

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

June 18, 2026

SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO BAY SHORELINE PROJECT

Project No. 02-070-06

Project Manager: Laura Cholodenko

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to: 1) \$1,865,000 to the California Wildlife Foundation to prepare designs for habitat restoration of Ponds A9-A15 and Pond A18 and designs for public access along Reaches 1-5, and 2) \$2,187,000 to Ducks Unlimited Inc. to construct tidal restoration features in 100 acres of Ponds A12 and A13, all as part of the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Project in Santa Clara County.

LOCATION: Community of Alviso, San Jose, Santa Clara County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Habitat Designs](#)

Exhibit 3: [May 5, 2022 Staff Recommendation](#)

Exhibit 4: [September 5, 2024 Staff Recommendation](#)

Exhibit 5: [April 18, 2024 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 two grants of amounts not to exceed: 1) \$1,865,000 to the California Wildlife Foundation to prepare designs for habitat restoration of Ponds A9-A15 and Pond A18 and designs for public access along Reaches 1-5, and 2) \$2,187,000 to Ducks Unlimited Inc. to construct tidal restoration features in 100 acres of Ponds A12 and A13, all as part of the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Project in Santa Clara County (collectively “the projects”).

The California Wildlife Foundation and Ducks Unlimited Inc. are each a “grantee.” Prior to commencement of each project, the grantee for the specific project 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 and Proposition 4 as the source of that funding.
4. Prior to commencing each project, the grantee shall enter into and record an agreement pursuant to Public Resources Code 31116(d) sufficient to protect the public interest in the improvements.

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 Conservancy's mandate to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy's jurisdiction.
2. The proposed projects are consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The California Wildlife Foundation and Ducks Unlimited, Inc. are nonprofit organizations organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize up to: 1) \$1,865,000 to the California Wildlife Foundation (CWF) to prepare designs for habitat restoration of Ponds A9-A15 and Pond A18 and designs for public access along Reaches 1-5, and 2) \$2,187,000 to Ducks Unlimited Inc. (DU) to construct tidal restoration features in 100 acres of Ponds A12 and A13, all as part of the South San Francisco Bay Shoreline Project (Shoreline Project) in Santa Clara County (collectively "the projects"). The Shoreline Project will provide flood protection, restore 2,900 acres of former salt evaporation ponds, and improve public access in the Alviso area of South San Francisco Bay (See Exhibit 1 for projects' location). Additional information about the Shoreline Project is provided in the May 2022 staff recommendation (Exhibit 3).

Construction of the Shoreline Project's levee along Reaches 1–3 was completed in November 2025, representing a major Shoreline Project milestone. Starting in July 2026, 230,000 cubic yards of upland soil will be imported into ponds A12 and A13 to build the ecotone slope along the bayward side of the new levee. The Conservancy authorized \$8 million for final design and construction of this ecotone as described in the September 2024 Staff Recommendation (Exhibit 4).

Building on the Conservancy's September 2024 funding authorization for construction of the ecotone in Ponds A12 and A13, the projects will prepare final engineered designs (earthwork plans and specifications) for a series of wave breaks and tidal slough channels that will then be

constructed concurrently with the ecotone slope (Exhibit 2). These habitat features will be constructed out of bay mud that was side cast into Ponds A12 and A13 during construction of the Reaches 1–3 levee. This side-cast bay mud is currently spread out along the pond bottoms and situated at marsh plain elevations suitable for rapid establishment of tidal marsh vegetation once the exterior levees of Ponds A9-A15 are breached. However, both this bay mud marsh plain and the ecotone slope will be prone to wind-wave erosion following breaching, putting the resilience of these habitats at risk. Reshaping and recontouring portions of the side-cast bay mud and potentially adding large wood to create wave break mounds will reduce wave height and velocity, leading to less erosion and more settlement of sediment out of the water column and onto the pond bottom. Imported upland soil may also be added to the wave break mounds to increase their height, if a supply is identified when soil is being imported for ecotone construction.

The tidal channels will provide habitat for endangered tidal marsh wildlife that will also utilize the ecotone slope for high tide refugia (e.g., California Ridgway's rail and salt marsh harvest mouse). The constructed slough channels will increase vegetation productivity and restore channel habitat for California Ridgway's rail foraging and for native fish, especially juvenile fish that need hiding places to rest, feed, and escape predators.

The San Francisco Bay Conservation Development Commission (BCDC) and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) issued permits for the Shoreline Project in 2018 based on conceptual restoration and public access designs. Because of the scale and complexity associated with implementing the Shoreline Project, those agencies anticipated a phased permitting approach, where permits are amended as the design of restoration and public access is advanced and construction plans are finalized. The permits currently authorize the construction of the ecotone slope but not construction of the wave breaks and channel features. In order to authorize construction of these habitat features concurrently with the building of the ecotone, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is requesting permit amendments. BCDC and the RWQCB have determined that in order to issue permit amendments, they need to review the wave break and slough features in the context of restoration plans for Ponds A9-15 as well as public access along Reaches 1-5. Specifically, the regulators require review of 30% designs for restoration of Ponds A9-A15 and 10% designs for public access. Therefore, the projects will support: 1) preparation of restoration and public access designs to the levels required by regulators, including hydrodynamic modeling, 2) 10% designs for the ecotone that is planned for Pond A18 because its design will affect the design for public access along Reaches 4-5, and 3) a revegetation plan for the Pond A12 and A13 ecotone and wave break islands. Preparation of these designs and plans and the final construction designs for the wave breaks and channels, will help ensure that tidal marsh restoration occurs at the earliest time possible, increasing the potential for tidal marsh vegetation to establish and be sustained in the face of sea level rise.

The Shoreline Project will provide direct and meaningful benefits to the severely disadvantaged and vulnerable community of Alviso, a predominately Latinx neighborhood in San Jose that is below sea level and has flooded repeatedly over the last 50 years when large rain events have caused local creeks to overflow their banks. Residents of Alviso, including the Alviso Water Task Force, support the Shoreline Project and were involved in determining the levee alignment

which will provide flood risk management to protect the community from current coastal flood risk and future coastal flood risk due to sea level rise. The recreational enhancements that will be implemented as part of the Shoreline Project will improve the community’s access to the regional trail network, wildlife viewing, and environmental education opportunities.

Site Description, Grant Application Qualifications, and Project History are described in the May 2022, April 2024, and September 2024 staff recommendations (Exhibits 3, 4 and 5).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

This staff recommendation remains consistent with the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on September 2021, as described in the attached 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 5).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy (current proposed authorization)	\$4,052,000
Coastal Conservancy (previous authorizations)	\$18,000,000
Association of Bay Area Governments	\$3,161,921
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$5,077,694
San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority	\$61,466,079
Valley Water	\$79,778,000
CA Department of Water Resources	\$21,000,000
CA Department of Water Resources (<i>grant pending</i>)	\$28,000,000
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	\$232,561,589
To be raised	\$ 59,442,364
Project Total	\$512,539,647

The above table shows the total cost to design, plan, and implement the Shoreline Project. The remaining budget shortfall for the non-federal sponsors after this authorization is approximately \$60,000,000. Valley Water and the Conservancy are working to identify sources for the remaining shortfall and to identify ways to reduce construction costs.

Conservancy funds are anticipated to come from the fiscal year 2025/2026 appropriation to the Conservancy 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. These funds are available as described in Section 92015 of the Public Resource Code. The funds are made available for the purpose of coastal and combined flood management projects and activities for developed shoreline areas, including areas with critical community infrastructure, including, but not limited to, transportation and port infrastructure at risk of current flooding and flooding due to sea level rise. The proposed

projects are consistent with Section 92015 because they are multi-benefit shoreline resilience projects that will address coastal flooding along the Bay shoreline. The projects will provide critical flood risk management for infrastructure, including a regional wastewater facility, as well as direct and meaningful benefits to a severely disadvantaged community, as defined by Proposition 4, that is currently threatened with coastal flooding and is at increased risk of flooding due to projected rates of sea level rise. Wetland restoration and development of the ecotone will add resiliency by buffering the engineered levee from coastal storm actions. Lessons from the implementation of the Shoreline Project at Alviso will be applied to expand activities to the rest of the south bay shoreline (see additional Discussion in Exhibit 5).

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 projects will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 3 (regarding the Climate Ready Program) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. The proposed projects 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)).

Pursuant to Section 31113(b), the Conservancy may undertake projects that address extreme weather events, sea level rise, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. Pursuant to Section 31113(c), the Conservancy must prioritize projects that maximize public benefits and either reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce hazards to harbors and ports, preserve and enhance coastal wetlands and natural lands, conserve biodiversity, and provide recreational opportunities, or reduce flood risk and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. Consistent with these provisions, the Shoreline Project will reduce flood risk and enhance fish and wildlife habitat by providing protection from a 1-percent coastal flood (one-hundred-year flood), as well as sea level rise while restoring 2,900 acres of native fish and wildlife habitat.

Consistent with Section 31113(d)(1), the Shoreline Project will: A) use natural infrastructure including an earthen levee and tidal marsh habitat to provide community protection to sea level rise, B) provide multiple public benefits including recreation through the development of trails, overlooks, and interpretive signs as well flood risk management, and C) help protect and expand the San Francisco estuary that provides feeding and nursery habitat for juvenile fish and foraging habitat for migratory waterfowl and other waterbirds.

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

This staff recommendation remains consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan as described in the attached 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 5).

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

On March 22, 2018 the Conservancy adopted findings pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the Shoreline Project and Conservancy staff filed a Notice of Determination on March 23, 2018. There have not been any project changes, new information, or changed circumstances that trigger the need for additional documentation under CEQA. Therefore, this authorization remains consistent with the March 22, 2018 findings.