

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
January 17, 2007

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

File No. 03-115-02
Project Manager: Janet Diehl

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$500,000 to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy to build segments of the California Coastal Trail and connecting trails, and to restore habitat on the National Park Service's 110-acre property at Mori Point in Pacifica.

LOCATION: Mori Point in the City of Pacifica, San Mateo County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Regional map and aerial photo](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site maps](#)

Exhibit 3: [Site photographs](#)

Exhibit 4: [Environmental Assessment and FONSI](#)

Exhibit 5: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

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

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) for the construction of the California Coastal Trail and connecting trails and for habitat restoration on the National Park Service's Mori Point property in Pacifica, San Mateo County and further adopts the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) adopted by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area on October 3, 2006 under the National Environmental Policy Act, and attached to the accompanying as Exhibit 4 to this staff recommendation and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4. This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds, GGNPC shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

- a. Evidence that GGNPC has obtained all necessary permits and approvals, and all other funds necessary to complete the project.
 - b. A work program, budget, schedule, and names of any contractors or subcontractors to be employed to carry out the work program.
 - c. A signing plan for the project acknowledging Conservancy participation, and the site's function as a segment of the California Coastal Trail.
2. The project shall be consistent with the Conservancy's 'Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development.'
 3. In carrying out the project, GGNPC shall comply with all applicable mitigation and monitoring measures of the project that are included in the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) adopted by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area on October 3, 2006 under the National Environmental Policy Act and attached as Exhibit 4 to this staff recommendation, and the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan accompanying the FONSI, and with all mitigation, monitoring and other measures that are required by any permit or approval for this 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 Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access to the coast.
3. The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.
4. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the Finding of No Significant Impact and Mitigation and Monitoring Program adopted by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area under the National Environmental Policy Act and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4, and finds that there is no substantial evidence that the project as mitigated will have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Sections 15074 and 15382.
5. The proposed project serves greater than local needs."

PROJECT SUMMARY

With this proposed \$500,000 grant, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC) will complete its construction of four miles of Coastal Trail and connector trails at the newest National Park unit at Mori Point in Pacifica. A parallel goal of the project is to preserve and restore habitat for the country's most endangered snake – the San Francisco garter snake – and for the threatened California red-legged frog.

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

The first stage of the project, recently completed, focused on wetlands re-creation and the construction of a hiker-only segment of the Coastal Trail, a steep set of stairs up the coastal bluff. The second stage will focus on trails – creating a wheelchair-accessible portion of the Coastal Trail, as well as several multi-use connector trails across this spectacular 110-acre property (Exhibits 2 and 3).

The presence of endangered species on the site required the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA). The EA, the “Mori Point Restoration and Trail Plan,” was completed in 2006 with the support of a Conservancy planning grant. GGNPC raised three-quarters of a million dollars to begin implementing the plan last year, but needs further Conservancy assistance to continue the work. GGNPC has broken the initial priority actions into two stages:

Stage 1 – Spring/Summer 2007 (completed)

- Expand one pond (frog breeding habitat) and construct two new ponds
- Construct hiker-only Coastal Trail segment
- Re-vegetate construction sites with native plants
- Remove invasive plants
- Launch community engagement/public information program

Cost: \$647,500

Stage 2 – Spring/Summer 2008 (proposed)

- Construct/improve trail system closest to sensitive habitat, including:
 - Boardwalk and Mori Road (will be accessible for disabled park visitors)
 - Multi-Use Coastal Trail, Coastal Trail Connector and Bowl Connector
 - Bowl Trail
- Remove “social trails” from prime habitat areas
- Re-vegetate construction areas with native plants
- Remove invasive plants
- Continue community engagement/public information program

Cost: \$1,903,000

When Stage 2 of the project is completed, visitors of all abilities will be able to enter the property from Mori Road and travel down the trail to where it joins the sea wall just north of Mori Point, which serves as the Coastal Trail (Exhibit 2). Visitors will then be able to ascend gradually along the Coastal Trail “Bowl Connector” toward the south, largely along an existing road that will be narrowed to a trail. This trail section, along with the rest of the Coastal Trail to the south, will meet proposed U.S. Access Board Outdoor Recreation and Trails Accessibility Guidelines. The Bowl Connector will switch back to the west via an improved existing trail, where it will intersect with the Bluff Trail, the Peak Trail and the Point Trail. The Coastal Trail will continue southeast along an improved existing trail through a stand of intact coastal scrub just north of Mori Peak. Upon reaching Mori Ridge, the Coastal Trail will descend southward, where it will meet private land.

