

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

September 17, 2026

CRADLE BASKET

Project No. 24-039-07

Project Manager: Vanessa Aczon

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to amend the scope of the Conservancy grant to Sonoma Ecology Center for the Cradle Basket Project, authorized by the Conservancy on November 21, 2024 to install an art installation comprised of five hand-carved boulders, produce accompanying audio/visual content, and create programming for tours that share stories of five tribes along a pathway to a future Indigenous Environmental and Cultural Learning Center along the Napa River, to reduce the number of hand-carved boulders that will be installed at Oxbow Commons from five to two.

LOCATION: Oxbow Commons, Napa, Napa County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Coastal Stories Grant Program 2024](#) (November 21, 2024 Staff Recommendation)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

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

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes an amendment to the scope of the Conservancy grant to Sonoma Ecology Center for the Cradle Basket Project, authorized by the Conservancy on November 21, 2024 to install an art installation comprised of five hand-carved boulders, produce accompanying audio/visual content, and create programming for tours that share stories of five tribes along a pathway to a future Indigenous Environmental and Cultural Learning Center along the Napa River, to reduce the number of hand-carved boulders that will be installed at Oxbow Commons from five to two. This authorization is subject to the same conditions as set forth in the Conservancy's November 21, 2024 staff recommendation.

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 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding implementing a system of public accessways to and along the California coast, including San Francisco Bay; and Chapter 4.5 of Division 21, regarding the resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. Sonoma Ecology Center 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 to authorize an amendment to the scope of the Conservancy grant to Sonoma Ecology Center (SEC), fiscal sponsor for Cradle Basket, authorized by the Conservancy on November 21, 2024 to install an art installation comprised of five hand-carved boulders, produce accompanying audio/visual content, and create programming for tours that share stories of five tribes along a pathway to a future Indigenous Environmental and Cultural Learning Center along the Napa River, to reduce the number of hand-carved boulders that will be installed at Oxbow Commons from five to two.

The amended Cradle Basket Project (the “project”) will feature an art installation consisting of two (originally five) intricately carved boulders that will represent the five tribes- Wappo, Patwin, Miwok, Pomo, and Ohlone. One boulder will depict the languages of the tribes, while the other will highlight the flora and fauna that hold significance to each of their heritage. The remaining components of the project that were described in the November 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 1), including the development of a website with curated audio and video that highlights the surrounding tribes’ histories, and ecological and cultural significance, and the creation of educational programming tours that share the stories of the five tribes, will remain unchanged. Additionally, the project’s location will remain the same, in which the two boulders will be placed along the walking path of the Oxbow Commons, a park in the City of Napa. The Oxbow Commons is visited by thousands of local residents and tourists, and is a sacred site for the Wappo and Patwin people. Historically, this area was visited by the Miwok, Pomo, and Ohlone tribes for trade and river access.

Based on a recent engineering assessment of the project, the total cost to install each boulder would be approximately \$25,000, significantly exceeding the original budget. These costs include earthwork, transportation and crane services for boulder placement, traffic control, and safety measures required by the City of Napa. Project costs have also increased due to the need for more coordination with the City of Napa and County of Napa, as well as engineers and contractors, than originally anticipated. Given these unanticipated costs, Sonoma Ecology Center has proposed a reduction in project scope from the placement of five boulders to the placement of two boulders as the most effective course of action that would allow it to successfully complete the project. The amended project still upholds the project’s core goals by

honoring the representation of the five tribes on the two boulders, symbolizing their inclusivity and interconnectedness. The project will give voice to the stories, history, lifestyle, and cultures of the Native Californians who have lived in the Napa region for over 10,000 years, and that are still there today, offering them a safe space to learn their origin and connect with their present tribal community, while also educating Napa Valley residents and approximately 3.85 million annual visitors about Native Californians.

In June of 2026, the Executive Officer used delegated authority to authorize an augmentation of \$20,000 to address the budget gap, as described above.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria, last updated on September 23, 2021, as described in the November 21, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 1).

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy (November 21, 2024 authorization)	\$167,400
Coastal Conservancy (June 2026 Executive Officer authorization)	\$20,000
Project Total	\$187,400

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's Project Financing, as described in the November 21, 2024 staff recommendation.

The Conservancy funding for the June 2026 Executive Officer delegated authority augmentation is the FY 25/26 Environmental License Plate Fund, derived from sales and renewal of personalized license plates. Funds in the California Environmental License Plate Fund are available upon appropriation for purposes outlined in Public Resources Code Section 21190. Section 21190(c) includes funding environmental education programs. The proposed project qualifies for these funds because each component of the project is educational, including the development of educational programming tours to share the stories of the five tribes indigenous to the region, art installations that educate the public with respect to the culture and history of five tribes indigenous to the region, and a website that will provide comprehensive information on the historical, ecological, and cultural significance of the Napa River and the tribes.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's Enabling Legislation as described in the November 21, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 1).

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

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan as described in the November 21, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 1).

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project remains exempt from CEQA as described in the November 21, 2024 staff recommendation (Exhibit 1).