

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 5, 2006

LAKE BERRYESSA SHORELINE TRAIL DESIGN

File No. 06-075
Project Manager: Betsy Wilson

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$9,500 to Berryessa Trails and Conservation to design two regionally significant trail segments of the proposed Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in the Lake District of eastern Napa County.

LOCATION: Shoreline of Lake Berryessa in eastern Napa County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location and Site Map

Exhibit 2: North End Trail Map and Photos

Exhibit 3: Smittle Creek and Oak Shores Park Trail Map and Photos

Exhibit 4: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31164 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed nine thousand five hundred dollars (\$9,500) to Berryessa Trails and Conservation to design two regionally significant trail segments, totaling approximately 6 miles, of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in the Lake District of eastern Napa County, subject to the condition that no Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing a final work plan, including a budget and schedule, and any contractors proposed to be used.”

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 set forth in Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the California Public Code (Sections 31160-31164) regarding the Conservancy's mandate to address the resource and recreation goals of the San Francisco Bay area.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
 3. Berryessa Trails and Conservation is a nonprofit organization existing under provisions of U.S. Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3) whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
-

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This authorization would provide up to \$9,500 to Berryessa Trails and Conservation (BT&C) to design two regionally significant trail segments, totaling approximately 6 miles, of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in the Lake District of eastern Napa County. The project will produce designs for approximately 2.1 miles of the North End Trail and 3 to 5 miles of trail through Smittle Creek and Oak Shores Park. The trail designs will extend existing trails, provide side trails to scenic viewpoints and realign existing trail sections that have become unsafe due to landslides or erosion. Following completion of this project, it is anticipated that the federal Bureau of Recreation (BOR) will contract with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) crews to construct the trails as designed.

The 28,000-acre Lake Berryessa Recreation area, consisting of a 19,000-acre lake and 9,000 acres around the entire shoreline, is federally-owned, public land administered by the BOR. The Lake Berryessa Recreation area averages 1.4 million visitors a year, primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area. For nearly 50 years, use of the Lake Berryessa has been dominated by motorboats, jet skis, and private vacation sites. However, all seven of the existing recreation concession contracts are due to expire in or prior to 2008-09. To prepare for the expiring concession contracts, the BOR released a new management plan and Record of Decision for the Lake in June 2006 which significantly alters the current recreational services to reflect contemporary public needs and use patterns. Recreation opportunities will be diversified with trails to serve hikers, bikers, and equestrian, kayak launch areas, some no-motor zones, and new remote campsites. All private vacation trailers will be removed.

Included in the BOR's Record of Decision is a 150-mile shoreline trail all the way around the Lake. The Record of Decision states that the BOR would like to develop the shoreline trail in partnership with other agencies and private organization using minimal federal appropriations. To help facilitate the development of the proposed Shoreline Trail, BT&C is proposing to prepare designs for the North End Trail and the Smittle Creek and Oak Shores Park Trail, two short but major segments of the shoreline trail.

Currently, the Lake District of eastern Napa County severely lacks trails. With the exception of the Stebbins Cold Canyon/Blue Ridge Loop Trail, the Pope to Putah trail currently under construction, and the two trails for which funding is being requested, there are no other formal, signed trails in the 80,000 acres of public land in the Lake District. The Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail will be a flagship trail in the regional trail system that the Blue Ridge Berryessa

Natural Area Conservation Partnership is currently planning. The Shoreline Trail will link to trails on other public land in the area and the region. Numerous individuals and organizations representing hikers, bikers, and equestrians wrote in during BOR's public comment period on the Lake management plan to support the development of a shoreline trail around the Lake.

North End Trail: The North End Trail (Exhibit 2) was constructed in the late 1970s by the California Conservation Youth Corps and originally ran from the Putah Creek bridge to Eticuera Creek. The trail fell into major disrepair and was effectively abandoned, with the exception of access trails to the shoreline and some segments that the public continued to use. Since 2003, BT&C volunteers have been working to restore the trail by locating and flagging the old trail bed, trimming back overgrown vegetation, meeting with BOR staff on the project, and creating a trail map. Following BT&C's flagging work, the BOR hired CDF crews to re-cut the old trail bed.

Today about 80% of the trail is usable, but gaps remain and some segments need realigning due to land slides or high water levels. There are also opportunities to construct new side trails leading to scenic viewpoints and to extend the trail from Eticuera Creek all the way to the east shore. The Eticuera Creek extension will link to a new parking area/trailhead and launch site now being developed. The designs for which funding is being requested will enable BT&C to complete the trail along the entire north shore, with the exception of an area which includes a massive land slide leading to the causeway across Eticuera Creek.

