

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

September 15, 2004

SAN FRANCISCO BAY TRAIL PROJECT BLOCK GRANT #3

File No. 04-053

Project Manager: Joan Cardellino

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to provide funding to the Association of Bay Area Governments for a variety of projects to extend the San Francisco Bay Trail.

LOCATION: Various locations around San Francisco Bay

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Conservancy Program; Public Access Program

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31000 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of three million eight hundred thousand dollars (\$3,800,000) to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) for the San Francisco Bay Trail Project (BTP), its associated nonprofit organization, to develop individual San Francisco Bay Trail projects. The funds shall be used to establish criteria for potential Bay Trail access grant projects, to solicit and evaluate grant proposals, to recommend to the Conservancy the award of grant funds to selected projects, to implement selected projects, to monitor implementation of funded projects, and for related matters including administrative costs.

Prior to the execution of an agreement with each individual project grantee, ABAG shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, schedule and budget for each project. No Conservancy funds shall be disbursed toward implementation of any proposed project that is not exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, until the Conservancy authorizes the project.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

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

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164 regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program; and with Sections 31400-31409 regarding public access.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends a grant of \$3.8 million to ABAG for the purpose of funding and managing a variety of individual projects that will further the development of the San Francisco Bay Trail. This grant will provide funding for further steps toward the completion of this important regional trail, accessible to the densely populated urban areas of the nine Bay Area counties. Through this grant, over the next few years, thousands of Bay Area residents and visitors can expect to gain several miles of new Bay trail and improved destination points along the trail. This same effective partnership between the Conservancy and the Bay Trail Project, matched by the funds of others, has recently produced 12 new miles of SF Bay trail that are now heavily used.

By making a “block” grant to ABAG, which will be administered and managed by the Bay Trail Project, the Conservancy reduces its own staff involvement in the daily management tasks of the individual projects, while providing valuable oversight and guidance to Bay Trail Project staff. BTP staff will be able to administer the grants and perform many of the project management duties, and Conservancy staff will assist in the pre-project analysis activities and in other areas as needed. This level of cooperation will help ensure the efficient and effective use of these funds. This arrangement has worked well over the past four years to provide efficient allocation and management of nearly \$10 million in block grant funding.

BTP staff and Conservancy staff will work together to decide on the best method of distributing the grant funds. In previous years the BTP has undertaken competitive grant rounds and evaluated the project proposals according to established criteria. Other projects have been initiated outside of the grant round process by either Conservancy or BTP staff. Grant rounds may not be needed for this particular block grant because of the preliminary work already done, which is now ready for implementation. For example, numerous planning studies and feasibility analyses were funded with the previous block grants, and many of those projects are now ready to be constructed. Additionally, BTP staff has undertaken a detailed analysis of remaining gaps in the trail, and when that analysis is complete it will provide a helpful guide to the strategic use of the new funds. However, if a grant round appears to be the best mechanism to use to solicit new projects with a portion of the available funds, this would be appropriate.

The BTP board of directors is made up of representatives from local governments around San Francisco Bay, from the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the Conservancy and members of trail advocacy groups. The steering committee meets on a bimonthly basis, and will have input into the project evaluation process. BTP is a nonprofit organization supported by

ABAG and dedicated to completing the San Francisco Bay Trail. ABAG is a council of governments consisting of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties and 98 cities. Its primary purpose is to provide region wide planning and local government services.

Site Description: The projects will be located along the Bay Trail spine (primary) alignment, as well as spur (shoreline point-access) and connector trails (to regional destinations located inland of the shoreline.)

