

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

January 17, 2008

POINT SAN LUIS LIGHTSTATION IMPROVEMENTS

File No. 07-101-01

Project Manager: Timothy Duff

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$550,000 to the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers to renovate the Point San Luis Lightstation, and to reconstruct an historic beach accessway, Point San Luis, San Luis Obispo County.

LOCATION: Point San Luis, San Luis Obispo County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Education and Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Project Location

Exhibit 2: Site Map

Exhibit 3: Project Photos

Exhibit 4: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31119, 31400-31409 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed five hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$550,000) to the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers (Keepers) to renovate the Point San Luis Lightstation and to reconstruct a beach accessway, Point San Luis, San Luis Obispo County, subject to the following conditions:

Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds for construction, the Keepers shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:

1. A work program, including project schedule and budget, and the names of any contractors and/or subcontractors to be employed on the project.
2. Evidence that all permits and approvals necessary to implement the project have been obtained.

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3. A signing plan for the project acknowledging Conservancy funding for the project and alignment of the Coastal Trail.
4. Evidence that the project design is consistent with the Conservancy's "Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development."
5. The Keepers shall enter into an agreement with the Conservancy sufficient to protect the public interest in any improvement or development constructed as part of this proposed project in accordance with the requirements of Public Resources Codes Section 31116(c)."

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 of Sections 31119, 31400-31409 of the Public Resources Code regarding coastal resource education and coastal access.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy last updated September 20, 2007.
3. The Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.
4. The project will serve greater than local needs."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Providing matching grant funds to the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers (Keepers) will enable the Keepers to complete the restoration of the lightstation buildings and reconstruct a historic beach accessway below the lightstation (Exhibit 3). Together with recent and pending repairs to the road serving the lightstation, and growing support for expanding access to it, this project will serve to significantly enhance educational opportunities and public access to the lighthouse and the surrounding area as called for in the Conservancy's Coastal Trail Report.

Originally built in the late 1800's, restoration of the historic Point San Luis Lighthouse and grounds will preserve an important and diverse part of California's history for public enjoyment, education and recreation. At its peak the lighthouse served as an essential component of a maritime network for commerce and public transportation, and the diverse cultural and economic history of the area makes this a historically significant site. Today, the lightstation retains a substantial number of the original facilities, and according to the National Register of Historic Places represents an outstanding example of a late 19th century, wood-frame lightstation complex. The ongoing and proposed future restoration is required to conform to the Secretary of the Interior's standards for such projects, and shall be approved by the National Park Service.

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The majority of Conservancy funds will be directed to completing the restoration of the headkeeper's quarters, light tower, and staff quarters that will enable historic furnishings, photos, equipment and filmed stories of a former lighthouse keeper to be securely displayed. The lightstation buildings will be wheelchair-accessible. Educational exhibits focusing on the area's diverse human and natural history will be created within the buildings informing visitors about the different populations who over centuries made their livelihood off of the land's bountiful resources, including the Chumash Indians, whalers and the lighthouse keepers. Filmed interviews of people who lived at the lighthouse will be displayed for visitors to learn about what life was like in this historic setting. Up to \$50,000 in Conservancy funds will also be directed to reconstruct an historic beach accessway located below the lightstation buildings to reestablish safe access to a sandy beach (Exhibit 3). While only remnants of the stairway exist today, the site still provides lightstation visitors with access to the beach. Once it is restored, the accessway will provide visitors, including kayakers and hikers arriving from the inner harbor area, with safe access between the beach and the lightstation.

When completed by the end of 2009, this project will serve to increase the scope and frequency of public tours to previously closed areas in the buildings, and expand public access to the lightstation grounds, as well as to the area's panoramic ocean views and nearby sandy beach (Exhibit 3). To date, public access to the lighthouse has been constrained by several factors, including the unsafe condition of the buildings themselves, the difficulty in maintaining and providing safe road access to its remote location, and its proximity to the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant. However, more recent efforts have resulted in the key stakeholders, including Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), Coastal Commission, Port San Luis Harbor District and the Lighthouse Keepers working collaboratively towards expanding access to the site.

PG&E currently offers guided hikes to the lightstation every Saturday with volunteer docents providing tours of some of the lightstation buildings. PG&E also offers weekday hikes to the lighthouse with advance reservations. Beginning in the spring of 2008 once all of the road repairs are complete, PG&E and the Keepers will be offering weekday lighthouse van tours for school groups. The Keepers expect to also provide van tours on Saturdays beginning in early 2008. By the end of 2009 when the renovation is complete, visitation to the lighthouse is estimated to exceed 4,000 persons per month.

