COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

June 18, 2026

**CANDLESTICK POINT CLIMATE SOLUTIONS LABORATORY**

Project No. 26-007-01

Project Manager: Erica Johnson

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to $772,000 to Literacy for Environmental Justice to undertake the Candlestick Point Climate Solutions Laboratory project, which consists of preparing final designs; preparing and submitting permit applications; and constructing a greenhouse, seed lab, workspaces, and storage unit to propagate plants for shoreline habitat restoration in San Francisco.

**LOCATION:** 1150 Carrol Ave, City and County of San Francisco

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*EXHIBITS*

Exhibit 1: Project Location Maps

Exhibit 2: Project Photos & Design Renderings

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 seven hundred seventy-two thousand dollars ($772,000) to Literacy for Environmental Justice ("the grantee") to implement the Candlestick Point Climate Solutions Laboratory project, which consists of preparing final designs; preparing and submitting permit applications; and constructing a greenhouse, seed lab, workspaces, and storage unit to propagate plants for shoreline habitat restoration in San Francisco (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 and Proposition 4 as the source of that funding.

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 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 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. Literacy for Environmental Justice 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 $772,000 grant to Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) for the Candlestick Point Climate Solutions Laboratory project, which consists of preparing final designs; preparing and submitting permit applications; and constructing a greenhouse, seed lab, workspaces, and storage unit to propagate plants for shoreline habitat restoration in San Francisco (the "project"). The project will address the urgent need for habitat restoration and climate adaptation in the southeastern region of San Francisco (Exhibit 1). The greenhouse, seed lab, workspaces, and storage unit are collectively referred to as the Climate Solutions Laboratory (Lab), which will serve the Bayview Hunters Point (BVHP) community and the surrounding area in San Francisco. BVHP is one of the state's most environmentally burdened communities and includes disadvantaged communities (DAC) and severely disadvantaged communities (SDAC) as defined by the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (2024 Climate Bond or Proposition 4). The project area is publicly accessible and part of a public park and includes a ranger station for State Parks; an outdoor community garden; and a native plant nursery. There is a critical gap in infrastructure to help prepare the community for climate change projections (particularly sea level rise) and produce the hundreds of thousands of native plants required for shoreline habitat restoration and nature-based climate adaptation projects.

From 2005 to 2020, LEJ staff and community members propagated more than 250,000 plants and restored over 40 acres of park and open space. However, lack of indoor temperature-

controlled facilities meant native plant seed processing relied on private homes—making operations inefficient, limiting skill-building for community workforce trainees to field labor, and reducing community programming capacity during extreme weather. Furthermore, LEJ operates with a cold frame greenhouse built in 2005, which is a low-tech greenhouse that lacks proper ventilation and sufficient production space to match the capacity of the native plant nursery, which was expanded in 2022 to meet the restoration needs of the region.

The project will complete construction of the Lab for the purpose of propagating and storing native plants required for shoreline habitat restoration and nature-based climate adaptation projects in San Francisco, as well as improving community access to climate-related monitoring and adaptation. The Lab will be comprised of multiple modular units that will directly address these urgent needs (Exhibit 2). The Lab space will include dedicated temperature-controlled seed lab, a unit to store soil and equipment, an updated greenhouse that is integrated with the nursery, and indoor workspaces equipped with GIS workstations and shoreline monitoring equipment (for monitoring king tides and sea level rise, native plant and invasive species, wildlife, and more). The indoor workspace will allow participants of LEJ's community workforce development programs, called the Eco Apprentices and Eco Techs, to build professional skills necessary for today's environmental workforce.

The proposed project includes the following elements for the Lab:

> Design, permitting, and inspections: Preparation of final engineering drawings for the modular buildings as well as fire marshal permitting, inspection, and environmental compliance costs (biological and cultural resource monitoring).
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> Infrastructure and Facilities: Installation of a 640-square-foot temperature-controlled seed lab; a 320-square-foot indoor workspace equipped with computer workstations, water, power, and high-speed internet; a 864-square-foot climate-controlled greenhouse, with an annual capacity of 50,000 seedlings to ensure year-round propagation; and creation of three interpretive panels showcasing climate resilience strategies and traditional ecological knowledge to engage the 1,000+ community members and students who visit the site annually
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> Furnishing and equipment: GIS workstations, projectors, monitoring tools, and secure storage for the tools. The equipment will support meetings king tide and shoreline monitoring, wildlife surveys, GPS mapping, and nursery health assessments.

