

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 24, 2007

CHENEY CREEK BRIDGE AND TRAIL

File No. 06-010

Project Manager: Deborah Hirst

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$305,000 to Sonoma County Regional Parks Department to connect the Bird Walk Coastal Access Park with Doran Beach Park by constructing a 110-foot bridge over Cheney Creek Gulch and completing 1,654 feet of the California Coastal Trail in Bodega Bay, Sonoma County.

LOCATION: Southern edge of Bodega Bay, Sonoma County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Access

EXHIBITS:

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map: Cheney Creek](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Photographs of Bodega Bay Shoreline, Wildlife and Recreation](#)
- Exhibit 3: [View of Cheney Creek Toward Doran Park from Bird Walk Access](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Doran Park Footpath Along Cheney Creek Toward Bird Walk](#)
- Exhibit 5: [Cheney Creek Bridge and Trail Plan](#)
- Exhibit 6: [Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Study Report #2](#)
- Exhibit 7: [Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation and Monitoring Plan](#)
- Exhibit 8: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed three hundred five thousand dollars (\$305,000) to Sonoma County Regional Parks Department (Sonoma County) to connect the Bird Walk Coastal Access Park with Doran Beach Park by constructing a 110-foot bridge over Cheney Creek Gulch and completing

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1,654 feet of California Coastal Trail, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds, Sonoma County shall submit for the written approval of the Conservancy's Executive Officer a work program, budget, names of any contractors it intends to employ for the project and a signage plan acknowledging the Conservancy funding and identifying the trail as a segment of the California Coastal Trail.
2. The grantee shall implement the applicable requirements of the mitigation and monitoring plan adopted for the project.
3. The grantee shall obtain all required permits and authorization of sufficient duration to perform the work prior to construction."

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 authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed the mitigated negative declaration, Mitigation Monitoring Plan (Exhibit 7) prepared by Sonoma County and public comment for the Cheney Creek Bridge and Trail project. The Conservancy finds that the project avoids or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects and that there is no evidence that the project as mitigated will have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15382.
4. The project will serve greater than local needs."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to three hundred and five thousand dollars (\$305,000) to Sonoma County Regional Parks Department (SCRPD) to connect the Bird Walk Coastal Access Park with Doran Beach Park by constructing a 110-foot bridge over Cheney Creek Gulch and completing 1,654 feet of California Coastal Trail.

The proposed project is consistent with SCRPD and partners' vision for a safe, multi-use trail off Highway 1 to connect from Salmon Creek north of Bodega Bay, down through the heavily visited coastal town, south to popular Doran Beach Park and eventually south to the border with Marin County. The Conservancy has been a supporting member of the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trail Study group and the public input process which

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led to the recommendations made in the Conceptual Improvement Plan (September 2005). The proposed project will provide a link between two valuable regional parks and close a gap in the California Coastal Trail by bridging Cheney Creek at the southern edge of Bodega Bay.

The proposed project will install a 110-foot, prefabricated metal bridge with 55-foot pilings and concrete landings over Cheney Creek. The existing 8'-wide crushed gravel trail at the Bird Walk Access will be extended by construction of an additional 340' of trail. On the Doran Beach side of Cheney Creek, an informal footpath along the creek will be improved to an 8'-wide trail with a crushed gravel surface for 1314' of trail to connect to Doran Beach trails. Construction activities will include grading, fill and temporary staging areas in three locations. Best Management Practices will be utilized to limit erosion and storm water pollution during the project and details are provided on environmental protection in the CEQA section below.

SCRPD operates an impressive network of parks and public access trails throughout the County of Sonoma and hosts over 2 million visitors along its spectacular coast each year. SCRPD has completed a number of coastal planning and implementation projects with public input and Conservancy support, including the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Study Conceptual Improvement Plan (September 2005) which identified the proposed Cheney Bridge project.

Site Description:

Doran Beach Park, located on the 2-mile sand spit which forms the southern edge of Bodega Bay, is recognized as one of Sonoma's most popular visitor destination. Reservations for the approximately 140 campsites along the spit are full through-out the summer season and used year-round. The park offers amenities including kayaking, windsurfing, boating and fishing access; views of the ocean, harbor and bay; picnic tables, parking and restrooms; and trail access along the spit and a footpath up to the bounds of Cheney Creek (Exhibit 2).

Just north of Cheney Creek is the .7 mile loop trail of the County's Bird Walk Coastal Access Park. The levee-top trail provides excellent bird and marine life viewing around the salt water marsh and the fresh water creek at the southern edge of Bodega Bay (Exhibit 3). In addition to the loop trail, Bird Walk Access has a 10-car parking lot, picnic tables and a portable restroom.