Smittle Creek and Oak Shores Park Trail: There is an existing 2.6 mile trail which runs between Smittle Creek Park and Oak Shores Park (Exhibit 3). This design project would extend the existing trail system from Berryessa Marina, through the two public parks, and all the way to the Visitors Center south of Oak Shores Park. This would create walking access points from the parks to the Visitors Center, which is currently only accessible by automobile. There are also some scattered, existing trail fragments in Oak Shores Park that may be found suitable for incorporation into this trail. The total estimated mileage for the Smittle Creek and Oak Shores Park Trail is 3 to 5 miles depending on the alignment, the extent to which the trail will follow the immediate shoreline, whether some loop trails can be included, and whether existing trail fragments can be incorporated.

The Grantee: BT&C's mission is to protect the environment through facilitating access to nature, environmental education, and conservation projects. BT&C carries out its mission by supporting the development of public trails and other nature-based recreational facilities, providing informational materials and educational programs, and engaging in conservation work to protect, restore, and enhance the natural environment. BT&C is a member of the Trails and Recreation Committee for the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership and a co-sponsor of the Trail Coalition of Napa County.

Site Description: The Lake District area of eastern Napa County is within the Putah Creek Watershed. It is primarily a natural area, with some vineyards, grazing land, and more than 80,000 acres of public land, including a 20,000 acre lake. Lake Berryessa is located in the middle of the Lake District (Exhibit 1), and surrounded by wilderness quality ridges and hill tops to the east and west. At capacity, Lake Berryessa stores 1.6 million acre feet of water and is one of the largest bodies of fresh water in California. The Lake is 23 miles long, 3 miles wide, with 165 miles of shoreline.

The project will produce designs for approximately 2.1 miles of the North End Trail (Exhibit 2) and 3 to 5 miles of trail through Smittle Creek and Oak Shores Park (Exhibit 3). These two trails comprise two major segments of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail.

Project History: Previous Conservancy projects have supported the development of trails in the eastern Napa County area, an area with significant natural areas within close proximity to San Francisco Bay Area residents. The Conservancy recently provided a \$46,000 grant to the University of California for the acquisition of 59 acres for inclusion in the UC Davis Stebbins Cold Canyon Reserve, a 576-acre natural reserve area above the southeast shores of Lake Berryessa. The property, which was previously under private ownership, includes a portion of the Stebbins/Blue Ridge Loop Trail, a popular 4-mile loop hike with views of Lake Berryessa and the surrounding area. Acquisition of the property by the University provides for continued public access on the trail and allows the UC Davis Natural Reserve System to restore the existing, eroded trail.

Lake Berryessa is located within Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area (BRBNA), a natural area of nearly 800,000 acres spread over portions of five counties, half of which is public land. The BRBNA is the subject of a voluntary conservation partnership, the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership, dedicated to conserving the natural, recreational and agricultural lands within the BRBNA. Trails planned in the Lake District of eastern Napa County form the core of the regional trail system being planned in the BRBNA, starting with the BOR's proposal for a 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail. BT&C is an active member of the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$9,500
Berryessa Trails and Conservation	740
Bureau of Reclamation	<u>20,000*</u>
Total Project Cost	\$30,220

The expected source of the proposed grant is a FY 04/05 appropriation made to the Conservancy pursuant to the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40), which allocates bond funds to the Conservancy to protect and restore land and water resources in accordance with the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Public Resources Code Section 5091.650(b)(8)). The proposed project will accomplish these purposes by planning for the development of land-based public access for recreational purposes. Proposition 40 directs the Conservancy to give priority to projects with matching funds (Public Resources Code Section 5096.651). The bulk of the project will be funded by the BOR and BT&C.

*The BOR funds will be used for environmental review and construction of the trails as designed by BT&C's trail design project. It is anticipated that the BOR will contract with CDF crews to construct the trails; a CDF crew of 14 people working a 4-hour day costs BOR \$160/day. At this extremely low rate, it is estimated that the trail construction will cost \$5,000. In addition, BOR will complete the environmental review work for the trails in-house, with an estimated value of \$15,000.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The project is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31164, to address resource goals in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The property is located in Napa County, one of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties in which the Conservancy is authorized, under Sections 31160 and 31161 of the Public Resources Code, to undertake projects and award grants to address resource and recreational goals for the region.

Pursuant to Section 31162(a), the Conservancy may award grants to improve public access through completion and operation of regional bay, coast, and ridge trail systems. The proposed project will design approximately 6 miles of the proposed 150-mile Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail in eastern Napa County. The Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail will be a flagship trail in the BRBNA regional trail system being planned and will provide the Bay Area with additional trail experiences.

