

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
March 8, 2007

**SOCIOECONOMIC STUDY OF NORTH COAST FISHERIES**

File No. 06-107  
Project Manager: Moira McEnespy/Sheila Semans

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$140,000 to The Regents of the University of California to conduct a socioeconomic study of north coast fisheries.

**LOCATION:** Fort Bragg, Mendocino County, to Crescent City, Del Norte County.

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources Protection, Urban Waterfront Restoration

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: Project Location Map

Exhibit 2: Letters of Support

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 31220 and Sections 31300 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of up to one hundred forty thousand dollars (\$140,000) to The Regents of the University of California (UC Regents) to conduct a socioeconomic study of north coast fisheries, subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of Conservancy funds, the UC Regents shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Coastal Conservancy a final work program, including budget and schedule, and the names of any contractors to be employed.”

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 Chapter 5.5 and Chapter 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Section 31220 and Sections 31300 *et seq.*), and with the authority of the Conservancy under Section 31111 to undertake and award grants for feasibility studies for these purposes.
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 that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$140,000 to The Regents of the University of California for the California Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) to conduct a socioeconomic study of north coast fisheries in collaboration with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to support sustainable fisheries management.

Nowhere are fishery management changes felt more strongly than in the north coast communities, whose small local economies have been traditionally dependent on fishing. Not surprisingly, there is a lack of socioeconomic data on the region's fisheries and coastal communities. Among the most critical information needs are accurate analyses of fisheries trends, data on port and fishery support infrastructure, data on expenditures and employment in fishery-dependent businesses, and determination of the linkages and relationships among fisheries and between fisheries and fishery-dependent businesses.

Socioeconomic data is needed for several reasons related to achieving sustainable fisheries management. First, socioeconomic data is integral to developing Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), which form the primary basis for managing the state's marine fisheries under the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA). A collective body of biological, ecological, physical, and socioeconomic information known as "essential fishery information" (EFI) is used to develop FMPs. The importance of socioeconomic data as part of this EFI is underscored in the California Department of Fish and Game's MLMA Master Plan, which states that "[i]t is imperative that fisheries managers have a clear understanding of the current economic condition of the community and fishery under regulation, and of the likely socioeconomic consequences of regulatory changes to the fishery" (*The Master Plan: A Guide for the Development of Fishery Management Plans as directed by the Marine Life Management Act of 1998 (The Master Plan)*, CDFG, Dec 2001, Section 4.2.2, p. 4-4). Although socioeconomic data constitutes part of EFI, the MLMA Master Plan states that "...socioeconomic information gaps still exist for the highest priority fisheries, and certain EFI, such as socioeconomics is almost entirely unavailable for most fisheries" (*The Master Plan*, Executive Summary, p. i). In fact, the ten highest priority FMPs are considered "data-poor" (defined as "unable to proceed with FMP development with any confidence") with regard to socioeconomic data (*The Master Plan*, Table 4-2), halibut and sea urchin being of current or historical importance to north coast fisheries.

Secondly, an understanding of the complex and dynamic nature of fishing activity (e.g., interacting effects of stock abundance, regulatory restrictions, environmental conditions and socioeconomic factors on fishing behavior and fishery trends; effects of fishery activity on port infrastructure and fishery-dependent businesses) is needed to inform the ecosystem-based management program now getting underway for the Humboldt Bay/Eel River delta area. Finally, the newly-adopted Ocean Protection Council Strategic Plan calls for actions to support market-based fishery management approaches (Objective E4) and encourage sustainable economic activity (Objective E5).

Sea Grant and the NMFS are currently involved in the Fishing Communities Project, funded by the NMFS, which analyzes 25 years of west coast commercial fishery landings data (including vessel, buyer, gear, port, species, weight and value) to develop profiles for commercial fisheries in all major west coast fishing ports, and to evaluate effects of changes in fishery management

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actions on fishing communities. Resulting work includes databases that enable characterization of fishing activity by year and fishery at varying geographic scales, and identification of high-priority fishery social science information needed by policy makers to augment the commercial fishery profiles.

