

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Project Summary
June 30, 2004

**PORT SAN LUIS HARBOR URBAN WATERFRONT RESTORATION PLAN-
HARFORD LANDING COASTAL TRAIL GATEWAY PROJECT**

File No. 00-016-1
Project Manager: Marc Beyeler

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Adoption of the Port San Luis Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan (UWRP) and Environmental Impact Report (EIR); and authorization to disburse up to \$500,000 to the Port San Luis Harbor District to assist in the implementation of the Harford Landing Coastal Trail Gateway Project, part of the adopted UWRP for Port San Luis.

LOCATION: Port San Luis, San Luis Bay, San Luis Obispo County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Urban Waterfronts and Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Regional Location Map

Exhibit 2: Project Site Map

Exhibit 3: Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan

Exhibit 4: Environmental Impact Report

Exhibit 5: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following Resolution pursuant to Sections 31300-31315 and Sections 31400-31404 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby adopts the Port San Luis Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan and authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to the Port San Luis Harbor District to assist in the implementation of the Harford Landing Coastal Trail Gateway, subject to the condition

that prior to the disbursement of any funds, the Port San Luis Harbor District shall submit for the review and approval of the Conservancy's Executive Officer:

1. A work program, including schedule and budget and the names of any contractors it intends to use to implement the project;
2. Evidence of permits and approvals; and
3. A plan for the erection of signs, acknowledging the Conservancy's funding and participation in the project."

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 policies of Chapter 7 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31300-31315) regarding urban waterfront restoration.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the policies of Chapter 9 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31404) regarding public access.
3. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Guidelines and Criteria adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
4. The Conservancy has independently reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Harbor Master Plan (EIR), adopted by the Port San Luis Harbor District on April 27, 2004 to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act, and attached as Exhibit 4 to the accompanying staff recommendation, and finds that, although the EIR identifies two significant environmental impacts that have the potential for a significant effect if the proposed project is approved, all other significant effects that can feasibly be mitigated or avoided were reduced to an acceptable level by the imposition of mitigation measures set forth in the "Mitigation Monitoring Program" included in the EIR. The Conservancy also finds that the Mitigation Monitoring Program establishes a mechanism and procedures for implementing and verifying the mitigations pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081.6. The Conservancy further finds that the remaining unavoidable significant impacts are clearly outweighed by the economic, social and other benefits of the proposed project, as set forth in the Port District's Statement of Overriding Considerations. Based on these determinations, the Conservancy finds that the EIR is adequate environmental documentation under the California Environmental Quality Act for its approval of the proposed project.
5. The project serves greater than local need."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The Port San Luis Harbor District is requesting a grant from the Coastal Conservancy to assist the District in the implementation of the Harford Landing Coastal Trail Gateway project, an essential component of the Updated Harbor Master Plan/Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan (UWRP). Staff recommends approval of this grant because it offers the opportunity to preserve significant coastal-dependent waterfront facilities and provide for enhanced public access.

The Updated Harbor Master Plan/Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan was prepared as an amendment to the Local Coastal Plan (LCP). On April 27, 2004, the Harbor District adopted the Harbor Master Plan/Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan, the Environmental Impact Report and a Statement of Overriding Considerations, addressing unavoidable environmental impacts.

The Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan provides for a careful balancing of expanded coastal public access and recreational activities, including bike and hiking support facilities, with expanded services to the commercial fishing industry in order to preserve the “working waterfront” character of Port San Luis, such as expanded and improved boat landing, haul-out and repair facilities.

Many elements were incorporated into the Plan to assist in implementation of the California Coastal Trail Program, supporting the connection of the Coastal Trail through or along the Harbor District’s property to Avila Beach. These planned improvements include public access staging areas, overnight accommodations, and related water and beach access recreational facilities. Among the coastal access improvements are facilities such as restrooms and showers, secure bike racks, and interpretive and directional signage for visitors to allow greater use of the Pecho Coast Trail, a portion of the California Coastal Trail. The proposed authorization would support development of the Coastal Trail Gateway in the Harford Landing portion of Port San Luis and facilitate greater public use of the trail while providing safe access within the working waterfront areas of Port San Luis.

The proposed Harford Landing Coastal Trail Gateway will provide essential facilities described below for public use of this portion of San Luis Bay, accessing the Pecho Coast, San Luis Obispo’s hidden, or “lost coast.” The trail to the Port San Luis Lightstation, and the Pecho Coast, is immediately adjacent to the Gateway project. Included in the Coastal Trail Gateway Project, to be funded by the Coastal Conservancy will be the following: public car parking; biking and hiking staging facilities, including bike and gear storage; a regional transit stop; interpretive and educational signage and displays; small boat storage; public restrooms; and other public use facilities, including a sitting and viewing area.

