

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
September 20, 2007

**JUGHANDLE CREEK FARM AND NATURE CENTER ENHANCEMENT**

File No. 07-061-01  
Project Manager: Joel Gerwein

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$87,300 to Jughandle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) for planning and initial implementation of improvements to its environmental education facilities.

**LOCATION:** Caspar, Mendocino County (Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Environmental Education

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Letters of Support](#)

Exhibit 3: [Preliminary Site Enhancement Plan](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Section 31119 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed eighty-seven thousand three hundred dollars (\$87,300) to the Jughandle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) to prepare an Education and Access Enhancement Plan, to conduct studies, prepare designs, and conduct permitting for improvements to educational and visitor facilities, and to remove hazardous trees and limbs from trails and campground areas at the nature center subject to the following condition:

Prior to the disbursement of funds, the grantee shall submit for the review of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, including a budget and project schedule and the names and qualifications of any contractor to be retained by JCFNC to undertake work on 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 authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Section 31119 (Chapter 3) of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.
  2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001.
  3. JCFNC is an organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
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### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff is recommending the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$87,300 to JCFNC to prepare an Education and Access Enhancement Plan, to conduct studies, prepare designs, and conduct permitting for improvements to educational and visitor facilities at the site, and to remove hazardous trees and limbs from trails and campground areas.

JCFNC is located adjacent to the town of Caspar, just east of Highway One, between Fort Bragg and Mendocino (Exhibit 1). The site is just south of and adjacent to Jughandle State Reserve, and contains publicly accessible trails connecting to trails in the State Reserve. The site totals approximately 35 acres, and includes forests and meadows, nature trails, a century-old Victorian farmhouse, a campground area, and a nursery and greenhouse used by school and youth groups to grow native plants for restoration projects. Jughandle Creek and an unnamed creek are located adjacent to the site.

JCFNC provides environmental education programs for youth from Mendocino County and other areas, affordable lodging and camping for tourists and environmental groups, and a greenhouse and nursery where students, youth groups and others can learn about and participate in native plant restoration projects. JCFNC provides environmental education programs for 800 to 1,000 Mendocino County students each year, including a summer day camp for 100 students sponsored by the Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District. In addition, approximately 2,000 people stay overnight at JCFNC each year. These overnight visitors range from tourists seeking affordable accommodations along the Mendocino coast to volunteers engaged in ecological restoration projects in the area. The great value of JCFNC's programs is recognized by schools, environmental groups, and government agencies throughout the area (Exhibit 2). Helene Chalfin, JCFNC's Education Director, was honored by the Mendocino Coast Environmental Partnership with their 2007 Local Environmentalist Award.

The proposed project would enable JCFNC to prepare an Education and Access Enhancement Plan to guide improvements to the site's facilities. The enhancement plan would integrate information about JCFNC's sensitive natural resources, current usage, existing infrastructure, and needs for additional facilities. A preliminary enhancement site map has been completed (Exhibit 2). The enhancement plan would provide the overall vision to ensure that plans for additional lodgings, classrooms, sanitary facilities, and trail improvements at JCFNC are integrated and complementary.

Conservancy funding would also allow JCFNC to contract for the necessary studies, such as septic, soils, hydrological, wetland, and botanical studies, for the construction of additional facilities. Funding would also support permit set designs of new sanitary facilities. Additional

lodgings, classrooms, and sanitary facilities would greatly enhance JCFNC’s ability to provide educational programs and to support groups involved in restoration. Additional affordable lodgings, such as bunk cabins, could make it possible for schools and youth groups on a limited budget to visit JCFNC, Jughandle State Reserve, and the Mendocino coast. An indoor classroom and an open-sided teaching shelter would allow JCFNC to provide educational programming in inclement weather. Currently, JCFNC’s programming is greatly reduced during the winter and other inclement weather periods because of the lack of sheltered classroom areas (See educator accounts in Exhibit 2). Additional bathrooms, sinks for hand-washing, and shower facilities would greatly enhance JCFNC’s ability to serve large student groups and to host groups undertaking restoration activities. Existing sanitary facilities for visitors are currently limited to two outhouses, four faucets and a sink at the campground area, and two full bathrooms and one half-bath in the farmhouse.

In addition, the recommended funds disbursement would allow JCFNC to contract for hazardous tree and limb removal to ensure that trails and campground areas are safe. It is anticipated that when the plans are completed, JCFNC will return to the Conservancy for additional funding to implement the project.

**Site Description:** As noted above, the JCFNC site is comprised of 35 acres, and includes forests and meadows, nature trails, a century-old Victorian farmhouse, a campground area, and a nursery and greenhouse. The site is located adjacent to Highway One just east of the town of Caspar in Mendocino County. Jughandle Creek Farm was originally a dairy ranch supporting cows and sheep. The farmhouse, which currently provides lodging for up to 30 visitors, was built in the 1870's and the creamery (a former dairy barn), which currently serves as office space and residence for the JCFNC caretaker, was built about 1938. JCFNC was established at the same time as the Jughandle State Reserve, and was intended to provide lodging and educational facilities to enhance public enjoyment of the reserve. The site contains 1.75 miles of trails, linking to the 1,000 acre Jughandle State Reserve’s trail network.