This proposed authorization will enable Sea Grant and the NMFS to expand the geographic extent and scope of work of the Fishing Communities Project in north coast fishing ports. Project purposes will be to provide baseline fishery information and analysis needed for ecosystem-based fishery management, and to better position north coast communities to proactively address fishery issues and opportunities. While only one north coast port is included in the existing study, the proposed project region will extend from Fort Bragg (in Mendocino County), to Crescent City (in Del Norte County), including Fields Landing, Eureka and Trinidad (in Humboldt County). Data collection and analysis will include recreational fisheries, as well as the originally-intended commercial (including tribal commercial) fisheries. The project will result in characterization and profiles of north coast commercial and recreational fisheries, an inventory of fishery-related infrastructure and businesses, primary data on linkages between north coast fisheries and port infrastructure, and primary data on expenditure and employment in fishery-dependent businesses. The feasibility of using these newly-obtained data to refine regional economic income and employment models will also be evaluated. A final report will present project results and will highlight the findings' usefulness to ecosystem-based management.

The project would be undertaken by California Sea Grant, a program of the University of California that works with academia, industry, government and the public to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about coastal and marine resources and help solve contemporary marine-related problems. Sea Grant brings a greater-than-local perspective, academic experience, expertise in local collaboration, and extensive experience conducting field research on the human dimensions of California fisheries. Sea Grant will work in collaboration with the NMFS, which brings extensive experience working with fishery data.

**Site Description:** The Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte County coastal region is globally outstanding in its diversity of species, rare habitats and ecological condition. The north coast ecoregion includes many of California's most significant rivers (Smith, Klamath, Mad, Eel, Mattole, Navarro, Big and Noyo), which are home to California's most significant remaining populations of wild salmon, as well as Humboldt Bay, one of the largest and most pristine bays on the Pacific coast, and the largest estuary in California north of San Francisco Bay. The region's coastal and marine habitats include tidepools, estuaries, bays, rocky headlands, sandy beaches, mudflats, eelgrass, surfgrass, high- and low-relief rocky features, and kelp forests.

The region has a long history of both recreational and commercial fishing, and supports a diversity of commercially-important marine species, including Dungeness crab, groundfish (rockfish, lingcod, sole), salmon, pink shrimp and albacore.

**Project History:** The proposed project will complement two current efforts. The NMFS and Sea Grant have been conducting a statewide Fishing Communities Project to develop profiles for commercial fisheries in major west coast fishing ports, and are ready to expand their research into the north coast. In addition, Sea Grant in collaboration with the Humboldt Bay Harbor, Recreation and Conservation District and many others has just commenced an ecosystem-based management program for the Humboldt Bay area, funded in part by the Conservancy, which will incorporate fishery management issues.

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**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$140,000
UC Regents (CA Sea Grant)	\$34,000
NMFS	<u>\$58,000</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$232,000</b>

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for the proposed project are public access funds within the California beach and coastal enhancement account, established in the California license plate fund. These funds are to be expended by the Conservancy for, among other things, projects consistent with the provisions of Division 21 (commencing with Section 31000) of the Public Resources Code. As shown in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section, below, the proposed project will be undertaken consistent with Chapter 5.5 and Chapter 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Section 31220 and Sections 31300 *et seq.*). The proposed project is thus consistent with the purposes of the proposed funding source.

Matching funds of at least \$92,000 will be provided by the NMFS and Sea Grant, including staff time for the two principal investigators.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to both Chapter 5.5 and Chapter 7 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation (Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Section 31220 and Sections 31300 *et seq.*) regarding integrated coastal and marine resources protection, and urban waterfront restoration. Section 31111 authorizes the Conservancy to undertake and award grants for feasibility studies implementing these provisions.

With respect to Chapter 5.5, Section 31220(a) provides that the Conservancy may undertake or award grants for marine habitat and living marine resources protection projects. In the proposed project, the Conservancy will grant funds to conduct a socioeconomic study of north coast fisheries. Study results will help characterize the status and relationships of an industry based on living marine resources, and thus provide the necessary information with which communities can better manage and protect living marine resources. The proposed project is thus consistent with Section 31220(a).

The proposed project will provide baseline fishery information and analysis that will enable north coast communities to better and sustainably manage their fish stocks, fisheries and fishing communities. In addition, the proposed project is consistent with the California Ocean Protection Council’s Strategic Plan, which calls for actions to support market-based fishery management approaches (Objective E4) and encourage sustainable economic activity (Objective E5). The proposed project is thus consistent with Section 31220(b)(7), which calls for reduction of the impact of population and economic pressures on coastal and marine resources, and Section 31220(b)(10), which makes provision for projects and activities consistent with Division 26.5 (commencing with Section 35500), the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA). Specifically, the proposed project is consistent with Section 35510(b)(6) of the COPA, which provides that improving the health of fish in coastal waters should be a priority of the State, and Section 35650(b)(2), regarding projects that foster sustainable fisheries and that improve management,

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conservation and protection of coastal waters and ocean ecosystems. The proposed project is thus consistent with Section 31220(b).

