

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

June 18, 2026

PEDRO POINT HEADLANDS PROPERTY DISPOSITION

Project No. 14-050-02

Project Manager: Erin Gravley

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approval of the Pedro Point Headlands Disposition Plan and authorization to transfer, free of charge, three State-owned parcels at Pedro Point Headlands in San Mateo County to the United States Government to be managed by the National Park Service, for open space preservation, natural resource protection, and public access as part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

LOCATION: Pedro Point Headlands, San Mateo County

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Pedro Point Headlands Disposition Plan](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Staff Recommendation April 19, 1995](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Staff Recommendation March 26, 2015](#)
- Exhibit 5: [Site Photographs](#)
- Exhibit 6: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby approves the Pedro Point Headlands Disposition Plan and authorizes the transfer of three parcels owned by the State on behalf of the Conservancy at Pedro Point Headlands in San Mateo County (San Mateo County Assessor Parcel Numbers 023-730-020, 023-730-220 and 023-740-020, collectively “the property”) to the United States Government to be managed by National Park Service, at no cost, for open space preservation, natural resource protection, and public access as part of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

The authorization of the transfer of the property to the United States Government is subject to the following conditions:

1. The United States Government shall hold, operate, use, and manage the property for open space preservation, natural resource protection, and public access, and shall permanently dedicate the property to these purposes by an appropriate instrument approved by the Executive Officer.

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 3 of Division 21, Section 31107 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the transfer of land acquired by the Conservancy and with Chapter 9 of Division 21 (Sections 31400-31410) of the Public Resources Code, regarding the establishment of a system of public accessways to and along the California Coast.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY

Since 1995, the Conservancy has held fee title to approximately 94 acres of open space property at Pedro Point Headlands (“the property”) bordering the southern boundary of the City of Pacifica in San Mateo County (Exhibit 1). Staff recommends the Conservancy approve the Pedro Point Headlands Disposition Plan (Exhibit 2), allowing the transfer of three parcels, owned by the State on behalf of the Conservancy at Pedro Point Headlands, to the United States Government to be managed by the National Park Service (hereinafter NPS), at no cost, for open space preservation, natural resource protection, and public access. Once completed, this disposition will fulfill the Conservancy’s decades-long goal of transferring the property to an entity equipped to both own and manage it for the purposes of public access and long-term open space and natural resource preservation.

Project History

The Conservancy’s involvement in the Pedro Point Headlands began in 1989, when staff joined the Trust for Public Land and the Peninsula Open Space Trust to provide technical assistance to Pacifica residents in establishing a local land conservation organization, the Pacifica Land Trust. Pacifica Land Trust turned its attention to Pedro Point Headlands, which was threatened at the time with a subdivision plan for 217 units. With the assistance of the Peninsula Open Space Trust, the Pacifica Land Trust reached agreement with the owners of the Pedro Point Headlands property on a phased acquisition plan. In 1992, the City of Pacifica (the City) completed the first phase of the acquisition, acquiring approximately 151 acres of Pedro Point Headlands with Conservancy grant funds. In 1995, the Conservancy completed the second phase by acquiring fee title to the remaining 94 acres at Pedro Point Headlands. The Conservancy acquired the property directly to take advantage of a federal grant opportunity (Exhibit 3). The intent was for the Conservancy to hold fee title temporarily, with the expectation that the property would later be transferred to a long-term owner.

Securing a long-term owner for the property proved more challenging than anticipated and the Conservancy has owned the property now for over 30 years. During this time, the Conservancy has pursued several transfer opportunities. Around 2012, NPS indicated interest in acquiring the property for incorporation into Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and the Conservancy took steps towards transferring the property. In 2014, the County of San Mateo (“the County”) expressed interest in acquiring the property, following the opening of its Devil’s Slide County Park, immediately to the south. Because of the proximity of the property to Devil’s Slide County Park, the Conservancy (with NPS’s blessing) approved an Implementation Plan (Exhibit 4) in 2015 to transfer the property to the County. However, by 2019, the County determined it was no longer able to assume ownership. As a result, plans to transfer Pedro Point Headlands to a long-term owner stalled for several years and the Conservancy has continued to own the property.

While under Conservancy ownership, the Pacifica Land Trust has assisted in stewarding the property. The Conservancy has awarded \$384,355 in grants to Pacifica Land Trust over the past 20 years to protect and restore habitat and improve public access at the property. Pacifica Land Trust’s community-based restoration and trail enhancement efforts at Pedro Point Headlands are carried out by part-time staff and members of the community at monthly volunteer workdays. The Pacifica Land Trust has also secured funding from other sources, including a grant of over \$1,000,000 to rehabilitate eroded trails at Pedro Point Headlands.

