

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 20, 2007

**CENTRAL CALIFORNIA BEACH AND MARINE DEBRIS
PREVENTION AND REMOVAL PROGRAM**

File Number: 07-077
Project Manager: Rachel Couch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 of coastal access funds to Save Our Shores to develop a community-based beach and marine debris prevention and removal program to benefit the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, Santa Cruz County.

LOCATION: Santa Cruz County, Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Integrated Coastal and Marine Resource Protection, Coastal Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31220 and 31400 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to Save Our Shores to develop a community-based beach and marine debris reduction and removal program to benefit the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Santa Cruz County. Prior to the disbursement of funds, the Executive Officer of the Conservancy shall review and approve in writing a work program, budget and schedule for the project and any contractors proposed to be engaged for the project.”

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 9 (Section 31400) of Division 21 of Public Resources Code, regarding provision of a system of public accessways to and along the coast.

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2. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 5.5 (Section 31220) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding undertaking coastal watershed and coastal and marine habitat water quality projects to reduce contamination of waters within the coastal zone or marine waters, to protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat within coastal and marine waters and coastal watersheds, and to reduce threats to coastal and marine fish and wildlife.
 3. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
 4. The proposed project serves greater than local need.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff requests that the Conservancy authorize up to \$100,000 to Save Our Shores (SOS) to develop a community-based beach and marine debris prevention and removal program in the Monterey Bay region. This program will actively engage the community in comprehensively addressing the sources and behaviors that generate marine debris. The project will target three major watersheds within Santa Cruz County, the Pajaro River, the San Lorenzo River, and the Arana Gulch, with the goal of reducing the quantity of human-generated debris polluting coastal public access areas and marine habitats (beaches, creeks, and nearshore waters) that serve as valued natural, recreational and commercial resources within Monterey Bay communities.

Building on its established beach clean-up activities, Save Our Shores will use Santa Cruz County as a pilot region to conduct a multi-dimensional strategy for removing, reducing, and preventing marine debris pollution. Recognizing that debris problems are commonly a result of individual behavior, SOS intends to analyze debris sources and use this information to work with the larger community to prevent these items from entering and degrading the County’s key coastal and ocean public access areas.

In an effort to make significant reductions in the amount of marine debris currently polluting the shore and nearshore waters, the SOS program will consist of four elements: marine debris removal and cataloguing; public education and outreach to encourage personal behavioral changes; outreach to businesses about marine debris and biodegradable disposable containers; and educating local government officials on significant sources and identifying potential prevention programs and policies.

Marine Debris Removal and Cataloguing

To accurately identify the sources and pathways of marine debris found on the County’s beaches and nearshore waters, SOS staff will use work groups of identified volunteers to host a range of debris clean-up activities. These will take place in the upper and lower river and creek beds, the outflow beaches, the nearshore waters and kelp beds, and around neighborhood storm drains. SOS staff and interns will also collaborate with the Cleaner Beaches Coalition to hold monthly beach clean-ups for the general public at rotating sites throughout Santa Cruz County.

The work groups will collect, identify, and document debris on data cards and SOS will create a

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post clean-up report form to assess the data collected and identify the potential sources. SOS will then store this information in its database and use the information to engage the larger community in debris prevention strategies.

Public Education and Outreach

A core element of this program will be to actively engage the general public and watershed work groups in debris clean-ups. SOS will focus on strengthening citizens' understanding of their role in the debris issue, by using its data and volunteers to educate and outreach to the larger community. SOS has developed a diverse base of volunteers from prior successful outreach programs that includes youth and community groups, retirees, and residents of the local communities. SOS plans to use this team of volunteers to conduct various outreach efforts to the larger community on individual behavior changes to reduce the marine debris pollution problem.

Business Outreach

SOS will also seek out cooperative relationships with local businesses to develop and implement best management practices for reducing sources of marine debris and its impact on the marine and shoreline environment. Tasks will include assessing the current Green and Clean Ocean Business certification program to ensure that marine debris prevention objectives are included, and highlighting businesses already implementing best practices. In addition, SOS will discuss with business owners current marine debris legislation and ways they can proactively address the marine debris problem through use of alternative product packaging.