Site Description: Port San Luis is the southern gateway to the pristine and wild Pecho Coast portion of the San Luis Obispo coast. Port San Luis is also a vital “working waterfront” along California’s central coast. The Port provides the only commercial fishing industry access along the central coast between Morro Bay and Santa Barbara. Located along the northern shore of San Luis Bay, Port San Luis provides essential onshore commercial fishing support facilities to the resident commercial fishing fleet. At the same time, Port San Luis also provides important public access staging areas serving the Pecho coast. Nearly 500,000 people visit Port San Luis annually.

Currently, much of the Harford Landing portion of Port San Luis is undeveloped or underdeveloped, with many aging and inadequate public facilities. The area is unpaved and lacks many essential public facilities, such as adequate transit access, public parking and restrooms. The public must use the harbor’s roadway for access to Harford Pier and for access to the trailhead for the Pecho Coast trail.

Project History: The Harbor Master Plan originally developed in 1984, included a 15-year timetable for implementation. In 2000, the Coastal Commission directed the Harbor District to review its Harbor Master Plan and insure compliance and compatibility with the San Luis Obispo County Local Coastal Plan (LCP). In January 2001, the Coastal Conservancy approved a grant to the Port San Luis Harbor District to prepare the Updated Harbor Master Plan/Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan; matching funding was provided by the Harbor District.

Coastal Conservancy staff has been working with local public agencies and local citizens to protect and restore significant onshore coastal-dependent marine resources and provide for coastal public access at Port San Luis for the past 15 years. Conservancy funds have contributed to the development of public access facilities, the restoration and improvement of the Harford Pier, and the provision of expanded and improved onshore commercial fishing facilities.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$500,000
Port San Luis Harbor District (Project Management And Engineering Personnel Services)	\$100,000
California Dept. of Boating and Waterways	<u>\$1,400,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$2,000,000

The anticipated source of funds is the Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2002 (Prop. 40). Consistent with the purposes of this funding source, the proposed project would be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation and would involve the preservation of coastal resources. In addition, under Proposition 40, this project is given priority because it involves substantial matching funds.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is consistent with the policies in Chapter 7 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Sections 31300-31315 of the Public Resources Code, regarding urban waterfront restoration. Conservancy participation in this project will help fulfill the Legislative goals set forth in Section 31301, to develop the state's urban waterfronts into environmentally sound areas to promote tourism, public access, and private sector development in these areas. Consistent with Sections 31305, the Conservancy has funded Plan development which seeks to promote excellence of design and which sensitively integrate man-made features into the natural environment. Consistent with Sections 31307 and 31309, the Conservancy is authorized to make grants to local governments to promote urban waterfront restoration. Consistent with Sections 31311, the Conservancy funding for implementation is for projects included in the UWRP proposed to be adopted by the Conservancy as part of this authorization.

This project is consistent with Chapter 9 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Sections 31400-31404 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access. Consistent with Section 31400, the Conservancy is being asked to approve funding to implement a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. Consistent with Section 31400.1, Conservancy staff has determined that the access improvements shall serve more than local public needs. Consistent with Section 31400.3, the Conservancy is authorized "to provide 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."

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

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective C**, the project would entail construction of up to one half mile of public access trail improvements within public ownership.

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective D**, the project would bridge gaps in the Coastal Trail by establishing a new pedestrian accessway within the Harford Landing portion of Port San Luis.

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective D**, the project would increase coastal recreation opportunities for residents and visitors, and correct dangerous conditions by establishing a new pedestrian accessway adjacent to an existing roadway that extends throughout the Harbor.

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective E**, the project would serve to alleviate the negative impacts of traffic and congestion on public access by creating a continuous pedestrian pathway within the Harbor and locating access improvements at the trail-head to the Pecho Coast portion of the California Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 3 Objectives A and B**, the project would increase and promote tourism and public access to the Port San Luis waterfront and harbor.