At present, Cheney Creek physically separates Bodega Bay's urban area and the Bird Walk Access from the Doran Beach Park peninsula (Exhibit 4). The proposed bridge will link the existing resources and trails of two regional parks at the southern edge of Bodega Bay and will also provide a dedicated pathway over the sensitive habitat of the area (Exhibit 5).

The project site is owned by the County of Sonoma.

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Project History:

Over the course of 2002-2005, the Conservancy supported an extensive outreach and planning process conducted by Sonoma County for the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Study. The resulting Conceptual Improvement Plan (September 2005) provided a phased plan for access and trail improvements from Salmon Creek to the north of Bodega Bay, down through the coastal town and out to the resources to the south including Doran Beach (Exhibit 6).

The primary purpose of the Conceptual Implementation Plan (CIP) was to create priorities and designs for a multi-use trail to provide a safe alternative for transit off Highway 1. The urgency of this need continues to be shown with vehicle-related fatalities occurring along this heavily traveled and treacherously windy, narrow stretch of Highway 1. The Bodega Bay trail segments will together form an important part of the California Coastal Trail where only a few gaps remain between southern Sonoma County and northern Marin County.

The proposed Cheney Creek Bridge project is identified as a “preferred, short-term” segment of the trail alignment. The CIP describes short-term as implementation within 1-3 years, medium-term within 3-5 years and long-term within 5-20 years. SCRPD is currently working on another “preferred, short-term” segment at the northern edge of Bodega Bay near the Bodega Bay Community Center and the Bodega Dunes Campground with support from additional partners.

The existing 26’ high, 10’ wide levees at Bird Walk Coastal Access Park were constructed to hold spoils from the dredging of Bodega Bay in 1980. The County improved the two resulting ponds for the benefit of bird and wildlife habitat in 1993-94 and those resources continue to flourish. The Conservancy provided funding to support the implementation of the Bird Walk Coastal Access loop trail, 10-space parking lot, picnic tables and portable restroom at that time. Linking these resources with the recreational opportunities at Doran Beach will greatly improve the access for campers and visitors. This project furthers the investment the Conservancy has made to the planning and design efforts conducted through the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Study.

As both Doran Park and Bird Walk Coastal Access are existing park facilities and the project area is owned by the SCRPD, the SCRPD has completed an environmental review document for the Cheney Creek Bridge project separate from new projects identified in the CIP. The County is the Lead Agency preparing a programmatic environmental review document for the majority of projects in the CIP and anticipates its completion in 2007.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$305,000
Sonoma County Park Mitigation Fee	<u>\$ 40,000</u>

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Total Project Cost

\$345,000

Conservancy funds for this project are expected to derive from the Conservancy's FY2002/03 appropriation from Proposition 40 (the "Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2002"). Proposition 40 authorizes the use of these funds for the purpose of coastal development and rehabilitation projects undertaken pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation (Division 21 of the Public Resources Code). Implementation of the Cheney Creek Bridge project will link two existing regional parks, add to the California Coastal Trail and improve public access in the highly scenic and popular coastal destination of Bodega Bay in Sonoma County. The project is consistent with the Conservancy's enabling legislation as described below.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 (Sections 31400 et seq.) of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline.

Section 31400.1 authorizes the Conservancy to award a grant to a local public agency to develop and manage lands for public access to and along the coast, so long as the accessway will serve more than local public needs. The proposed project is consistent with this section as the Regional Parks Department is a public agency and the area recognized as a destination of regional, national and international interest to millions of people annually in western Sonoma County.

Pursuant to Section 31400.2, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of acquisition of interest in lands and the initial development of public accessways by any public agency or nonprofit organization, as provided in Section 31400.1. The proposed project is consistent with this section as project funding will derive from the Conservancy and another public agency, the SCRPD, for the development of an accessway in the Bodega Bay area. Staff has evaluated the project in light of the total amount of funding available for coastal accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the grantee, the urgency of the project and other factors herein described in recommending this grant.

Pursuant Section 31400.3, the Conservancy is authorized "to provide such assistance 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." Consistent with this section, the proposed project will assist a public agency, SCRPD, in developing an addition to the system of accessways planned for the Bodega Bay area as described in the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Conceptual Improvement Plan.

Pursuant to Section 31409, the Conservancy is authorized to award grants and provide assistance to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to establish and expand those

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inland trails systems that may be linked to the California Coastal Trail. The proposed project is consistent with this section as it will link two existing trails and lead to the connection of the California Coastal Trail planned for the southern section of Sonoma County and northern Marin.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

Consistent with **Goal 2 - Objective C & D:** the proposed project will construct an important link in the California Coastal Trail and close a gap between resources of two regional parks by constructing a bridge over Cheney Creek Gulch in the Bodega Bay area of Sonoma County.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESSWAY STANDARDS

Consistent with Access Standard Number 1, the proposed project will construct an accessway in a location that will provide safe access for the public, prevent crowding and protect environmentally sensitive habitats. In addition, the accessway will have a design and location that will minimize alteration of natural landforms and be subordinate to the setting's character.