As the Conservancy has limited resources to manage land, it remains a high priority to transfer these properties to an entity with the capacity to both own and manage the property for long-term protection of natural resources and public access. In addition, Pedro Point is a high-priority gap in the California Coastal Trail. The Conservancy is currently leading planning for this trail segment, but a long-term owner for the property needs to be secured for the trail to be constructed. Thus, transfer of the property will assist in completion of this Coastal Trail gap.

Proposed Disposition to NPS for Inclusion in GGNRA

In 2023, NPS again expressed interest in acquiring the property, aiming to incorporate it into GGNRA. GGNRA includes sites in San Mateo County, including nearby park sites at Mori Point and Rancho Corral de Tierra. For this reason, inclusion in the GGNRA is an excellent option for long-term management for the property.

As described in the proposed Pedro Point Headlands Disposition Plan (Exhibit 2), the Conservancy will transfer the property to NPS in two phases. In Phase 1, the Conservancy will transfer two of its three parcels, approximately 73 acres identified as Assessor Parcel Numbers (APN) 023-730-220 and 023-730-260 (Parcels 1 and 2). The remaining 21 acres, identified as APN 023-740-040 (Parcel 3), will be transferred in Phase 2. Phase 2 will occur after the Conservancy has constructed the Pedro Point segment of the California Coastal Trail through Parcel 3.

The disposition will be phased so that Parcels 1 and 2 can be transferred while the Pedro Point Coastal Trail over Parcel 3 is being constructed. Construction of the Pedro Point Coastal Trail is most efficiently done while the Conservancy still owns the property along the trail alignment. Completing this segment of the California Coastal Trail is a high priority for the Conservancy,

and NPS's commitment to own and manage the constructed trail is a key factor in moving the Pedro Point Coastal Trail towards reality.

City of Pacifica Conveyances and Interim Management Plan

During the period between Phase 1 and Phase 2, portions of Pedro Point Headlands will be owned by multiple owners, namely: the Conservancy, the City, and NPS. Separate from this proposed authorization, the City also intends to transfer its parcels at Pedro Point Headlands to the NPS. Because two City-owned parcels, approximately 11 acres, fall outside of GGNRA's legislative boundary and are the same City-owned parcels necessary to construct the California Coastal Trail, the City will use the same two-phase approach described above, in concert with the Conservancy.

Until all parcels have been transferred to NPS, the Pedro Point Headlands area will be owned by and under the jurisdiction of the Conservancy, NPS, and the City. To guide management during this interim period, which may last several years, the Conservancy, the City, and NPS will jointly prepare an Interim Management Plan Agreement to detail the roles and responsibilities for the property. Management activities may include wildfire fuels reduction and vegetation management overseen by the San Mateo Resource Conservation District and continued stewardship of and improvements to existing trails and facilities by the Pacifica Land Trust.

Once Phase 2 is complete, operations and maintenance of the property and its trails will be the responsibility of NPS.

Site Description: Pedro Point Headlands is a large promontory located at the southern edge of the City of Pacifica, approximately 15 miles south of San Francisco. Pedro Point Headlands rises almost vertically from the ocean to a height of approximately 625 feet, where the bluffs provide a spectacular view of the coastline north to Point Reyes, south to Devil's Slide, and east to Montara Mountain and the Santa Cruz Mountains. While a small portion of the Pedro Point Headlands is privately owned and developed with houses, the remainder is publicly-owned open space. The Conservancy owns approximately 94 acres, and the City owns approximately 162 adjacent acres at Pedro Point Headlands.

The only level areas at Pedro Point Headlands lie along the bluff-tops and in the main valley. Scenic trails link these level areas and connect to a six-foot-wide trail running parallel to Highway One. To the south, protected public land extends to Devil's Slide County Park, while nearby Pacifica State Beach, an approximately 0.75-mile crescent-shaped beach, is popular regionally for families and surfers. A planned California Coastal Trail (CCT) alignment for the Pedro Point Headlands would connect approximately 7 miles of existing segments in the City of Pacifica to the CCT at Devil's Slide.