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

Measures to avoid construction-related impacts to animals, including the California red-legged frog and the San Francisco garter snake, have been incorporated into the project (see “Compliance with CEQA” section, below). A section of the new wheelchair-accessible trail, for example, will be elevated as a boardwalk to allow the frogs and snakes to pass underneath. The project includes a biological monitoring component to ensure that the restoration activities produce functional habitat, and that the closed trails remain unused. A qualified biologist/herpetologist along with an aquatic biologist and hydrologist will review habitat and wildlife status throughout the project.

Work on the project is being done by a diverse group of people, ranging from garter snake experts permitted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to a broad body of volunteers. GGNPC holds educational and restoration programs at Mori Point once a month, in order to build public awareness about the project and the endangered species that live there. Interpretive hikes are led by GGNPC staff and its Trail Keeper Volunteer Program members, who are trained to walk the trails and engage people they see on the property.

Volunteers also help with much-needed habitat restoration work in the park. In 2006 alone, 647 volunteers contributed 6,544 hours of work, including invasive plant removal, at Mori Point. GGNPC also operates a small native plant nursery at Oceana High School, which engages local youth and grows thousands of native plants for Mori Point restoration.

GGNPC has been active in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area system for over 20 years and its volunteers have been instrumental in the construction of trails and the completion of environmental restoration projects throughout the park system. The project at Mori Point is part of GGNPC’s larger *Trails Forever* initiative. The primary goal of *Trails Forever*, a new park-wide project undertaken in partnership with the National Park Service and the Presidio Trust, is to enhance the public’s enjoyment and access to the California Coastal Trail, and regional connecting trails such as the Bay and Ridge Trails, through improvements to these trails.

Site Description: Mori Point is a landmark on the Pacifica coastline, jutting several hundred feet into the ocean and visible from nearly every high point in the City of Pacifica (Exhibit 1). From its ridge-top, hikers can see the Pedro Point Headlands to the south and, on clear days, the Marin Headlands and Point Reyes to the north.

The northern boundary of the property consists of a steep ridge that rises up from the Laguna Salada Marsh and Sharp Park Municipal Golf Course, both owned by the City of San Francisco. To the west, the Pacific Ocean and the sandy shore of Rockaway Beach bound the property. To the south is the Calera Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant, and 20 acres of restored wetlands, owned by the City of Pacifica. The City has completed a section of the Coastal Trail along the Calera Creek corridor that will connect to the Mori Point Coastal Trail if the private property that lies between them is secured. Mori Point is bounded on the east by Highway 1. Across the highway lies another unit of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, Sweeney Ridge.

The seaward edge of the Mori Point property consists of rocky intertidal areas and steep cliffs that support rare sea bluff vegetation. The upland portions of the property support annual grasslands and remnants of native coastal scrub and coastal prairie plant communities.

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

The small freshwater ponds and marshes on the site’s northwestern edge support the northern-most population of the San Francisco garter snake (SFGS). Known as “the rarest snake in North America,” the SFGS is listed on both the federal and state endangered species lists, and occurs in only a few dozen sites in San Mateo County. The willow riparian areas found on the property support populations of the California red-legged frog, listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which is one of the primary food sources for the garter snake. The habitat value of these wetland areas and adjacent uplands is augmented by their proximity to the larger Laguna Salada marsh just to the north.

Project History: The public has been eyeing Mori Point for decades, as indicated by its citation in the 1975 California Coastal Plan as an immediate acquisition area. Despite this expression of public interest, the property remained in private hands for the next 35 years, and was the subject of failed development proposals, foreclosure, and environmental and corporate litigation. Two major development proposals for the site rose and faltered. Eventually, the investors behind these proposals brought suit against the firm that had promised returns on their investment. The court ordered liquidation, and the property was put up for public auction. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) acquired the Mori Point property at auction in 2000, using its own funds and a million-dollar grant from the Coastal Conservancy.