Consistent with Access Standard Number 5, the proposed project will provide access near environmentally sensitive areas in a manner avoiding adverse effects on the resources (See the "Compliance with CEQA" section below). The project will install a bridge over Cheney Creek and guide public access to established trails on the levees of Bird Walk Coastal Access Park and the Doran Beach Park footpath along Cheney Creek.

Consistent with Access Standard Number 8, the proposed project will establish a trail to provide public access continuously between shoreline resources and recreation facilities in Bodega Bay. The project will provide a 110-foot bridge between two regional parks and connect the edge of town in Bodega Bay to camping, fishing, boating, bird watching and other recreational resources on the sand spit of Doran Beach Park.

Consistent with Access Standard Number 9, the proposed project will provide a scenic overlook of Bodega Bay harbor, the wetland areas of Bird Walk Access and over Cheney Creek itself from the new bridge. The bridge provides an overlook accessible by trails from two regional parks and will be accessible to people with physical disabilities.

Consistent with Access Standard Number 10, the proposed project will provide non-motorized bicycle access to and along the coast. The project is a part of the larger Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan developed to implement a continuous non-motorized bicycle accessway along the coast and through the town of Bodega Bay off Highway 1 where possible

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Consistent with Access Standard Number 13, the proposed project will implement an accessway that is barrier-free and will enable access by people with physical disabilities who require wheelchairs for mobility.

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 public provided input to the Conceptual Improvement Plan that includes the proposed project, and regional partners have submitted letters in support of the project (Exhibit 8).
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located on regional park land owned by the County of Sonoma at the juncture of the Bird Walk Access Park, Doran Park and Cheney Creek in Bodega Bay.
5. **Need:** The proposed project fills a need identified in the Conceptual Improvement Plan for Bodega Bay funded in part by the Conservancy. Absent Conservancy funding, the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department will be unable to proceed with construction.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The project area provides non-vehicular access in a highly congested and dangerous segment of Highway 1 used by those seeking recreation through bird watching, hiking, beach visits and site-seeing in the harbor area of this Sonoma County coastal community. The draw of Bodega Bay as a whole, including Doran Beach and Bird Walk Park, extends from local families to regional visitors and international tourists.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** The need to pursue a safe trail access separate from Highway 1 through Bodega Bay is urgent. The proposed project will provide a safe, continuous route from southern Bodega Bay through existing park land to reach one of the most important destinations of the area, Doran Beach Park.
8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The project includes elements that will both

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extend the reach of the California Coastal Trail and close a gap between regional parks at Cheney Creek Gulch.

9. **Leverage:** The Conservancy's contribution to this project is leveraged by funding from partner agencies, as discussed in the "Project History" section above.
10. **Readiness:** Sonoma County has begun to implement initial projects identified in the Conceptual Improvement Plan (September 2005) and has the capacity and readiness to conduct the proposed project.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
12. **Cooperation:** The project involves the cooperation of two land-owning agencies and was developed through the Bodega Bay Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails Study which involved many stakeholders and agencies working together to identify trail opportunities.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The Doran Beach Park and Bird Walk Coastal Access Park properties are located within the Coastal Zone and are subject to the jurisdiction of the County of Sonoma's Local Coastal Program (Certified June 1982, Amended December 2001). The proposed project is consistent with the relevant sections of the Local Coastal Program (LCP) and the County of Sonoma's General Plan.

Consistent with Section V (Recreation) of Sonoma County's LCP and Section 30210 of the Coastal Act, "maximum access and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people, consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from over use," the proposed project will increase public access to the resources in Bodega Bay by linking two existing regional parks and adding to the California Coastal Trail.

Consistent with Section VI (Harbor) and Coastal Act Section 30221, "ocean front land suitable for recreational use shall be protected for recreational use and development unless present and foreseeable future demand for public or commercial recreation activities that could be accommodated on the property is already adequately provided for in the area," the proposed project will provide additional access for bird watching, hiking, biking and water sports by installing a bridge between two waterfront parks.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), SCRPD prepared the Cheney Creek Bridge and Trail Project Initial Study, Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) and Mitigation and Monitoring Program (MMP) for the proposed project (Exhibit 7). Notice of the environmental review was published with the State CEQA

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Clearinghouse on February 7, 2006. Public comment regarding the project is summarized on pages 1-4 of Exhibit 7. The Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approved the MND and a Notice of Determination on May 15, 2007.