Section 31163 provides criteria for eligible projects under the San Francisco Bay Program. Projects should have local support, serve a regional constituency, be timely, include matching funds, and take advantage of otherwise fleeting opportunities to benefit the region. The proposed project is consistent with Section 31163(c) in the following respects:

- (1) The project is supported by the *Blue Ridge-Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Framework* which has a primary trails and recreation goal to promote nature-based recreation in the BRBNA and identifies the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail as a high recreation priority. The trail is included in the BOR's Record of Decision on the Future Recreation Use and Operation of Lake Berryessa, June 2006.
- (2) The project serves a regional constituency, in that the project will help provide public access for the benefit of the population of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Lake Berryessa Recreation area averages 1.4 million visitors a year, primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area.
- (3) The project can be implemented in a timely way since BT&C has extensive experience working with consultants and the BOR and has already flagged portions of the trail.
- (4) The project provides benefits that would be lost if the project is not quickly implemented. Since numerous previous plans (1959, 1974, and 1993) to develop a shoreline trail have not been implemented, it is important to develop useable trail segments as soon as possible to make it clear that this trail plan will be implemented. Also, as potential concessionaires prepare to bid for new concession contracts beginning in 2008-09, it is important that they view their potential market to include not only motor boats and water ski interests, but also those who come to hike, bike, and ride horses on the Shoreline Trail.
- (5) BT&C is providing staff time to manage to contract with a trail designer, oversee the project, and coordinate with the BOR. BT&C has already expended over 160 hours of volunteer time to improve the North End trail. In addition, it is anticipated that the BOR will provide funds for the environmental review and construction work required to complete the trails designed by this project.

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

Consistent with **Goal #11, Objective B** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, which seeks to develop 100 miles of regionally significant public access trails and corridors, this project will complete design work to create and improve approximately 6 miles of the Lake Berryessa Shoreline 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:** There is a great deal of local support for the project from trail users and members of the local community. The BOR, Napa County Supervisor Dian Dillon, the Napa Sierra Club, the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership, Tuleyome, and Yolo United Mountain bikers all support the trail. In addition, numerous individuals and organizations representing hikers, bikers, and equestrians wrote in to support the development of a shoreline trail around the Lake during the public comment period on BOR's management plan for the Lake. Letters of support are attached as Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is in Napa County, within the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
5. **Need:** The BOR's Record of Decision for future use and operation of the Lake indicates that the BOR would like to develop the shoreline trail in partnership with other agencies and private organization using minimal federal appropriations. Furthermore, previous plans in 1959, 1973, and 1993 to develop a Shoreline Trail were not implemented, partly due to lack of funding. Conservancy funding is needed to enable BT&C to implement this trail design project as no other source of funding is currently available.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail will be a flagship trail in the regional trail system that the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership is currently planning, linking to trails on other public land in the area and the region. In addition, the project will help provide public access for the benefit of the population of the San Francisco Bay Area. The Lake Berryessa Recreation area averages 1.4 million visitors a year, primarily from the San Francisco Bay Area, as well as the Davis and Sacramento region.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** Several previous plans for a shoreline trail (1959, 1974, and 1993) were never implemented in part due to lack of funding, so it is important that progress be made to develop useable segments of the shoreline trail as soon as possible to make it clear that this trail plan will be developed. Potential concessionaires will be preparing bids later this year or early next year with the selected concessionaires taking over as the current concession contracts expire in 2008-09. It is important that the concessionaires view their potential market as including not only motor boat and water ski interest, but those who come to hike, bike and ride horses on the Shoreline Trail, as well as other trails in the area.
8. **Leverage:** BT&C is providing staff time to manage the project and has already committed substantial volunteer time to restoring trails along the Lake Berryessa shoreline. BT&C is pursuing numerous other funding sources to complete other portions of the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail, including River Parkways funds from the Resources Agency, Recreational Trails Program funds from the State Department of Parks and Recreation, and private funds from the Napa Valley Community Foundation. In addition, it is anticipated the project will leverage implementation/construction funds as the BOR will complete the required environmental review work in-house and will likely hire CDF crews to construct the trails.
9. **Readiness:** BT&C is ready to proceed with the trail design project in January 2007. It is anticipated that the trails will be constructed by the end of summer 2007.
10. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.”
11. **Cooperation:** The project involves cooperation between BT&C, the BOR, and CDF. The BOR has specifically requested assistance from other agencies and private organization to develop the Lake Berryessa Shoreline Trail. In addition, the project will support the efforts of the Blue Ridge Berryessa Natural Area Conservation Partnership to plan and develop a regional trail system in the area.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

This project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15262 (“Feasibility and Planning Studies”) because it involves only feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions and will not have a legally binding effect on later activities.

Part of the project consists of basic data collection and resource evaluation activities, including those necessary for planning the trail alignment. These information-collecting activities will be designed and implemented in a manner that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and are thus categorically exempt from CEQA review, under CCR Section 15306 (“Information Collection”).

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