In 2002, the National Parks Service acquired the property from TPL. Two years later, the Conservancy provided partial funding to GGNPC to conduct trail planning and site assessment for the Mori Point property. The Mori Point Restoration and Trail Plan was completed in 2006, and GGNPC began the first stage of habitat restoration and trail work – with federal and private foundation support – in the summer of 2007. GGNPC completed Stage 1 in November 2007, and has the permits in place to begin Stage 2 this summer. GGNPC staff is actively seeking funding to complete Stage 2. The proposed \$500,000 Conservancy grant will enable GGNPC to construct the multi-use Coastal Trail and Coastal Trail connectors in Stage 2 even if it is unsuccessful in attracting further funding at this point.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Current Phase:

Coastal Conservancy	\$500,000
Private Foundations (proposals pending)	50,000
Federal Transportation Reauthorization Funds	40,000
Challenge Cost Share (NPS special funding)	30,000
Other public/private funds (SFPUC, foundations, individuals)	1,000,000
NPS Centennial Challenge or GGNPC	<u>283,000</u>
Total Project Cost, Stage 2	\$1,903,000

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

Completed Phase:

Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation	\$360,000
Federal Transportation Reauthorization	200,000
NPS Remediation funds	70,000
GGNPC	<u>17,500</u>
Total Project Cost, Stage 1	\$647,500
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$2,550,500

The expected source of Conservancy funds for this project is the FY 2004/05 appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhoods and Coastal Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 40). This funding source may be used for the development of land and water resources in accordance with the provisions of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Public Resources Code Section 5096.650(b)). The proposed project serves to assist in the development of land-based public access to and along the coast.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with and will help to implement Chapter 9 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation: Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31409), regarding public access and enjoyment of coastal resources. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy shall have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline, and Section 31408(a) directs the Conservancy to coordinate the development of the California Coastal Trail. Through the proposed action, the Conservancy will play a primary role by funding the development of an important link in the California Coastal Trail.

Section 31400.1 allows the Conservancy to award grants to non-profit organizations for accessways to and along the coast that serve more than local public needs. Consistent with this section, the subject of the proposed action is a link in the California Coastal Trail, a trail system of state-wide significance. The beaches and trails of Pacifica attract more than 150,000 visitors per year from throughout the greater Bay Area. The inclusion of Mori Point into the National Parks system indicates the site's importance as a national resource. The GGNRA system receives more than 17 million visitors per year from throughout the nation and the popularity of its park units in San Mateo County is steadily increasing. The NPS has authorized GGNPC to initiate this trail development effort for Mori Point in advance of the completion of GGNRA's General Management Plan Amendment primarily because of the large numbers of cyclists, hikers, and birders who already visit the property on a regular basis. Mori Point itself is a feature of regional, if not

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

statewide, significance and the proposed project will enable greater public access to this remarkable place.

Section 31400.2 requires the Conservancy to consider a number of factors in determining the amount of funding for an access project. Consistent with this section, the proposed level of funding was evaluated relative to the total amount of funding available to the Conservancy for coastal access projects. Also consistent with this section, the fiscal resources of the applicant have been taken into account. The GGNPC is a nonprofit organization funded through private donations, which runs largely through the efforts of volunteers.

Section 31400.2 also stipulates that the level of funding for an access project be determined by an application of factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of determining project eligibility and priority. Consistent with this requirement, and as discussed in greater detail in the section below, the project has been evaluated and found to be consistent with the Conservancy's project selection criteria and guidelines.