Project History: In the fall of 1999 the Conservancy authorized a grant of \$2.5 million to ABAG/BTP. In December 2000 a second grant of \$7,387,500 was provided from the “Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund” (Proposition 12). A total of 58 projects have been undertaken through these two previous grants. Ten construction projects and 20 planning and feasibility studies have been completed, and another 28 projects are currently in progress and rapidly nearing completion.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$3,800,000
Other sources (e.g., grantees and other grant funds)	say \$2,000,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the “California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002” (Proposition 40.) These funds are available for all the purposes of the Conservancy, including the San Francisco Bay Conservancy Program.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Increasing public access to the San Francisco Bay Trail is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, sections 31400 *et seq.* regarding public access; and with Chapter 4.5 sections 31160 *et seq.* regarding San Francisco Bay projects.

With respect to public access, 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, including San Francisco Bay. By providing \$3.6 million for Bay Trail projects, the Conservancy will be helping significantly to implement the comprehensive San Francisco Bay Trail. Section 31400.1 allows the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies and qualified nonprofit organizations. ABAG is an association of governments and the Bay Trail Project is a nonprofit organization that works with ABAG in all nine San Francisco Bay Area counties to promote the Bay Trail. Under Section 31400.3, the Conservancy may provide such assistance as is required to aid public agencies and nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, which includes San Francisco Bay. Granting funds to ABAG not only provides needed cash to construct trail projects, but also helps to ensure that environmental review will be completed in an appropriate manner. Providing this oversight function is an important role for the Conservancy to play.

With respect to the San Francisco Bay Area, Section 31162(a) states in part that the Conservancy may undertake projects that will improve public access to and around the bay, through completion of regional trail systems. Consistent with Section 31163(c), the

proposed grant will be used for funding projects that, to the greatest extent, are supported by adopted local or regional plans; serve a regional constituency; can be implemented in a timely way; take advantage of opportunities that would be lost if the project is not quickly implemented; and include matching funds from other sources of funding or assistance.

Finally, Section 31111 authorizes the Conservancy to fund plans and feasibility studies in implementing Division 21.

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

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objectives A and B**, projects funded through the block grant will increase the amount of land that is accessible to the public, and will very likely result in the construction of more than one mile of the San Francisco Bay Trail.

**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 of the public:** This block grant partnership between the Conservancy and the Bay Trail Project has been very successful, with many local governments and special districts benefiting from the program. Letters of support are attached in Exhibit 1.
4. **Location:** Projects proposed for funding with this grant will be located on the Bay Trail alignment along the Bay shoreline and connecting to it.
5. **Need:** Local governments are the primary grantees for the projects funded through the block grant program, and they are suffering from the current statewide fiscal crisis. Without Conservancy assistance it is likely that the only portions of the Bay Trail to be funded over the next few years would be those portions required by the Bay Conservation and Development Commission as a condition of development permits.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Bay Trail is a regional trail network that will be approximately 400 miles in length when completed. This grant program will help further the completion of the trail.

Additional Criteria

9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above. The BTP has established the provision of matching funds as a criterion for evaluating projects, and nearly every project funded through the block grant program has had significant matching funds.

12. **Readiness:** BTP staff is ready to begin allocation of these funds within the calendar year.

CONSISTENCY WITH SAN FRANCISCO BAY PLAN:

Promoting public access opportunities along the bay shoreline is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Plan Public Access Policies. Policy number 8 states that access to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available. Diverse and interesting public access experiences should be provided which would encourage users to remain in the designated access areas to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects on wildlife and their habitat. Projects funded through this proposed grant will be consistent with this policy.

Policy number 10 states that federal, state, regional and local jurisdictions, special districts and the Bay Commission should cooperate to provide appropriately sited, designed and managed public access, especially to link the entire series of shoreline parks, regional trail systems and existing public access areas to the extent feasible without additional Bay filling and without significant adverse effects on Bay natural resources. Projects funded through this proposed grant will be consistent with this policy, as regional and local jurisdictions and special districts, and eligible nonprofits, are the presumed grantees under this program. Closing gaps between existing public access areas is a high priority for funding.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed authorization does not have the potential to result in any physical changes to the environment and therefore is not a “project” subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15378. However, any projects later proposed for funding will be evaluated as required by CEQA.