Activities proposed for the proposed Cheney Creek Bridge involve site grading, delivery and installation of two 55-foot sections of prefabricated, metal bridge, construction of concrete bridge abutments with metal pilings driven into the ground to the depth of 55 feet. Improvements to the Doran Beach Marsh Trail include the widening of the existing footpath to 8 feet wide and addition of crushed gravel to the trail surface. Extension of the Bird Walk Coastal Access Trail will involve grading to a maximum of 5 percent for implementation of 370 feet of 8-foot wide trail and the addition of crushed gravel from 6 to 18 inches. The construction site area will be approximately 1.02 acres. This area is approximately 43% grassland, 22% coyote brush scrub and 39% existing trail. The Initial Study identified potential significant effects of the project in areas of Biological Resources, Air Quality, Hazards/Hazardous Materials, Traffic, Hydrology/Water Quality and Noise. The project was designed to minimize these impacts by restricting as much as possible to area of construction, placing the staging areas to avoid impact to habitat and limiting construction to July through September. The Mitigation and Monitoring Plan described below provides methods proposed to mitigate for the potential significant effects on the environment.

The MND included a final botanical and wetland resource report (2006) as well as reports on the project area's potential cultural resources. The resource reports found that the tidal marsh and channels support invertebrate communities and fish species including arrow goby, starry flounder, topsmelt, three-spine stickleback, plainfin midshipman, longjaw mudsucker and sculpin. A wide variety of shorebirds, wading birds and more than thirty species of waterfowl use the marsh and the bay depending on the season and tide level. A total of thirty-six special-status animal species have potential of occurring in the region of the proposed project site location. Of these, eight have some degree of potential to occur within the project site or its adjacent area; these include steelhead, tidewater goby, Allen's hummingbird, Rufus hummingbird, black phoebe, saltmarsh common yellowthroat, short-eared owl and northern harrier. Three special status plant species identified within the study area include coastal bluff morning-glory, Point Reyes bird's beak and Marin knotweed.

The proposed MMP for the project (Appendix A of Exhibit 7) incorporates 33 specific mitigation measures based on the potential for risk to the areas resources. Of the eight areas identified for mitigation, Biological Resources have eleven measures; Air Quality, Hazards/Hazardous Materials and Traffic have four; Hydrology/Water Quality and Noise have three; and Cultural and Geology/Soils have two. The measures are summarized below. The mitigation will be implemented by an SCRPD Environmental Specialist, Park Planner and Planning Technician over the course project from design to pre-construction, through construction and into a post-construction period. County staff will complete documentation and maintain records on the implementation of the MMP.

The mitigation measures required to avoid impacts to Biological Resources for the

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proposed project include sensitive resource awareness training for construction staff, restriction of work time to drive the bridge pilings (July 1st – September 30th), and avoidance of impacts to wildlife and vegetation. Methods to avoid impacts will include pile driving at low tide, use of construction barrier fencing around protected areas identified by SCRPD, surveys of bird nesting and timing of the removal of vegetation to avoid nesting season. SCRPD will complete and implement a revegetation plan and clearly identify vegetation to be removed or protected prior to construction. The MMP provides specific requirements for the marking, removing and disposing of vegetation and the provision of sediment control and exclusionary fencing around staging and construction areas. SCRPD will adhere to all necessary Federal, State and regional regulations and permits concerning protection of drainages and wetlands

Air Quality mitigation measures will require efforts to minimize dust and loose materials as well as construction vehicle emissions.

Hazards/Hazardous Materials measures will involve completing a spill prevention plan, proper disposal of petroleum-based products and attention to construction site restroom maintenance.

Traffic mitigation will be coordination with California Highway Patrol and CalTrans regarding the transportation of the two prefabricated section of bridge, notice ahead of construction to neighbors and emergency services, proper signage and use of public safety provisions.

Hydrology/Water Quality mitigation measures will require SCDRP to submit a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, including a sediment control plan, prior to project construction.

Noise mitigation will include use of mufflers on engines per State Resources Code requirements and restriction of work to the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays except to prevent or resolve an emergency.

Should human remains be discovered on the site, Cultural Resources will be protected by immediate cessation of work and arrangement for a qualified archaeologist to make a recommendation and record the resources.

Geology/Soils mitigation measures involve the use of Best Management Practices to protect soil resources and avoid disturbance in the rainy season (October 16th – May 1st).

Based on independent review of the Initial Study, the Mitigated Negative Declaration, the accompanying reports and public comment, staff recommends the Conservancy find there is no substantial evidence that the project as designed may have a significant effect on the environment. The required mitigations will be monitored through a Mitigation Program (Exhibit 7), consistent with Public Resources Code Section 21081.6. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Determination for the Cheney Creek Bridge project.