By constructing the Lab, the proposed project will complete the nursery expansion effort at 1150 Carroll Ave originally launched in 2016 through a previous Coastal Conservancy grant. The initial stage of the nursey expansion transformed the site by removing 9,500 square feet of impermeable pavement and installing a 2,250-square-foot native plant demonstration rain garden alongside a 4,500-square-foot drought-resilient garden, and constructed a larger nursery to support increased plant production. LEJ successfully finalized the initial phase of the

nursery expansion in 2022. Today, these permeable spaces divert 124,500 gallons of annual runoff from San Francisco's stormwater system. Furthermore, LEJ's installation of a rainwater harvesting system now provides 16,000 gallons per year to nursery and community garden operations, successfully reducing water usage by one-third. The Lab will add a much-needed climate-controlled seed lab, an updated greenhouse, dedicated soil storage, and expanded workspaces to fully support the larger nursery. The project site is located on Candlestick Point State Recreation Area lands and the Lab is a facility that will be publicly accessible on a daily basis. Both school and volunteer programs will actively use the site, and regular drop-in events will be scheduled to encourage community participation. The project provides additional park facilities and ensures that residents of BVHP have the tools, knowledge, and capacity to adapt to climate change and support long-term restoration at Candlestick Point, India Basin Waterfront Project, Heron's Head Park, and other locations in San Francisco.

**Site Description:** The project area is located in the BVHP community, comprised primarily of the India Basin, Hunters Point, Bayview, and Bret Harte neighborhoods which are separated from other San Francisco neighborhoods by the 101 Freeway. The BVHP area is still considered a high poverty area according to the 2020 census data and residents are predominantly Black, Latinx, and Asian. The shoreline is heavily urbanized and access to the waterfront is fragmented by a concrete plant, a recycling plant, warehouses, a former powerplant, abandoned scow schooner shipyards, and a former U.S Naval Shipyard. In addition, residents bear a disproportionately high level of environmental burden (Cal-Enviro Screen 4.0) and continue to advocate today for environmental justice and clean-up of toxic substances from the former Naval Shipyard, which was a declared superfund site in 1989. Strong community advocacy and partnerships with non-profits, local government, and landowners, has resulted in numerous parks and restored open space along the shoreline.

The project site is at 1150 Carroll Avenue at the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area in San Francisco. The property is owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks). However, LEJ maintains the legal right to carry out the project through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with State Parks, which secures access, operational authority, and stewardship responsibilities from 2016 until 2037, with the strong likelihood to renew the MOU thereafter for another 20 years. The project area is approximately one acre, and existing infrastructure includes a ranger station for State Parks; an outdoor community garden co-operated by LEJ and State Parks; and a native plant nursery operated by LEJ. The immediate surroundings is characterized by several acres of deteriorated asphalt, the Alice Griffith public housing complex, and various light industrial facilities such as auto salvage yards. The site is a critical link to nearby natural habitats, situated between restoration areas to the north (Pier 94, Heron's Head, India Basin Waterfront Park and Open Space, Yosemite Slough) and the expansive 151-acre Candlestick Point State Recreation Area to the south.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:** LEJ is a community-based organization that has a long history of advocating for green spaces in the BVHP, outdoor education, and environmental justice. LEJ also has over 25 years of experience administering local, state, and federal grants to deliver ecological restoration and climate resilience projects, and recreation programming to the community. The organization's extensive project history includes work at Pier 94, Yerba Buena

Island, the $1.8 million expansion of the Candlestick Point Nursery that began in 2016, and multiple Coastal Conservancy grants at Heron's Head Park (notably the 2003 Eco Center construction, 2007 wetland restoration, and 2022 shoreline stabilization). LEJ has secured letters from State Parks and other supporters of the proposed project, included as Exhibit 3. To ensure the Lab remains fully operational beyond the grant term, LEJ has institutionalized its long-term maintenance through its core nursery operations. LEJ staff, Eco-Apprentices and Eco-Techs will oversee year-round plant propagation, stewardship activities, infrastructure upkeep, and pathogen-prevention protocols.

