bays, coastal dunes, wetlands, coastal forests, watersheds, trails, and public access facilities (Sections 92000 and 92010). The term “protection” includes restoration, preservation, and site monitoring as well as “those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to persons, property, or natural, cultural, and historic resources[;] actions to improve access to public open-space areas[;] or actions to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural, cultural, and historic resources” (PRC Section 90100(h)).

In addition, funds made available pursuant to Section 92000 may be allocated to projects for purposes of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program established pursuant to Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 31160) of Division 21 (Section 92010(1)(5), which addresses the resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area, as identified in Public Resource Code Section 31162, in a coordinated, comprehensive, and effective way.

The project is consistent with this funding source because it is a coastal resilience project located within the San Francisco Bay Area, addressing resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area; namely, restoring upland and grassland habitats near the shoreline,

increasing resilience of tidal marsh ecosystems by removing invasive plants, planting native species, and improving high-tide refugia and habitat connectivity.

In addition to the non-state cash contributions listed in the table, Grassroots Ecology will provide about \$115,000 in in-kind support. This includes \$88,000 in volunteer labor, \$27,000 in unrestricted donations that Grassroots Ecology is allocating to project delivery, and further contributions through nursery resources and staff time.

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 project is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Program. Pursuant to Section 31162, the Conservancy is authorized to award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help achieve the goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, including protecting, restoring, and enhancing natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance; and promoting, assisting, and enhancing projects that provide open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes (Section 31162(b), (d)). The project is consistent with Section 31162(b) because it restores and enhances regionally important shoreline habitats in the San Francisco Bay Area by removing invasive vegetation, installing approximately 1,000 native plants, and improving 7.3 acres of upland transition zone and grassland habitat adjacent to tidal marsh. The project is consistent with Section 31162(d) because it provides open space and natural areas accessible to nearby urban communities for educational and stewardship purposes through volunteer restoration workdays, community events, guided walks, and public ecology workshops. Although the project does not construct new public access facilities, it supports the intent of Section 31162(a) by improving the ecological condition of shoreline open space within a heavily visited regional recreation area, enhancing the public’s experience of the park. The project is also consistent with Section 31162(c) because it helps implement local and regional resource management plans, including the City’s Shoreline Wildlife Management Plan and the ecological goals of the San Francisco Bay Plan, by restoring degraded shoreline habitat and supporting climate-resilient stewardship.

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

Consistent with **Goal 3.2 Restore or Enhance Habitats**, the project will restore 2 acres of upland transition zone and 5.3 acres of grassland habitat, enhancing wildlife resilience to sea-level rise by improving high tide refugia for native wildlife. The project will also improve wildlife corridors to the adjacent SBSRP 710-acre restoration area.

Consistent with **Goal 1.4 Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects**, the project will provide hands-on environmental job training by training 30 young adults as part of AmeriCorps placements, providing micro-internships to 30 high school students from underserved communities, and providing 3 workdays to the San Jose Conservation Corps.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Section 15304 (Minor Alterations to Land), which exempts minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation that do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes, including new gardening or landscaping, such as replacement of existing conventional landscaping with water efficient or fire resistant landscaping (CCR Section 15304(b)). The project is consistent with this section because the project will remove invasive vegetation and install native species that are water efficient and adapted to the local environment; and the project will not remove any healthy, mature, scenic trees.

The project is categorically exempt from review under the CEQA, pursuant to Title 14 of the CCR, Section 15301(c) (Existing Facilities), which exempts the operation of existing public or private structures and facilities, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use, including existing streets, sidewalks, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities. The project is consistent with Section 15301 because it will use existing trails and similar facilities, such as for guided tours, with negligible or no expansion of existing or former uses.

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