JCFNC’s location on the coast, right on Highway One, halfway between Fort Bragg and Mendocino, with easy access to the ocean, several State Parks, Jackson State Forest and nearby amenities, makes the site an important location for providing environmental education focused on coastal resources, for supporting coastal restoration projects, and for providing affordable lodgings to enhance access to the coast for low-income travelers.

**Project History:** JCFNC has been a partner in several restoration projects that the Conservancy supported on the Mendocino Coast in recent years, including the Garcia River, the Stornetta Brothers Ranch, and Point Cabrillo. JCFNC worked with youth groups to propagate and plant native plants for these projects. JCFNC was identified by the Conservancy several years ago as a candidate for a grant to enhance environmental education on the Mendocino Coast. The Conservancy supported the construction of a boardwalk trail on the JCFNC site in the 1970s.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

|   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| Coastal Conservancy                     | \$ 87,300        |
| Jughandle Creek Farm and Nature Center* | <u>56,308</u>    |
| <b>Total Project Cost</b>               | <b>\$143,608</b> |

**\*JCFNC match is comprised of \$16,478 in cash and \$39,830 in in-kind resources.**

The expected source of Conservancy funds for this project is the FY 05/06 appropriation to the Conservancy from the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 50). Proposition 50 authorizes the use of funds for development of facilities to promote public access to and participation in the conservation of land, water, and wildlife resources (Water Code, section 79571(b)). Eligible projects under section 79571 include nature centers that are in or adjacent to watersheds and wetlands and provide wildlife viewing, outdoor experiences, and conservation education programs.

Consistent with these requirements, the grant will allow JCFNC to provide additional facilities for environmental education. The grant will provide increased educational opportunities for students and children from Mendocino County and other parts of Northern California.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:** The JCFNC project is undertaken pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31119 of Chapter 3 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation.

Section 31119(a)(1) enables the Conservancy to undertake educational projects for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12, inclusive, relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement and maintenance of coastal resources, and may award grants to nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and public agencies for those purposes. The proposed project will enhance the existing environmental education program at JCFNC, allowing for increased participation during much of the year, and providing enhanced facilities for overnight stays by low-income groups.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective D, subsection 1.c.**, the proposed project will expand and improve environmental education programs by supporting a regional environmental education center.

**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 a broad level of support from local schools and school districts, public agencies and officials, environmental education programs, nonprofit organizations, and the public in general (Exhibit 2). Project supporters include: State Parks, the Fort Bragg City Council, the California Native Plant Society, the Fort Bragg Unified School District, the Redwood Elementary School, the Mendocino Coast Recreation

and Park District, and the Mendocino County Water Agency.

4. **Location:** JCFNC is located in a coastal watershed containing the unique Jughandle Ecological Staircase. Few places on earth display a more complete record of ecological succession. Each of the five terraces in the Ecological Staircase represents one stage in a progression of successional environments. JCFNC plays an important role in providing interpretive programs and access to this unique example of ecological succession and landscape evolution on the coast, as well as providing environmental education generally related to coastal ecosystems. The project will benefit the watershed, as well as inland and coastal resources, by expanding the number of students and the geographic area that JCFNC's environmental education program can reach.
5. **Need:** Although JCFNC has obtained grants and donations from a variety of other sources, these sources cannot provide enough funds to undertake the preparation of the enhancement plan and design of additional facilities. Conservancy funds are essential to complete the enhancement plan, and undertake the studies and design work necessary to add needed facilities to JCFNC.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** As noted above, JCFNC plays a key role in providing interpretive programs and access to the Jughandle Ecological Staircase, which has been called the most complete demonstration of soil evolution in the world. While JCFNC's education programs primarily serve local students, the site also serves students from the San Francisco Bay Area and other parts of Northern California. JCFNC has also hosted student groups from around the country participating in restoration projects on the Mendocino coast.

#### **Additional Criteria**

7. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
8. **Readiness:** JCFNC has initiated studies to support permitting and design of additional facilities and has completed a preliminary Education and Access Enhancement Map. JCFNC is ready to contract for additional studies and complete the planning process once Conservancy funds are secured.
9. **Cooperation:** JCFNC is working together with Mendocino and Fort Bragg Unified School Districts, the Mendocino Coast Recreation and Park District, and the California Department of Parks and Recreation to carry out its environmental education and ecological restoration programs.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:** The project is categorically exempt from review of environmental impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because it primarily involves planning and design. Hazardous tree and tree limb removal for the project is categorically exempt from CEQA because it involves the maintenance of existing facilities (trails and campground), specifically the maintenance of native growth for public safety (14 California Code of Regulations Section 15301(h)). Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon Conservancy approval of the project.