**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 is timely due to the multiple large investments in parks and open space and sea level rise planning along the shoreline that will require native plants, stewardship, and community input. It is highly feasible, as it leverages $206,000 in non-state funds through partnerships and in-kind support (See Project Financing section below).
   The project advances the state's **30X30 Executive Order key pathway** "Expand and Accelerate Environmental Restoration and Stewardship" (Strategy 6) by establishing a climate-controlled greenhouse and seed lab capable of producing 50,000 seedlings annually, while empowering local workforce trainees to map invasive species and monitor shoreline health using GIS workstations.

   The proposed project is also consistent with the following regional and local plans:

   - **Baylands Ecosystem Habitat Goals Science Update (2015)**: The Lab directly implements climate adaptation strategies by creating the regional infrastructure necessary to produce the vast quantities of native plants required for nature-based shoreline restoration and sea-level rise mitigation in the San Francisco Bay.
   - **San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission's Coastal Management Program (Environmental Justice)**: The project institutionalizes environmental justice by providing a publicly accessible, culturally relevant space where marginalized community members are meaningfully involved in climate adaptation planning and hands-on restoration science.
   - **San Francisco General Plan Candlestick Point Subarea (Policy 6.2)**: The project enhances the Candlestick Point area by completing a nursery expansion that integrates

public recreational space, interpretive climate and environmental education, and seven-day-a-week access for residents and visitors.

- **Candlestick Point State Recreation Area General Plan (2013)**: The project fulfills the General Plan's vision by upgrading aging nursery infrastructure into a modern hub for habitat restoration, ensuring a reliable supply of native plants to enhance the ecological health and public recreational value of the park.
- **City of San Francisco's Waterfront Resilience Program:** The project directly supports the implementation of nature-based resilience features, such as those at Islais Creek, by providing the specialized seed storage, GIS monitoring tools, and large-scale seedling production required to build functional, bio-engineered shoreline protections.

**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.**

LEJ has previously collaborated with members of the Ohlone community - to help train LEJ's staff and workforce trainees on traditional ecological knowledge, food sovereignty, and culturally relevant plants. LEJ is working on formalizing partnerships with indigenous community members to help shape the Lab's ethnobotanical curricula, planting designs, and stewardship protocols. Furthermore, LEJ staff are also anticipating co-developing interpretive signage and digital mapping that weave indigenous languages and histories into the restoration of Southeast San Francisco. By embedding these relationships into the project's technical infrastructure, the Lab ensures that shoreline climate adaptation is inseparable from cultural revitalization and land sovereignty.

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

The project is designed to adapt to a changing environment by utilizing permeable surfaces that currently divert 124,500 gallons of runoff and rainwater harvesting systems that reduce reliance on developed water, ensuring the Lab remains resilient against chronic drought and flood cycles in a location not anticipated to be impacted by projected sea-level rise. The Lab also ensures that there is indoor working space when there are extreme weather events, which are anticipated to increase due to climate change. By transforming a former industrial area into a resilient restoration hub sustained by a strategy that integrates routine maintenance into established nursery workflows, the project alleviates multiple stressors by providing access to high-quality community space and driving social equity through a workforce development program that prioritizes long-term career pathways.

The long-term maintenance of the Lab is secured through a 20-year MOU with State Parks and integrated directly into LEJ's existing nursery operations. A dedicated team of staff, Eco Apprentices, and Eco Techs will oversee infrastructure upkeep and pathogen-prevention protocols to ensure the site remains fully operational beyond the grant term.

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

The Lab will allow LEJ staff to train approximately 25 local young adults (ages 18-25) and San Francisco State Climate Fellows annually, equipping them with the technical expertise

required for the emerging green economy through professional-grade instruction in GIS mapping, soil health, and pathogen prevention. LEJ's workforce program specifically differentiates between three tiers of professional development: the ongoing Eco Apprentice Program, which provides young adults with foundational paid training in native plant propagation and habitat ecology; the advanced EcoTech program, a next-level track for Eco Apprentice graduates and emerging professionals to gain specialized certifications in restoration technology and data collection; and the San Francisco State Climate Fellows, who engage in high-level environmental science and research. This comprehensive facility ensures that participants in these programs have access to the hands-on Lab and field training necessary for career advancement in the growing fields of climate resilience and conservation.