Section 31400.3 states that the Conservancy may assist public agencies in developing and implementing a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. The proposed project will further these goals by improving and enhancing a major public accessway in a heavily visited coastal region as part of a regional, comprehensive public access plan.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCESSWAY LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

Consistent with Standard No. 1, the Mori Point Coastal Trail has been designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms and to be subordinate to the setting's character. The trails have been designed in a way that prevent hazards to the land and to public safety (Standard Nos. 1 and 2), ensure the privacy of private landowners (Standard Nos. 1 and 4), and protect environmentally sensitive habitats (Standard Nos. 1 and 5). Consistent with Standard No. 8, the proposed project will help to establish trails on an ocean front parcel that would connect inland units of state, federal, and local park systems with the shore. Further consistent with Standard No. 8, the project will be undertaken in part to eliminate existing trails on geologically unstable and erosive soils. Consistent with Standard No. 13, the proposed project will result in barrier-free public access.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective D** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project includes construction of approximately 4 miles of the Coastal Trail and connecting trails on the Mori Point property. This section of the Coastal Trail will be signed, consistent with **Goal 1 Objective B**.

Consistent with **Goal 2 Objective E** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project will correct dangerous conditions along erosive coastal bluffs by eliminating excess "social trails" on steep portions of the Mori Point property.

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objective B** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project will preserve and enhance one acre of environmentally sensitive habitats on Mori Point by build-

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

ing a new trail alignment to avoid impacts to such areas and re-vegetating excess trails to return them to natural habitat.

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objective D** of the Conservancy's Strategic Plan, the proposed project includes the eradication of non-native invasive plants that threaten environmentally sensitive habitat.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines 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.
3. **Support of the public:** The proposed project has the support of several elected officials, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Letters of support are attached as Exhibit 5.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone of the City of Pacifica.
5. **Need:** The Mori Point property is already heavily used by hikers and bicyclists via a network of informal trails. Such uncontrolled access is contributing to soil erosion and damage to sensitive habitat areas. Improvements to the Mori Point trails and restoration of degraded areas are needed now. The proposed project will allow the GGNPC to proceed with these projects in a timely manner.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** As discussed in greater detail in the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above, Mori Point is a scenic and recreational resource of regional and statewide importance. Completion of the Coastal Trail is a major goal of a number of state agencies, including the Department of Parks and Recreation and the California Coastal Commission.

Additional Criteria

8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The proposed project will facilitate the development of the Coastal Trail while providing for the restoration of sensitive habitat areas.
9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
12. **Readiness:** As discussed above, GGNPC has obtained all necessary permits and approvals, and has completed the first stage of trail construction and restoration activities. It is ready to begin the second phase once funding is in place and the proper season for construction in sensitive habitat arrives (summer).
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See the "Project History" section above.

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

15. **Cooperation:** The proposed project involves the cooperation of the NPS, a federal agency, GGNPC, a private nonprofit organization, and many local volunteers and community groups.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed project furthers many policies of the October 1997 City of Pacifica Local Coastal Plan. Some of the most directly relevant are:

Public Access Element

3. To enhance public safety, and facilitate visitor access, safe bicycle and walking paths should be established between neighborhoods and through the City.

Circulation Element

9. Develop safe and efficient bicycle, hiking, equestrian and pedestrian access within Pacifica and to local points of interest.

Open Space and Recreation Element

1. Retain open space which preserves natural resources, protects visual amenities, prevents inappropriate development, provides for the managed use of resources, and protects the public health and safety.
4. Promote community wide links to open space and recreation facilities which do not abuse the open space resource or threaten public safety.

Conservation Element

2. Require the protection and conservation of indigenous rare and endangered species.
4. Protect and conserve the coastal environment, sand dunes, habitats, unique and endangered species and other natural resources and features which contribute to the coastal character.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The Conservancy is the lead state agency for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for this project. The Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC), using a Coastal Conservancy grant, prepared the Mori Point Restoration and Trail Plan Environmental Assessment (February 2006) in conjunction with Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). This document, attached to this recommendation as Exhibit 4, served as an environmental assessment (EA) for the purposes of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Mori Point Restoration and Trail Plan is subject to NEPA because it describes a management strategy for land owned and managed by GGNRA, part of the National Park Service. GGNRA completed the environmental review process for the proposed project in 2006 and made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

State agencies are encouraged to use NEPA documents, rather than preparing an additional document pursuant to CEQA, if the NEPA process is proceeding faster than the CEQA process, and if the FONSI prepared pursuant to NEPA complies with the requirements of CEQA (14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15221). Consistent with 14 CCR Section 15223, Conservancy

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

staff consulted with GGNRA during the preparation of environmental documents, and commented on the federal document.