Historically, the property was largely undisturbed until 1970-1992, when it was leased to an off-road motorcycle club which caused serious erosion problems and landscape scars. Since the City and Conservancy's acquisition of Pedro Point Headlands in the 1990s, the Pacifica Land Trust and its volunteers have been instrumental in repairing the damage done, restoring habitat, and improving public access trails.

Transferee Qualifications: The National Park Service (NPS) manages the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). GGNRA is comprised of multiple park sites in the San Francisco Bay

Area, totaling more than 80,000 acres north and south of the Golden Gate Bridge. It is considered one of the world's largest national parks in an urban setting. NPS staff at GGNRA oversee 37 distinct park sites, from Muir Woods National Monument to Fort Point National Historic Site to Alcatraz Island, with more than 130 miles of trails and 1,200 historic structures. GGNRA's park sites include Mori Point, which lies just a couple miles north of Pedro Point Headlands in Pacifica and Rancho Corral de Tierra, which is a couple miles south.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

The proposed authorization 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.

Disposition of the property at Pedro Point Headlands to the NPS will enshrine the long-term preservation of approximately 94 acres of coastal lands with habitat for wildlife, open space connectivity, stunning views, and public access trails. Separate from this proposed authorization, the City of Pacifica's 162 additional acres at Pedro Point Headlands will also be transferred concurrently to the NPS. The Conservancy has limited resources to manage land. Securing a long-term landowner for the property will complete a decades-long goal to transfer the property to an entity with capacity for improved public access and long-term preservation.

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

The proposed authorization will transfer the Conservancy's property at Pedro Point Headlands to an owner with sufficient staff, capacity, expertise, and authority to oversee long-term protection of and public access to the property's resources. As manager, NPS intends to continue to work with local partners, including Pacifica Land Trust for ongoing community-based habitat restoration and the San Mateo Resource Conservation District for wildfire resiliency work at Pedro Point Headlands.

4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The transfer will fulfill a decades-long objective for the Conservancy to transfer the property to a long-term owner. Disposition of the property will also secure a trail manager for a priority segment of California Coastal Trail, which will connect pedestrians and bicyclists to the Pedro Point Headlands and Devil's Slide County Park from the City of Pacifica. The addition of the Pedro Point Headlands to GGNRA will improve management of the property for public access

and resource conservation and also introduce it to a larger segment of the public, as GGNRA's sites are visited by an estimated 19 million people per year.

5. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

Support for the transfer of the Headlands to the NPS comes from the City of Pacifica, San Mateo County, Pacifica Land Trust, and the Peninsula Open Space Trust, as well as Governor Gavin Newsom and San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller. The potential management of Pedro Point Headlands was included in GGNRA's 2014 General Management Plan.

PROJECT FINANCING

The proposed authorization does not involve a grant of Conservancy funds. The Conservancy's property will be conveyed at no cost to the NPS, except for any closing costs.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION

Public Resources Code Section 31107 requires the Director of General Services (DGS) to lease, rent, sell, exchange, or otherwise transfer land at the Conservancy's request, provided that the request is pursuant to an approved implementation plan. In addition, Section 31107.1 requires DGS and the Conservancy to develop appropriate procedures for land disposal. In 1990, DGS and the Conservancy set forth these procedures in a Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Real Property Transactions (MOU). Section 3 of the MOU requires the Conservancy to follow the procedures laid out in Exhibit A, titled Property Disposition Procedures, including approval of a "Property Disposition Plan" that consists of or is an element of an implementation plan required by section 31107 and that includes certain findings. The Disposition Plan attached as Exhibit 2 meets the requirements of the MOU. Accordingly, it is appropriate for the Conservancy to approve the Property Disposition Plan and accordingly authorize its Executive Officer to request that DGS transfer the property.

Public Resources Code Section 31400 directs the Conservancy to have a principal role in the implementation of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. To this end, Public Resources Code Section 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to "provide such assistance as is required to aid public agencies and nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division." Transferring the Pedro Point Headlands property to the NPS for purposes of open space, natural resource protection and public access is consistent with these provisions because it will facilitate public access on land along the coast, while protecting the natural resources of the property for public enjoyment. The disposition will serve the recreational needs of tourists from all over the Bay Area and beyond in addition to local residents.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2.4 Build Trails**, the proposed project will facilitate the development of a priority segment of California Coastal Trail at Pedro Point Headlands by designating a long-term owner and manager for the built trail.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed disposition is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15325 as a transfer of ownership of interests in land in order to preserve open space and existing natural conditions, including habitat.

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