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 above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See Project Financing above.
3. **Support of the Public:** Both the County of San Luis Obispo and the California Coastal Commission support the Harbor District's update to the Port's Harbor Master Master Plan adoption and implementation, as do State Senator McPherson and Assemblymember Maldonado. Additional support comes from local environmental groups, including ECO SLO and the Central Coast Salmon Enhancement Project (Exhibit 5).
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of San Luis Obispo County.
5. **Need:** The proposed project is the first implementation project to be considered under the updated Harbor Master Plan/UWRP. This project would not proceed if SCC funds are not approved.
6. **Greater-Than-Local Interest:** The coastal resources at Port San Luis are used by the local communities of San Luis Obispo, as well as visitors from the Central Valley, the San Francisco Bay Area, and southern California. Port San Luis is a working waterfront of regional and statewide significance.

Additional Criteria

7. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The Plan includes a review of regional public access needs, onshore commercial fishing support facilities, and coastal water quality protections. The Plan addresses multiple goals of resource protection, public access and maintenance of the "working waterfront" of Port San Luis.
8. **Leverage:** See Project Financing above.
9. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See Project History above. The Coastal Conservancy has funded public access, waterfront and marine support facilities within Port San Luis since 1986. The Coastal Conservancy has been working with the Harbor District to provide new public access improvements, while maintaining the character of the "working waterfront" of Port San Luis. The proposed project funding would ensure that the character of the Harbor is maintained as a working waterfront while providing essential public access improvements supporting the goal of completing the California Coastal Trail.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

The project, as designed, is consistent with Conservancy's Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development as follows:

Standard No. 1 Protect Public and Coastal Resources

The project is designed and located to minimize alteration of the natural landforms of Port San Luis and protect environmentally sensitive habitats by locating the pathway adjacent to an existing roadway, eliminating unwarranted hazards to public safety by using an adequate buffer between pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Standard No. 2 Correct Hazards

By establishing a pedestrian pathway that is to include directional signage and a buffer between the roadway and the pathway, the project would serve to reduce existing hazards associated with pedestrians using the roadway shoulder.

Standard No. 5 Environmentally Sensitive Areas

The project has been designed and routed to protect environmentally sensitive areas near the bluffs adjacent to the Harbor Complex.

Standard No. 8 Trails

The boardwalk would serve to connect the harbor with the nearby Pecho Coast Trail-head, and would include appropriate paving materials, adequate trash receptacles, benches, and signs.

Standard No. 9 Scenic Overlooks

The Harford Landing project would include a staging overlook that would provide the public with a unique view of the bay and coast and would be accessible to those with physical disabilities.

Standard No. 12 Support Facilities

The project would include support facilities including directional and resource interpretation signs and would serve regional users.

Standard No. 13 Barrier-Free Access

The project would be wheelchair-accessible.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The Updated Harbor Master Plan/UWRP has been prepared as an amendment to the Local Coastal Plan (LCP) and will guide development within the Harbor consistent with the goals of the Coastal Act. The content and form of the combined Harbor Master Plan Update/UWRP will serve as the basis for a review and analysis of the Local Coastal Plan (LCP). Both the County of San Luis Obispo and the California Coastal Commission have been regularly consulted and have advised the Harbor District throughout the preparation of the UWRP.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

On April 27, 2004, the Port San Luis Harbor District (District) adopted the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Harbor Master Plan (EIR) in compliance with the

California Environmental Quality Act. (See Exhibit 4). The EIR identified potential impacts of the project in the areas of geology; public services; air quality; growth inducing impacts; cultural resources; biological resources; visual resources; noise; traffic; hazardous materials; and cumulative impacts. Changes or alterations were required or incorporated into the project which avoid or substantially lessens these potentially adverse impacts to a level of insignificance.

However, the District found that two of these potentially significant effects in the areas of construction related air quality and cumulative traffic impacts could not be entirely mitigated or avoided if the project were approved and implemented. The District, therefore, adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations (Section V, of Attachment B of Exhibit 4). The District found that these remaining unavoidable significant impacts are clearly outweighed by the economic, social and other benefits of the proposed project.

Conservancy staff recommends that the Conservancy find that it has independently reviewed the Final EIR adopted by the District in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act; that, although the EIR identifies two significant environmental effects that have the potential for a significant effect if the proposed project is approved, all other significant effects that can feasibly be mitigated or avoided were reduced to an acceptable level by the imposition of mitigation measures set forth in the "Mitigation Monitoring Program" included in the EIR; that the Mitigation Monitoring Program establishes a mechanism and procedures for implementing and verifying the mitigations pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21081.6; that the remaining unavoidable significant impacts are clearly outweighed by the economic, social and other benefits of the proposed project, as set forth in the District's Statement of Overriding Considerations; and that the EIR is adequate environmental documentation under the California Environmental Quality Act for Conservancy approval of the proposed project.

Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Determination for the project.