Consistent with Section 31220(c), the proposed project consists of an evaluation, specifically a socioeconomic study, of north coast fisheries.

With respect to Chapter 7 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, the proposed project is consistent with Section 31301 in that it will promote restoration of vital urban waterfronts, namely those in Fort Bragg, Eureka and Crescent City, by characterizing commercial and recreational fisheries, creating an inventory of fishery-related infrastructure and businesses (based on existing data), collecting primary data on linkages between north coast fisheries and port infrastructure, and collecting primary data on expenditure and employment in fishery-dependent businesses, all of which will result in baseline fishery information and analysis needed to better position north coast communities to proactively address fishery issues and opportunities. Consistent with Section 31307, the Conservancy will award a grant to a public entity to conduct a study that will help restore coastal waterfront areas, specifically with respect to commercial and recreational fisheries. Consistent with Section 31315, the Conservancy will distribute state funds to inventory and assess the infrastructure of fishing harbors on public trust lands, which may lead to their improvement. Consistent with Section 31316, the Conservancy will award a grant for an activity that is compatible with the preservation, restoration or enhancement of ocean and coastal resources, namely fishery resources and associated amenities and infrastructure, and that facilitates education about sustainable resource management.

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

Consistent with **Goal 3 Objective B**, the proposed project will support commercial fishing, ports, harbors and other coastal-dependent uses by characterizing north coast commercial and recreational fisheries, creating an inventory of fishery-related infrastructure and businesses (based on existing data), collecting primary data on linkages between north coast fisheries and port infrastructure, and collecting primary data on expenditure and employment in fishery-dependent businesses. These activities will result in baseline fishery information and analysis needed for ecosystem-based fishery management, and to better position north coast communities to proactively address fishery issues and opportunities.

### **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:** The proposed project has the support of Congressman Mike Thompson, State Senator Pat Wiggins, Assembly Member Patty Berg, north coast ports, and

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the California Department of Fish and Game. Please see letters of support contained in Exhibit 2.

4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zones of the Counties of Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte.
5. **Need:** Although the North Coast's economy has been traditionally dependent on its fisheries, there is a lack of socioeconomic data on the entire region's fisheries and coastal communities. Absent Conservancy participation, commercial and recreational fisheries data collection and analysis for the entire north coast region will not occur.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project will address fisheries issues along the north coast from Point Arena to the Oregon border.

### **Additional Criteria**

7. **Urgency:** The proposed project builds on the momentum of the ongoing Fishing Communities Project, which is now poised to begin in the north coast. Absent Conservancy action now, the opportunity to have NMFS and Sea Grant socioeconomic and fisheries specialists collect and analyze needed data for the entire north coast region, including the recreational fishing sector, will be lost.
9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
10. **Conflict resolution:** The proposed project will better position north coast communities to proactively address fishery issues and opportunities.
11. **Innovation:** The proposed project will address fisheries management from an often-overlooked socioeconomic perspective.
12. **Readiness:** Principal investigators from the NMFS and Sea Grant are poised to begin work in the north coast region.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" section, above.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH COASTAL ACT/LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) for Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte counties are based upon policies contained in the Coastal Act of 1976 (Public Resources Code, Division 20, California Coastal Act). Coastal Act Section 30234 states that facilities serving the commercial fishing and recreational boating industries shall be protected and, where feasible, upgraded. Consistent with this section, the proposed project will support ports, harbors and fishery-related facilities by characterizing north coast commercial and recreational fisheries, creating an inventory of fishery-related infrastructure and businesses (based on existing data), collecting primary data on linkages between north coast fisheries and port infrastructure, and collecting primary data on expenditure and employment in fishery-dependent businesses. Coastal Act Section 30234.5 states that the economic, commercial, and recreational importance of fishing activities shall be recognized and protected. Consistent with this section, the proposed project will result in baseline fishery information and analysis needed for ecosystem-based fishery management, and to better position north coast communities to proactively address recreational and commercial fishery issues and opportunities. The proposed project is thus consistent with the relevant sections of the Coastal Act upon which the county certified LCPs are based.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15262 in that it involves only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions which have not yet been approved, adopted or funded. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of the project.