The Keepers have been the lead party responsible for restoring the lightstation and providing public access to it for the past ten years. As stated in its bylaws, the Keeper's purpose and objective is to restore and maintain the lightstation as an historical, educational and recreational site, to education the public about the site and provide safe access to it. Seventeen volunteers, on average have participated in monthly workdays contributing an estimated 1400 hours of labor each year. The volunteer group includes a master carpenter, electrician, engineer, architect, professional photographer, retired horticulture professor, master painters and members with a variety of other skills. The Keepers have obtained and administered major grant funds for the restoration activities, and have been responsible for overseeing all work done at the lightstation since 1996. They will continue

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in this capacity until the restoration is complete, and will also continue to manage ongoing docent-led hike and van tours of the lightstation in partnership with PG&E and the harbor district.

Site Description: The lightstation is located at the northwestern tip of the Port San Luis Harbor at Point San Luis, the southern gateway to the pristine and wild Pecho Coast portion of the San Luis Obispo coast (Exhibit 1). The project area covers approximately 30 acres and includes seven lightstation buildings, a sandy beach area on the east side of the breakwater and the rocky inter-tidal areas between the lighthouse and the Port Harford Pier (Exhibit 2). Access to the site is controlled by PG&E and originates at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant access road located off the main public access that connects Highway One to Avila Beach and the harbor.

Project History: In 1991 the lightstation buildings and property were deeded from the Coastguard to the Port San Luis Harbor District, and with the help of the District and the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, the Point San Luis Lighthouse Keepers was organized as a non-profit corporation. In 1998 the Keepers entered in to an agreement with the District, and assumed responsibility to protect, preserve, and restore the lightstation for the public's use and enjoyment as an educational, historic and recreational facility. Over the past ten years the Keepers volunteers have invested an estimated \$720,000 of labor into restoration of the lightstation, and obtained over \$280,000 in grants for this purpose. In addition, the Keepers have coordinated guided public access to the lightstation with PG&E and the Harbor District.

Over the past several years, PG&E, Unocal, Coastal Commission, San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), Port San Luis Harbor District, County of San Luis Obispo and the Keepers have worked together to increase and improve public access to the lightstation. Over \$1.5 million has been directed to repair the access road and these repairs are expected to be complete by mid-2008. The Keepers and Harbor District provided Conservancy staff with a tour of the lightstation in May of 2006, and between the summer of 2006 and fall of 2007 Conservancy staff has worked with the Keepers to develop a grant proposal for Conservancy consideration.

PROJECT FINANCING:

1996-2007:

San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG)	72,500
Unocal	192,000
Lighthouse Keepers (in-kind)	720,000
Private Foundations	<u>10,500</u>
Subtotal:	\$995,000

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2008- 2010:

State Library (California Culture and Historical Endowment)	648,500
State Department of Fish and Game	300,000
Coastal Conservancy	550,000
San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG)	80,000
Lighthouse Keepers	111,000
Private Foundations	<u>123,000</u>

Subtotal: \$1,762,500

Total Project Cost: \$2,757,500

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 ten percent of the bond funds be used 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 §79571 include facilities provide wildlife viewing, outdoor experiences, and conservation education programs. Funding priority is to be given to projects operated by a nonprofit organization that provide educational opportunities to children from urban areas that lack access to such opportunities. (*Id*)

Consistent with Proposition 50 funding criteria, the proposed restoration of the Point San Luis Lightstation and adjacent shoreline will provide new opportunities for the public access and education, including children from urban areas (e.g. Paso Robles, Santa Maria) that lack such access opportunities, to learn about coastal and marine conservation and cultural and maritime history, while also viewing wildlife at the project area. The project will thus serve communities beyond the local area where the lightstation is situated.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This education and public access project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapters 3 and 9 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation,.

Section 31119(a) authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to non-profit organizations "to undertake educational projects ... for pupils in kindergarten to grade 12, inclusive, relating to the preservation, protection, enhancement, and maintenance of coastal resources". The proposed project will create and improve the lighthouse as a place for the coastal resource educational exhibits and programs offered by other entities.

. Under Chapter 9, the Conservancy is to have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public coastal accessways. In undertaking that role pursuant to Section 31400.1, the Conservancy may award grants to a nonprofit organization to develop, operate, or manage lands for public access purposes to and along the coast. In addition, Section 31400.3 states that the Conservancy may provide such assistance as is required to aid nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related

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functions necessary to meet that objective.