Under Section 15225 of CEQA Guidelines, a NEPA document may be used by the CEQA lead agency without the necessity of re-circulating the document where (1) the FONSI is circulated as broadly as required under CEQA, and (2) the CEQA lead agency provides notice of its intent to use the NEPA document, and of its determination that the federal document complies with CEQA. Both of these requirements have been met.

Public scoping was conducted by GGNRA between October 7 and November 7, 2005. Notice of the beginning of the scoping period was mailed to more than 1,500 individuals, agencies, and organizations. Public workshops were held to solicit comments. GGNRA considered all public comments in the development of the EA. The EA was available for public review and comment from February 23 through March 31, 2006. Public notice of the availability of the EA was provided on the GGNRA website, and a postcard/email notice sent to 1,920 individuals, organizations, and agencies. Copies of the EA were provided in local libraries and notice was given in the local newspaper. GGNRA responded to all comments (Exhibit 4, FONSI and Errata).

As the CEQA lead agency, Conservancy staff has provided notice of the Conservancy's intent to use the NEPA document, pursuant to 14 CCR Section 15072(b). Conservancy staff mailed notice to owners of contiguous property, posted notice on the project site, and notified the State Clearinghouse and the San Mateo County Clerk on December 6, 2007. No comments on the notice of intent had been received by staff as of December 17, 2007. If comments are received between December 17, 2007 and January 7, 2008, they will be forwarded to the Conservancy as an addendum to this recommendation, and will be posted on the Conservancy website.

Potential Environmental Effects and Mitigation Measures

With respect to the work at Mori Point that the Coastal Conservancy would fund, the EA identified potentially significant effects in the following areas: Geology and Soils; Hydrology and Water Quality; Visitor Safety, Use and Recreation; Noise; Cultural Resources, and Biological Resources. Mitigation measures have been adopted to reduce these potential effects to a level of insignificance, as summarized below (see Exhibit 4 for a more detailed discussion of the mitigation measures).

Geology and Soils

Short-term direct and indirect adverse impacts due to increased potential for erosion and sediment transport could occur during habitat restoration, removal of placed fills and debris, trail and boardwalk construction, and other site improvements. These potential short-term construction-related impacts would be local and regional, and minor.

Mitigation measures to address these impacts include the requirement that GGNRA shall prohibit construction activities in any site area with seismic hazards until geologic and soil conditions of the site are investigated and appropriate mitigation measures, if any, are incorporated into development/restoration plans.

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

Long-term indirect beneficial impacts due to reduced erosion and sedimentation are anticipated from the following project actions: soil de-compaction and re-vegetation, removal of placed fills, trail construction, removal and improvements, and boardwalk construction. Additionally, changes in visitor use patterns resulting from guided use on appropriately constructed trails and limited use in sensitive areas would reduce erosion and sedimentation.

Hydrology and Water Quality

Excavation without proper design may yield slopes that are temporarily more prone to erosion and/or landslides, creating a potentially short-term adverse impact on downstream areas and water quality. To mitigate this potential impact, the following mitigation measures will be implemented: Construction shall be limited to the dry-weather months; trails shall be designed so surface water drains appropriately; erosion control measures shall be implemented where project actions could leave soils exposed to runoff prior to re-vegetation; soil stockpiles shall be covered; heavy equipment shall be kept outside of wetlands and environmentally sensitive areas; debris and construction waste shall be kept outside of wetlands and other waters of the state and shall be disposed properly, and all work areas shall be restored and re-vegetated upon completion of the project, using only local native plants.

Visitor Safety

The expansion of existing ponds and construction of additional ponds may result in increased breeding habitat for mosquitoes, which may result in impacts to public safety due to possible increased transmission of diseases to humans. To mitigate this potential impact, as recommended by the San Mateo County Mosquito Abatement District, mosquito populations shall be monitored. If necessary, application of *Bacillus thuringiensis* shall be implemented to reduce mosquito population.

The proposed project activities may temporarily increase potential impacts to visitor safety during trail work, erosion repair, pond construction, hydrology improvements, or debris and weed removal. To mitigate this potential impact, advanced notification of construction work, detour signage, and construction fencing shall be implemented to restrict visitors from hazardous areas during construction.