Local Government

Finally, SOS will work with local government officials to address issues related to the delivery of public services that may be contributing to the beach and shoreline debris problem. Staff and volunteers will gather information on existing trash, recycling and cigarette butt receptacles to determine their adequacy and collection frequency; investigate trash collecting at storm drains and determine hotspots for debris accumulation; and review existing litter laws and enforcement levels. Using the information its gathers, SOS staff will report these findings to appropriate City and County staff and officials and recommend solutions such as collaborating with local waste haulers on a County-wide public anti-litter message and policies that promote overall debris reduction and environmentally friendly packaging.

Project History

The public beaches of the central coast of California are widely used by coastal and inland citizens for recreational enjoyment. Unfortunately, the increasing amount of debris collecting in the ocean and along the shoreline is threatening the environmental quality of coastal access areas by polluting beaches and estuaries, harming wildlife, and contributing to degraded water quality. Continual maintenance of coastal accessways such as beaches, bluffs estuaries and parks is time consuming and labor intensive but necessary to ensure public enjoyment of these natural and recreational areas. Whereas historically beach clean-ups have served as a sufficient method for addressing debris pollution in these coastal access areas, increasing use of these areas and high population densities are now resulting in a significant trash debris problem that requires greater prevention and reduction action. For example, in 2006 the amount of debris collected during Coastal Clean-up Day statewide was roughly 1,000,000 pounds.

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Marine debris is an increasing and serious problem causing irreversible damage to marine ecosystems. By ingestion, entrapment, and entanglement, marine debris harms hundreds of wildlife species, some of which are threatened or endangered. Plastics and other debris can also facilitate movement of harmful invasive species to distant lands. Plastics can last hundreds of years in the environment without biodegrading, and contain potentially harmful constituents. Land-based sources, especially single use plastics contribute 90 % of all floating marine debris. This material also creates a nuisance on public beaches and in coastal areas that requires state and local agencies to spend millions of dollars per year in litter collection. Debris prevention programs highlight for the public how watersheds are the channels by which marine debris travels from land to the sea and about the adverse effects that degraded ecological and aesthetic conditions can have on the economic and overall quality of life of coastal communities.

The 2006 Community Assessment Project poll in Santa Cruz County found that water pollution was at the top of the list of ecological concerns by area residents. Save Our Shores has been conducting beach clean-ups since 1981 and has witnessed firsthand the growing trash phenomenon at coastal access areas in the Monterey Bay region. In fact, at its July 5th beach clean-up in Santa Cruz County this year, SOS volunteers collected an estimated 40,000 pounds of trash left from the holiday activities of visitors the day before. Monterey Bay beaches serve as a major attraction for California tourists and residents: the Bay's marine waters serve as an ocean recreation paradise; Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk is celebrating its 100th anniversary and provides recreational enjoyment to thousands of visitors and citizens each year; and quaint coastal communities like Capitola provide popular summer destinations for many living inland. This program takes beach clean-ups upstream, into the neighborhoods and the business community, and to local government to address marine debris at its sources. The program will develop partnerships to find long-term solutions. This approach, source control coupled with targeted clean-ups will serve to demonstrate the effectiveness of a comprehensive and integrated approach to reducing human generated debris in coastal watersheds and public access areas.

Save Our Shores

Save Our Shores is a grassroots 501(c) (3) organization based in Santa Cruz that promotes marine conservation through policy research, education, and citizen involvement. Established in 1978, to counter the threat of offshore oil drilling along the central coast, Save Our Shores has a long history of working within the local communities surrounding the Monterey Bay to safeguard the region's exceptional shoreline and marine environment.

SOS is well poised to carry out an expanded marine debris reduction program that will compliment existing programs. Since the first-known public beach cleanup organized in Santa Cruz by Save Our Shores in 1981 and the implementation of the Interpretive Beach Cleanup and Clean Boating Programs in 1996, SOS has established effective grassroots approaches to providing direct remediation and education through local community-based initiatives, mobilizing volunteers as citizen scientists. The Sanctuary Watch Program educates citizens on regulations associated with the MBNMS, and encourages the reporting of incidents and violations within the Sanctuary to NOAA. The Cleaner Beaches Coalition was formed by SOS to streamline efforts to clean Santa Cruz County beaches through collaboration with other organizations on common program elements. SOS partners with other community organizations

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and local government to coordinate the spray painting of "Drains to Bay" warnings on storm drains. Several of these programs have since been replicated at the state level by the California Coastal Commission and other agencies.

Save Our Shores will provide quarterly reports to the Conservancy regarding program progress and evaluation as well as statistics on the debris sources from debris cleanups. Data from beach cleanups and program progress will also be publicized to the community via Save Our Shores' newsletter and website.

