

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

September 17, 2026

SEAWOOD CAPE PRESERVE OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION IMPLEMENTATION

Project No. 26-048-01

Project Manager: Peter Jarausch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,218,390 to the Wildlands Conservancy to undertake the Seawood Cape Preserve Overnight Accommodation Implementation Project, consisting of 1) developing final designs and completing the permitting process, and 2) constructing a campground, a new section of the California Coastal Trail, and other public access improvements and amenities at the Seawood Cape Preserve just north of the City of Trinidad in Humboldt County.

LOCATION: Humboldt County.

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code:

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed one million two hundred eighteen thousand three hundred and ninety dollars (\$1,218,390) to the Wildlands Conservancy ("the grantee") to undertake the Seawood Cape Preserve Overnight Accommodation Implementation Project, consisting of 1) developing final designs and completing the permitting process, and 2) constructing a campground, a new section of the California Coastal Trail, and other public access improvements and amenities at Seawood Cape Preserve, just north of the City of Trinidad in Humboldt County.

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 and Proposition 68 as the sources of that funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. 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.

In addition, to the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Coastal Access Project Standards.'

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 a system of Public Accessways.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.
3. The Wildlands Conservancy 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 of an amount not to exceed \$1,218,390 to the Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) to undertake the Seawood Cape Preserve Overnight Accommodation Implementation Project (the "project"), consisting of 1) developing final designs and completing the permitting process, and 2) constructing a campground, a new section of the California Coastal Trail, and other public access improvements and amenities at Seawood Cape Preserve, just north of the City of Trinidad in Humboldt County (Exhibit 1).

Visitors from many parts of California travel to Humboldt County in the summer. They come to enjoy the natural beauty, escape the inland heat, and increasingly, to escape wildfire smoke. The need for clean coastal air is particularly acute in late summer and early fall. Tourists from around the world also travel to northern Humboldt and Del Norte Counties to experience the redwoods. In addition, as part of the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route, there is a steady stream of bicyclists traveling through the area, many of whom seek overnight accommodations.

Existing accommodations in Sue-meg State Park and in the nearby City of Trinidad are in very high demand during the summer. The Sue-meg State Park campground is typically full and, because the area is so popular, the private hotels and campgrounds are expensive. While State Park attempts to accommodate overnight bicyclists when possible, this often leads to crowded conditions. The limits on the number of campsites, as well as the costs associated with staying outside of the State Park, are barriers for equitable access to the coast.

TWC has a great deal of experience providing free accommodations at their southern California preserves, and has begun to expand opportunities to groups who traditionally do not have the resources to visit the coast. TWC currently offers free accommodations at Seawood Cape Preserve on a reservation basis, and hosts Outward Bound Adventures, a portion of Outward Bound that focuses on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) youth and their families. Outward Bound is a national leader in providing outdoor experiences for all ages. TWC has also worked with the nearby community to host school and college groups at no cost, as well as organizations such as the California Native Plant Society. College groups were from College of the Redwoods and Cal Poly Humboldt.

Seawood Cape Preserve currently has only basic campground infrastructure, and space for 10 undeveloped campsites. To provide a no-cost venue for multi-day and overnight nature-based programs, along with camping for hikers and bikers, TWC needs to construct a campground. The project will start with final design development and completion of permitting, and will proceed with campground and trail construction, as described below.

The campground will include 10 individual campsites as well as enhancement of 1.5 miles of existing trails which have been designed to improve accessibility while minimizing impacts to natural resources. In addition to campsite construction, potable water, fire water, and wastewater systems will be installed on the property. Trail construction will include a new section of the California Coastal Trail, open for both day use and overnight visitors. To support day use and improve safety, parking and a crosswalk will be added on Patrick's Point Drive.

To support group use of the property, the new campground may also include a new group campsite facility and parking. The group campsite will have capacity for 65 people and will include a building with accessible restrooms, a covered gathering area, and a kitchen. The group site is an important part of the overall project because it supports Wildlands' ongoing work to bring groups from underserved communities to the coast. TWC is still in the process of securing additional funds for this component of the project. This component of the project may be delayed until after the individual campsites, trails, and water systems are completed, depending on when the remaining funds are secured.

Site Description:

TWC's Seawood Cape Preserve is located in unincorporated Humboldt County, along the California Coastal Trail and Pacific Coast Bike Route, 3 miles north of the City of Trinidad, and 4 miles south of Sue-meg State Park (see Exhibit 1). Seawood Cape Preserve encompasses 128 acres of diverse ecosystems including spruce-fir and redwood forests, a wet meadow, alder woodlands, and coastal bluffs. TWC envisions Seawood Cape Preserve as a venue that provides a gathering space and basic accommodations for education programs, and for hikers/bikers along the trail, all at no cost.

The west side of Seawood Cape Preserve is open for day use, free of charge, from sunrise to sunset. From the west side, a short hike out to Scotty Point leads to breathtaking views of the coastline and offers a chance to view wildlife such as the seasonal whale migrations in the spring and fall. The east side of Seawood Cape Preserve has an undeveloped parking area and 10 undeveloped campsites that host public groups by reservation.