Visitor Use and Recreation

Site-wide management actions may result in short-term, direct and indirect impacts to the recreational resources at Mori Point. Possible adverse impacts related to short-term construction and associated noise could temporarily detract from the visitor experience. Access through Mori Road to the beach shall be re-routed during possible construction of a boardwalk or bridge in the “bowl” area. Temporary fencing and signage shall discourage access through restoration areas. Public use of the site shall be redirected to specific marked and designated areas for the purposes of trail and habitat restoration.

Stewardship actions with the goal of restoring habitat areas may result in long-term indirect impacts such as limiting access to specific sites determined critical for endangered species

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

recovery. The designation of certain trails as hiker-only may result in adverse impacts to the recreational experiences of other user groups including bikers and equestrians. However, alternative loop routes accessing the same destination points would be available to all user groups. Adverse impacts are expected to be local and minor. Site Stewardship work would occur one Saturday per month; no heavy machinery would be used during this work. Adverse impacts are expected to be short-term, local and minor but will be offset after implementation of mitigation. To further mitigate these impacts, construction shall not begin before 7 a.m. or continue beyond 8 p.m. and shall not occur on weekends. Established trails shall be re-routed during construction.

Noise

Construction activities associated with the restoration and trail work could result in short-term, minor increases in noise levels to neighboring residents and public visiting Mori Point. To mitigate potential impacts due to noise, neighbors shall be given notice prior to any construction activities, construction vehicles and equipment shall not idle when not in use, and machines shall use the best available noise control techniques.

Cultural Resources

No known archeological resources exist within the Mori Point project, and the project will not impact any historic resources. The project team will consult with the GGNRA archaeologist well in advance of any work in potentially sensitive areas, however, and if archaeological materials are recovered, project monies shall fund preservation, cataloging, storage, equipment and materials needed.

Biological Resources

Biological resources were analyzed according to wildlife, vegetation and native plant communities, wetlands, and “special status species.” Special status species known to occur on the site include the federally-listed rare and endangered San Francisco garter snake (SFGS) and the federally threatened California red-legged frog.

Mori Point is one of six areas identified in the recovery plan written by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) with specific protection and enhancement recommendations for SFGS. Reasonable and Prudent Measures were provided by the USFWS as a result of consultation. These items were not identified in the EA but added to the mitigation table included in the FONSI (Exhibit 4, FONSI, pp 16-20).

To minimize the potential for direct impacts to the special status species, the FONSI lays out four pages of mitigation measures, including the following: Any earthmoving or soil disturbing work in the vicinity of the “Bowl” or existing ponds or wetlands is forbidden between November 15 and April 15. A biologist holding a valid Scientific Collection Permit from the USFWS shall be on-site or on call to handle any SFGS or red-legged frogs encountered during pre-construction

MORI POINT COASTAL TRAIL

and construction activities. A qualified biologist shall prepare worker education materials regarding the red-legged frog and the garter snake. To minimize the potential for mortality of SFGS, the areas near wetlands and ponds shall be trapped-out and fenced to the maximum extent possible when heavy equipment is used. The measures also include restrictions for herbicide use, protocols for tool sterilization, and requirements to monitor the ponds for bullfrogs.

The proposed project will have no long-term adverse impacts to the biological resources of the property, and will be beneficial to listed species. Best Management Practices will be implemented in order to reduce any impacts to wildlife and to wetlands to a degree that is less-than-significant.

Short-term adverse impacts to vegetation and native plant communities may occur during trail construction, and weeds may encroach into project areas after soil disturbance. To mitigate such potential impacts, all vehicles shall be brought in cleaned and free of weeds, and soils and vegetation contaminated with weed seeds shall be segregated and disposed of or treated appropriately.

Conclusion

After reviewing the EA/FONSI and the Mori Point Restoration and Trail Plan Mitigation Measures, staff concurs that the project, as mitigated, will not have a significant effect on the environment, and recommends that the Conservancy make such a finding. Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the Mitigation Measures and Monitoring Program accompanying the EA/FONSI (Exhibit 4). Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Determination.