

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 8, 2005

GOLETA SLOUGH TIDAL RESTORATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

File No. 99-092
Project Manager: Trish Chapman

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Amend the Conservancy's May 27, 2004 authorization for the Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Demonstration Project (Exhibit 1) to reduce the scope of the project to construct and monitor only experimental basin F and its effects on restoring tidal circulation to the slough and on the bird air strike hazard at Santa Barbara Municipal Airport.

LOCATION: Goleta Slough, City of Santa Barbara

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: May 27, 2004 Staff Report for the Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Demonstration Project

Exhibit 2: Project Location Map

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 21351- 31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby amends its May 27, 2004 authorization to reduce the scope of the Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Demonstration Project to construct and monitor only experimental basin F and its effects on restoring tidal circulation to the slough and on the bird air strike hazard at Santa Barbara Municipal Airport, subject to the conditions in its May 27, 2004 authorization.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the May 27, 2004 and the accompanying staff reports and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that the project, as amended, remains consistent with the findings in its May 27, 2004 authorization.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

At its May 27, 2004 meeting, the Coastal Conservancy authorized a grant of up to \$250,000 to the City of Santa Barbara to implement the Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Demonstration Project. The proposed action would amend this authorization and allow the City of Santa Barbara to reduce the scope of work that would be completed using Conservancy grant funds. The reduction in project scope is necessary because bids received to complete the project were nearly double the engineer's estimated costs. The City has increased its funding contribution, but has been unable to secure funds from any other sources; therefore, they have divided the project into two phases. Conservancy funding would be used for Phase 1.

The purpose of the Goleta Slough Tidal Restoration Demonstration Project is to resolve a long-standing concern that restoration of tidal wetlands in the slough surrounding the airport could result in an increased bird-strike hazard at the Santa Barbara Municipal Airport. The Santa Barbara Airport lies in the middle of the western arm of Goleta Slough (Exhibit 1). The airport is owned and operated by the City. Most of the wetlands in the western slough have been isolated from tidal circulation by berms, severely degrading the habitat quality. Restoration of tidal circulation to basins that have become hydrologically isolated in the slough was identified as a top priority in the 1997 Goleta Slough Ecosystem Management Plan. However, proposed restoration of tidal circulation to basins surrounding the airport has raised concerns from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the City that wetlands restoration activities could increase the risk of airplanes hitting birds potentially leading to harm of equipment and/or people.

To address these concerns, the City proposed to undertake a closely-monitored demonstration project to obtain empirical data that would help resolve the bird-strike issue. The study design called for introducing muted tidal action to basin F in the slough and full tidal action to basin L. Basin F would drain completely every day, while water would remain ponded in basin L during neap tides. Tidal circulation would be restored by either cutting a hole in the berm or installing culverts through the berm. The two experimental basins along with two control basins would then be monitored for two to three years, with monitoring focused primarily on bird use. The project was designed so that either of the experimental basins could be returned to its original condition within 24 hours, if monitoring data indicates that the demonstration project has resulted in an increase in the bird-strike hazard.

As stated above, bids received for the project were nearly double the engineer's estimates, with the most significant costs being related to excavation and disposal of sediment from the two basins and stabilization of the levee providing access to basin L. The City has been unable to secure additional funds to cover the higher project costs and therefore is proposing that the project be done in two phases, as follows:

- Phase 1: Restoration and monitoring of basin F as originally proposed using funds provided by the City and the Coastal Conservancy. This would provide information on restoration of muted tidal circulation.
- Phase 2: Following the two year monitoring period for Phase 1, basin F would be further excavated to achieve full tidal range. This phase would also be monitored for two years. Conservancy staff would assist the City to secure funding for phase 2 of the project; however, it is not anticipated that the Conservancy would be asked to provide additional funding.

Basin F would be used for both phases of the project to avoid the costs of stabilizing access to basin L.

The City's proposal for a two phased approach to the project will reduce overall project costs and allow the project to get underway this year. Even if Phase 2 is not implemented, the Phase 1 project will provide valuable data about the compatibility of tidal restoration in the slough with airport operations.

See Exhibit 1, the May 27, 2004 staff report, for more information on the project, site description and project history.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy (previously authorized)	\$250,000
City of Santa Barbara	<u>500,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$750,000

The intended source of Conservancy funds is monies appropriated to the Conservancy from Proposition 40, the "California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002." Allowable uses under this legislation include acquisition, restoration, and protection of land and water resources in accordance with the Conservancy's enabling legislation. The proposed project will facilitate restoration of wetland resources at Goleta Slough, and will further efforts of the WRP to acquire, restore, and enhance coastal wetland and coastal watersheds in southern California. Therefore, the project is consistent with the purposes of the funding source.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The project with the proposed amendments remains consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation as described in the May 27, 2004 authorization (see Exhibit 1).

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

The project with the proposed amendments remains consistent with the Conservancy's Strategic Plan goals and objectives as described in the May 27, 2004 authorization (see Exhibit 1).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The project with the proposed amendments remains consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria as described in the May 27, 2004 authorization (see Exhibit 1).

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The project with the proposed amendments remains consistent with the Local Coastal Programs of both the City and County of Santa Barbara's as described in the May 27, 2004 authorization (see Exhibit 1).

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The project with the proposed amendment remains consistent with the Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted by the Conservancy on May 27, 2004.