The SOS debris card is designed to complement the reporting methodology established by the Ocean Conservancy and US Environmental Protection Agency's National Monitoring Program (2000-2007). This will allow for data to be compared to and analyzed with the Conservancy's dataset to monitor historic marine debris trends.

Site Description

The Program will target three major urban watersheds within Santa Cruz County: Pajaro River, the San Lorenzo River, and the Arana Gulch. These watersheds run through the County's most populated areas.

PROJECT FINANCING

Funding Sources:

State Coastal Conservancy Coastal Access Funds	\$100,000
Grant Awardees' Funding Match (CEMEX)	<u>\$ 20,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$120,000

The Coastal Access Account derived from Coastal Commission permit fees is the expected source of funding for this project. Unlike bond funds, these funds may be used for operations and maintenance activities.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 9 (Section 31400) of Division 21 of Public Resources Code, regarding managing the development of public access to and along the coast. "It is the policy of the state that the right of the public to access and enjoyment of the coastal resources should be effectively guaranteed", and "the conservancy may award grants to any public agency or non-profit organization to ... develop, operate or manages lands for public access purposes along the coast." By providing cleaner beaches along the Monterey Bay, which are some of California's most popular recreational beaches for visitors worldwide, this project is serving a greater than local need.

The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria set forth in Chapter 5.5 (Section 31220) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding undertaking coastal watershed and coastal and marine habitat water quality projects to reduce contamination of waters within

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the coastal zone or marine waters, to protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat within coastal and marine waters and coastal watersheds, and to reduce threats to coastal and marine fish and wildlife, and to reduce the impact of population and economic pressures on coastal and marine resources.

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

The proposed authorization will partially implement several of the Coastal Conservancy's Strategic Plan goals, including: Goal 1, Objective E – acquire and improve regional trails and river parkways along rivers and creeks connecting inland populations to the coast; Goal 6, Objective A – develop plans and projects that preserve and restore coastal watersheds; and Goal 6, Objective B – complete plans or projects that improve water quality. As stated in the public accessways program summary, accessways “are the maintenance and operational responsibilities of local, state, and federal agencies, and in some cases private concessions and non-profit organizations. Many facilities suffer from lack of long-term maintenance...” and “to the extent special funds are available the Conservancy will provide funds for annual operations, for unique projects, and special events.”

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 is supported by a number of community groups, local officials, and business owners. Letters of support are attached as Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** This project will be conducted in Santa Cruz County to benefit the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and its beaches.
5. **Need:** Marine debris pollution on California's beaches is becoming a problem of epidemic proportions. In the Monterey Bay, Save Our Shores beach clean-ups, which are volunteer-based, are unable to remove the consistent abundance of debris found on the beaches and require additional workable solutions to address debris prevention and reduction. Public

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funding for beach clean-ups is limited to annual coastal clean-up day supported by the California Coastal Commission and the Coastal Access Fund, which is designed to preserve the right of the public to access and enjoy the coastal resources of the state, and is of the few funding sources available for supporting ongoing marine debris removal and reduction work.

6. **Greater-than-local interest:** This project will occur in three major watersheds that drain to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The project is consistent with the goals outlined in the Resolution on Reducing and Preventing Marine Debris adopted by the Ocean Protection Council in February 2007 and the resulting action plan being carried out by the an interagency steering committee. This project will also serve as a model for other California communities in developing comprehensive and effective strategies to reduce and prevent land-based sources of marine debris.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** Marine debris is now recognized as a major problem affecting coastal, marine ecosystems. Abatement and source control of marine debris was elevated as a statewide priority per the Marine Debris Resolution adopted by the Ocean Protection Council in February 2007. This project compliments interagency coordination efforts underway at the state level. Several bills that would address source reduction of marine debris are currently moving through the state legislature.
8. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
9. **Innovation:** The partnership is designed to maximize existing relationships among regional entities and encourage collaboration between community organizations, businesses and government agencies and officials to cost-effectively address lasting marine debris reduction goals.
10. **Readiness:** SOS is able to begin implementation of this project before the end of calendar year 2007.
11. **Cooperation:** This project will involve partnerships among local community groups including Coastal Watershed Council, Ecology Action, Surfrider Foundation, Pack Your Trash, and the Pleasure Point Night Fighters, as well as high schools, youth groups, businesses and government agencies.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The project involves information collection for beach and marine debris clean-up and outreach activities which will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and is thus categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15306. Staff will file a notice of exemption upon approval by the Conservancy.