Grant Applicant Qualifications:

Over the past 27 years, TWC has acquired 25 nature preserves totaling 209,000 acres of land in California, Oregon, and Utah. These preserves are open to the public free of charge for passive recreation including hiking, picnicking, and camping. The organization has ample experience managing planning projects and grant funding in order to develop public recreation facilities throughout their preserve system. Examples include planning for constructing a parking lot, restroom, and trailhead on Highway 1 for the Jenner Headlands Preserve on the Sonoma Coast, and the acquisition and management of the Lone Pine Property in Trinity, Mendocino, and Humboldt Counties. TWC has successfully managed multiple grant-funded projects from the State Coastal Conservancy and other funds from local, state, and federal agencies over the past decade. TWC received a previous grant from the Conservancy to conduct planning and design for this project.

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 proposed project is a good investment of state resources as it contributes to the State's objective to provide lower-cost overnight accommodations on the California coast and will also construct a new section of the California Coastal Trail. The proposed project has a reasonable budget which will allow for the construction of the campground and the needed infrastructure improvements. The grantee will provide access to the preserve at no cost to the public.

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.

TWC has reached out directly to local tribes and tribal members during the planning phase of the project. It will continue those outreach efforts during the final design and permitting portions of the project.

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

The proposed project will integrate design elements that protect and conserve coastal resources. The existing trail and campsite improvements will be designed to require as little maintenance as possible. Both the new section of California Coastal Trail and the camping area are well back from the bluff and will not be impacted by increased erosion due to climate change.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The proposed project will construct no cost accommodations along a popular part of the California coast. These accommodations will benefit both the overnight visitors and the local economy, which relies on tourism. In addition, the new section of California Coastal Trail will increase opportunities for wildlife viewing, particularly when whales are migrating up the coast, and will improve public health by providing a new opportunity for outdoor recreation.

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

The proposed project involved meaningful community engagement. TWC staff are engaged with the community through guided tours, educational programming and access opportunities, and via open dialogue with those who will be most immediately impacted by activity at Seawood Cape Preserve. In anticipation of the proposed project, the Preserve hosted a variety of community events, including field trips with the California Native Plant Society and Godwit Days, local hiking groups, elementary school and college classes, and programming, such as Nature Journaling and BioBlitzes. At each event, participants were asked to share other ways that TWC can serve them and their communities. TWC staff also tabled at numerous community events to solicit input. Seawood Cape Preserve also holds an annual 2-week summer program hosting a group of southern California youth from Outward Bound Adventures where they learn restoration/stewardship skills through hands-on training and development.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,218,390
The Wildlands Conservancy	\$150,000
TBD	\$281,610
Project Total	\$1,650,000

Conservancy funding will derive from two different fund sources. The first anticipated source of funding is an appropriation to the Conservancy of the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, also known as the 2024 Climate Bond or Proposition 4 (Public Resources Code Section 90000-95015). Section 92010, which describes the purposes of Proposition 4 coastal resilience funds, includes 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 “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)). The project is consistent with this funding source because it will develop a publicly accessible camping facility and a new segment of the California Coastal Trail to improve public access to and continued use and enjoyment of

the coast. The Conservancy expects that \$100,000 of the recommended grant will come from Proposition 4.

The second anticipated source of funding for this project is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68, Public Resources Code Sections 8000-80173). The term “protection” includes “actions to improve access to public open-space areas, or actions to allow the continued use and enjoyment of...natural resources” 80002(l). Consistent with the purposes of this funding source, the proposed project consists of developing approximately 10 campsites to improve access to and enjoyment of Seawood Cape Preserve and the California Coastal Trail. The Conservancy expects that \$1,118,390 of the recommended grant will come from Proposition 68.

The Conservancy grant will leverage cash and in-kind contributions from TWC and in-kind contributions from Outward Bound Adventures. TWC will provide \$150,000 in funding for the project, as well as two 4,500-gallon water tanks for the water system, valued at \$12,000. Outward Bound Adventures will conduct vegetation clearing, partial trail creation, and revegetation, valued at \$30,000. TWC will endeavor to secure \$281,610 in additional public or private funds to complete additional project components , as discussed above.

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 proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 (Sections 31400 et seq.) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31400-31410), related to public accessways. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy shall have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline. Sections 31400.1 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop, operate, or manage lands for public access purposes to and along the coast. Consistent with this section, the proposed authorization will support expansion and improvement of public access to and along the coast.

Pursuant to Section 31409, the Conservancy may award grants to a nonprofit organization to establish and expand inland trail systems that may be linked to the California Coastal Trail. The proposed authorization will enable TWC to expand a section of the California Coastal Trail, consistent with this section.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2.7 Explore the Coast Overnight**, the proposed project will construct a new campground that will be free to visitors.

Consistent with **Goal 2.4 Build Trails**, the proposed project will construct a new half mile section of the California Coastal Trail.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Section 21080.57 of the Public Resources Code, which exempts activities or approvals necessary for or incidental to planning, design and construction of public park or nonmotorized recreational trail facilities funded in whole or in part by the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024 (Proposition 4). Consistent with this section, the project will be partially funded by Proposition 4 and will develop designs and construct improvements to a public park and nonmotorized trail facility. Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption.