

## COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
October 23, 2003

### SHELTER COVE BREAKWATER ENGINEERING AND DESIGN

File No. 03-082  
Project Manager: Su Corbaley

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 to the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District to develop engineering feasibility studies, environmental documentation, and permit applications for the rehabilitation of the Shelter Cove breakwater facility.

**LOCATION:** Shelter Cove, Humboldt County (Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Urban Waterfront

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#### EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: Location Map
  - Exhibit 2: Aerial Photograph
  - Exhibit 3: Letters of Support
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#### **RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following Resolution pursuant to Sections 31300-31315 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District (“the District”) to undertake engineering feasibility analyses and preparation of environmental documentation and permit applications to evaluate options for the rehabilitation of the breakwater facility in Shelter Cove. This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to the disbursement of funds, the District shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, schedule and budget, and the names of any contractors to be employed in preparation of the feasibility studies.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

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

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria in Chapter 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31300-31315) regarding the restoration of urban waterfronts.
  2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 21, 2001.”
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## **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

The proposed authorization would enable the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District (the District) to develop engineering feasibility studies and associated environmental and permitting documentation for the rehabilitation of the breakwater facility in Shelter Cove. This work is necessary in order to continue to provide safe aquatic access for open-water boat launching for recreational and commercial fishing activities. Commercial and recreation salmon fishing and ocean bottom fishing are the major boating attraction in the Shelter Cove area, and Shelter Cove provides the only boat launching facility between Fort Bragg and Humboldt Bay (Exhibit 1); if this facility were to become unavailable, even seasonally during high tides, it would have an important impact on the local economy. It is anticipated that with the design and engineering completed pursuant to the proposed grant, the project would be able to compete for construction grants through the Department of Boating and Waterways.

An important function of the District is to assure continued viable uses of Shelter Cove for commercial and recreational boating activities, and the District has been engaged in several improvement projects in Shelter Cove, as discussed below in the “Project History” section. This project will enable the District to continue its function and complete several years of improvements, to keep aquatic access available and the fishing industry alive in Shelter Cove. The project will include data collection, development of engineering studies to present the design options, preparation of necessary environmental impact studies, and completion of permit applications.

Since the late 1970s the District has been the lead agency for several projects at the Shelter Cove Boat Launching Facility to improve and maximize its use and availability for local residents and tourists. In recent years comments at public meetings regarding Shelter Cove development have revealed that the overriding interest, above many other possibilities, is improvement of the breakwater to increase public safety and access. Common suggestions at a District-sponsored workshop included constructing the breakwater out of larger rock; constructing the breakwater higher and extending it further offshore; deepening the low tide channel at the farther reach of the structure; and locating seasonal floats inside the breakwater.

Shelter Cove has become an active recreational commercial fishing area, drawing tourists from near and far. Part of the attraction is Shelter Cove’s quiet environment where people can stroll along the beach, view the magnificent mountains that drop to the sea, and in particular enjoy the abundant ocean fishing, both salmon and bottom fishing. Unfortunately, while open water boat launching is still possible, it has become increasingly difficult for commercial and recreational fishing vessels to launch during high tides or winter weather conditions due to the degraded condition of the breakwater.

Severe winter weather has eroded the breakwater, making boat launching unstable at times. If these improvements are not soon made, this access could be lost. This would have a major im-

pact on the economics of the area, and would result in no ocean boating access for a stretch of approximately 100 miles of California.

The Conservancy has long been interested in maintaining coastal dependent uses of urban waterfronts throughout the state, and has undertaken numerous projects to assure that these uses continue. Commercial and recreational fishing is an important component of such efforts.

**Site Description:** Shelter Cove is located approximately 25 miles west of Garberville, at the southern end of Humboldt County, and approximately 200 miles north of San Francisco, on California's "Lost Coast." The cove faces south; its location makes it an important port of refuge from northwesterly winds and seas. However, during westerly and southerly storms, waves and wind move unimpeded into the cove, making beach access very precarious and often swamping vehicles or boats. Boats are either self-launched by backing the boat down into the water, as is typical on boat ramps, or are carried into the water by a high clearance vehicle operated by the local boat launching business (Lost Coast Landing) that is able to drive further into the water than a passenger vehicle, thereby allowing larger vessels to use Shelter Cove for aquatic recreation.

High bluffs surround the cove; the cove is comprised of hard-packed sand stretching approximately one-third of a mile from Point Delgada to Dead Man's Gulch, with rock beach continuing south another quarter mile to Point No Pass. Parking is available adjacent to the launching area or uphill in the visitor parking area where there are restaurants, shops, public restrooms, and fish receiving facilities. The breakwater is constructed of large rocks piled to create a rock wall. Time and wave action have caused the rocks to settle and waves at average high tide can crest the top of the breakwater. Extreme high tides can submerge the outer limits of the jetty, making it virtually ineffective in protecting the cove (Exhibit 2).

**Project History:** Shelter Cove has served as an important safe harbor since the early 1900s when it was an active lumber port with a long pier that extended into the ocean. The port also served to export sheep and cattle, and imported many important cargoes to southern Humboldt County, including the delivery of the first automobile from San Francisco to Humboldt County. It also was a fish receiving and processing port prior to World War II. Today, Shelter Cove is an active recreational and commercial fishing area providing services to locals and tourists. The District has been responsible for the improvement and maintenance of the Shelter Cove Boat Launching Facility since the late 1970s.

The District has implemented several projects over the years to improve the facilities available at the cove. In 1978, the District entered into an agreement for the use of the beach access road with the property owners, Mario and Shirley Machi. To date, five phases of improvements have been completed through grants and District funds:

- 1978 – Phase I. Improvements included paving the boat ramp, the access road, and turnaround, utilities and engineering design to improve the breakwater to its current design.
- 1980 – The District was granted an easement for the access road and launch ramp area.
- 1981 – Phase II. Construction of a restroom and parking area to complete the second phase of improvements.
- Mid 1980s – Phase III. Paving of the access road and ramp and construction of a rock slope to protect the road.

- 1987 – Phases IV and V. Bluff stabilization by installing a rock revetment at the toe of the bluff.

As a result of the improvements, Shelter Cove became a popular attraction with sports fishermen and retirees, as well as the commercial fishermen who have continued to rely on the launch facility. The increased use increases the need for improvements.

In 1999, a District-sponsored workshop held in Shelter Cove revealed that the most recognized maintenance issue, out of several identified, was the ineffectiveness of the breakwater to increase its capacity and improve safety. The proposed project will assist the District to achieve these goals.

### **PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$100,000
Harbor District	<u>4,500</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$104,500</b>

The expected source of Conservancy funds for this project is the FY 02/03 appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhoods and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40). These funds are available for use in accordance with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Division 21, for uses including rehabilitation, restoration, and improvement of land and water resources.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

This project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 7 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation (California Public Resources Code Sections 31300-31315).

Section 31301 sets forth the legislative finding that California's urban waterfronts are in need of restoration in order to remain a vital economic and cultural component of the community and establishes the promotion of urban waterfronts as the purpose of Chapter 7. Section 31315 provides that under its urban waterfront restoration mandate, the Conservancy shall administer state funds, when appropriated to the Conservancy, for the improvement of the infrastructure to fishing harbors on public trust lands. The project site is on public trust land formerly administered by the State Lands Commission.

Under §31307, the Conservancy may award grants to public agencies for the restoration of urban coastal waterfront areas. This project would develop alternatives to maintain continued viability of the recreational and commercial fishing economy in Shelter Cove. Additionally, when the project is constructed, coastal access would be made safely available, year-round.

Pursuant to §31308, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of any urban waterfront project. The District has obtained funding from many other organizations for past improvement projects for Shelter Cove facilities, and plans to secure funds from the Department of Boating and Waterways (DBW) for the implementation of the project. The Conservancy's full funding of this phase of work would complement DBW's expected future contribution for construction. Also consistent with this section, the level of Conservancy funding for this project has been determined through consideration of the total amount of funding available for urban waterfront projects and the relative urgency of the project.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S  
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective A**, the proposed project will restore a northern California urban waterfront resulting in increased visitation, tourism, and economic vitality by providing a safer launch facility.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S  
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

**Required Criteria**

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support from the public:** The maintenance of the breakwater at Shelter Cove has the strong support of both residents of and visitors to the area. The Conservancy has received many letters of support from local, regional and tourists who utilize the cove for sport fishing. Letters have also been received from the Shelter Cove Resort Improvement District, the local boat launching business, Humboldt County Supervisor Jimmy Smith and State Senator Wes Chesbro (Exhibit 3).
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone.
5. **Need:** The breakwater does not provide adequate safety to boaters in certain rough weather. Because there is insufficient revenue generated by the launching activities, the Harbor District (whose responsibilities cover an extensive reach of coast) does not have funds available to fund the engineering aspect of this project. Likewise, the City of Shelter Cove does not have sufficient funds to contribute to the process. Conservancy funds are critical for the project to move ahead so the District may apply for construction grant funds from the Department of Boating and Waterways.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The commercial and recreational fishing industry is an important element of California's coastal waterfront economy, and is a critical component of Shelter Cove's economy. Local and regional residents, as well as out of area tourists utilize the launching facilities at Shelter Cove. Its location, halfway between Ft. Bragg and Humboldt Bay, make it critical to contiguous coastal across in northern California.

**Additional Criteria**

7. **Urgency:** The current condition of the breakwater is of great concern for the safety of those who access the coast here. If repairs do not occur soon, a critical access point may be lost. Further, the economy of the region would be severely affected if commercial and recreational fishing could not continue.

8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** This project will help assure a viable fishing industry and a continued quality coastal access experience for the visitor to Shelter Cove.
12. **Readiness:** The District and the City of Shelter Cove, as well as those who enjoy the calm beach of the cove, are anxious to see improvements made. The District is prepared to initiate the project immediately to take advantage of the winter weather data gathering opportunities and position itself for applying for grants for the implementation phase of the project.

#### **COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Sections 15262 and 15306 in that it involves only feasibility or planning studies and it may include basic data collection and research (neither of which will impact any environmental resource(s)), undertaken as part of a study leading to an action which the Conservancy has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Staff will file a “Notice of Exemption” upon approval of this project.