6. **Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.**

   The Lab is the result of over 25 years of community advocacy and co-visioning within BVHP, shaped by residents who championed the nursery expansion during the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area General Planning process in 2013 as a priority for climate resilience and environmental workforce development. This enduring partnership with California State Parks ensures the site remains a permanent community anchor, supported by a collaborative ecosystem including the Alice Griffith Tenant Association, BMAGIC, and SF Unified School District Title I schools. The project's construction, led by Civicorps and LEJ's Eco Apprentices, fosters shared learning and expands high-level green infrastructure training, establishing a foundation for intergenerational leadership and involving 1,000 annual participants in stewardship events like king tide monitoring and shoreline cleanups.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

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| **Coastal Conservancy** | **$772,000** |
| San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development | $70,000 |
| Bothin Foundation | $25,000 |
| California Natural Resources Agency Youth Community Access | $10,000 |
| **Project Total** | **$877,000** |

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. These funds are available as described in Section 92010, which describes the purposes of Proposition 4 coastal resilience funds, 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. 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, providing an SDAC and DAC with a public access facility that will be used to provide additional capacity to learn and prepare for sea level rise. In addition, the project includes the construction of facilities that will help propagate native plants and store seeds that will be used to restore habitats near the San Francisco shoreline, increasing resilience of tidal marsh ecosystems by planting native species and improving shoreline resilience.

In addition to the non-state cash contributions listed in the table, LEJ will provide about $86,000 in in-kind support, which includes volunteer labor to furnish the Lab workspaces.

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. The project is located in the County of San Francisco, one of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties as required by Section 31162.

The project is consistent with Section 31162(b) because it will construct a facility that will be used to restore and enhance regionally important shoreline habitats in the San Francisco Bay Area by propagating native plants for shoreline enhancement and restoration and promote ecological knowledge and stewardship via community programs.

The project is consistent with Section 31162(d) because it provides a multi-functional facility to nearby urban communities for educational and stewardship purposes through volunteer stewardship days and workforce development programs in the nursery, Lab, and adjacent open spaces and parks.

The project is also consistent with Section 31162(c) because the project is consistent with the General Plan for the Candlestick Point State Recreation Area (January 2013), and promotes and implements state plans and policies, as detailed in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines” section, above.

Under Section 31165, the Conservancy may award grants for activities that are compatible with the restoration or enhancement of bay watershed resources, or that facilitate environmental education related to these resources. The project will build a multi-functional facility dedicated to the protection and restoration of native bay shoreline habitat.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2023-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Consistent with **Goal 1.1 Commit Funding to Benefit Systemically Excluded Communities**: The project directs critical infrastructure investment to BVHP, one of the state's most environmentally burdened communities containing multiple Prop 4 designated severely disadvantaged census tracts, to address the urgent need for habitat restoration and climate adaptation capacity.

Consistent with **Goal 1.4 Incorporate Workforce Development in Our Projects**: The project will provide professional-grade instruction for at least 25 young adults (ages 18-25) per year — including the Eco Apprentices and advanced Eco Techs— and San Francisco State University Climate Fellows utilizing temperature-controlled lab spaces, GIS workstations, and monitoring equipment to build the technical expertise required for the emerging green economy.

Consistent with **Goal 2.5 Recreation Facilities and Amenities**: The project will support educational facilities for volunteers and youth by completing the nursery expansion with a publicly accessible site that includes an updated greenhouse, interpretive panels showcasing climate resilience, and indoor workspaces designed to engage 1,000+ annual community members and students.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The project is categorically exempt from review under CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (14 Cal. Code Regs. §15303), Section 15304 Minor Alterations to Land (14 Cal. Code Regs. §15304), and Section 15333 Small Habitat Restoration Projects (14 Cal. Code Regs. §15333) because the scope consists of the construction of a limited number of new, small facilities and minor alterations to the land that do not involve the removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees. Specifically, the project involves the installation of modular storage and workspace units, and interpretive signage on a site not exceeding five acres. These activities are consistent with the California Department of Parks and Recreation's list of exempt activities and do not involve significant grading or adverse environmental impacts.

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