Consistent with Section 31400.2, staff recommends approval of this project after evaluating the amount of funding provided by the Conservancy in light of the total amount of available for coastal public accessway and urban waterfront projects, the fiscal resources of the grantee, the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects, and the application of factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of determining project eligibility and priority. The proposed authorization would leverage matching funds by providing 17 percent of the amount needed to complete the renovation project.

The proposed project is consistent with the County of San Luis Obispo Local Coastal Program as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies section below.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective E**, renovating the lightstation buildings and beach accessway will increase and enhance coastal recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Consistent with **Goal 3 Objective C**, the proposed project entails the installation of interpretive and educational displays at the lightstation emphasizing cultural and maritime history.

Consistent with **Goal 3 Objective D**, renovating the lightstation and increasing public access to the area will serve to increase public education about environmental issues affecting the coast.

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, and updated September 20, 2007, 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.

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3. **Support of the public:** The project is supported by (Letters of support Exhibit 4).
4. **Location:** The project is located within the coastal zone of San Luis Obispo County.
5. **Need:** Funding from the Conservancy is needed to bridge the existing gap left in renovation funds. The Conservancy's proposed grant represents 17 percent of the total cost of the project.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Point San Luis Lightstation is one of a limited number of lightstations in the state that provide public access every week of the year. Once the renovation is complete and more frequent public access is established, even more state, national, and international tourists will be able to visit this attraction.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** After close to ten years of planning, fundraising, and initial restoration, the project is entering its final restoration phase, and is scheduled for completion by the end of 2009.
8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The project will resolve both the need for additional and improved coastal public access and enhanced maritime and cultural educational facilities. The project will also restore and preserve several historically significant structures on the property.
9. **Leverage:** The project is highly leveraged, with approximately 83 percent of the funds being provided by sources other than the Conservancy.
11. **Innovation:** Restoring formally designated and registered historic lightstation buildings to meet current building code requirements and installing interpretative exhibits within these structures has called for innovative approaches, both in interpretive design and historic preservation.
12. **Readiness:** The grantee has finalized plans, completed CEQA review, and is now working to obtain all necessary permits to initiate the project. The grantee has raised all of the funds needed to complete the project which is scheduled to begin in 2008.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** In June 2004 the Conservancy authorized a \$500,000 grant to the Port San Luis Harbor District to design, permit and construct public access improvements in and around the harbor, including enhancing access facilities associated with the entrance to the Coastal Trail that leads to the lighthouse. The proposed grant will serve to compliment this previous Conservancy grant.
15. **Cooperation:** The project entails the cooperation of local and state agencies, a dedicated nonprofit organization, and a major utility that operates a nuclear power plant nearby.

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Consistency with Conservancy Access Standards

The proposed facilities will be consistent with applicable Conservancy's "Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development." Consistent with Standard 1, the project will minimize any impact on coastal resources or landforms and prevent unwarranted hazards to the land and public safety. Further, the proposed reconstruction of an accessway to the beach below the lighthouse will correct or at least not increase the potential of any hazard, such as fire or erosion (Standard 2). Consistent with Standard 8 the stairway will link the lighthouse facilities to the shoreline and avoid geologically unstable and erosive soils. Consistent with Standard 13, the lightstation buildings will be wheelchair-accessible.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed project is consistent with San Luis Obispo County's certified Local Coastal Plan (LCP) policies that recommend improving access to the lightstation and nearby beach. The San Luis Bay Area LCP (Chapter 6, Public Facilities) Lightstation Policy No. 3 states that the Harbor District and County "shall provide managed public access to the Point San Luis Lighthouse (e.g. trail, access staging, shuttle) and improve connections between the Lighthouse and other Port properties." Lightstation Policy No. 6 recommends docent-led access, camping, special events, paths and trails, sightseeing, picnicking, historic sites and museums, and specialized programs.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA under Title 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15331 relating to Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation. Eligible projects are limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historical Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. The Department of Interior Standards are available on the Office of Planning and Research website: <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/standards/index.htm>. An Historic Structures Report and Treatment Plan for the Lightstation was prepared in 2005 in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Department of Interior that identified a range of activities to be undertaken in accordance with that Treatment Plan, including all of the restoration and reconstruction activities to be funded by the Conservancy. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.