COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
April 24, 2008

SANTA MONICA BAY RESTORATION PROJECTS

File No. 00-117
Project Manager: Kara Kemmler

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to $2, 840,275 for specific projects located in Ballona Creek, Malibu Creek, Dockweiler State Beach, Stone Canyon Creek, Point Vicente, McCarrell's Canyon, City of Los Angeles, and various state parks in the Santa Monica Mountains, to improve coastal water quality, enhance habitat and coastal access within the Santa Monica Bay Watershed to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan.

LOCATION: Various locations within the Santa Monica Bay Watershed, Los Angeles County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource enhancement

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Regional Map

Exhibit 2: Santa Monica Bay Cities Map

Exhibit 3: Project Area Maps

Exhibit 4: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed two million eight hundred forty thousand two hundred seventy five dollars ($2,840,275) to be disbursed to seven nonprofit organizations and public agencies for the following projects, as more specifically defined in the accompanying staff recommendation, to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan approved by the Conservancy on August 2, 2001, as follows:

a. Three hundred thousand dollars ($300,000) to the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation (SMBRF) for preparation of the Ballona Creek Watershed Historical Ecology Study.

b. One hundred seventy-five thousand dollars ($175,000) to the SMBRF for development of the Ballona Creek Watershed Water Budget.

c. One hundred twenty-five thousand dollars ($125,000) to the SMBRF for preparation of planning documents for the Ballona Greenway Plan.

d. Two hundred fifty thousand dollars ($250,000) to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) for preparation of the Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study.

e. One hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) to the CDPR for the California Red-legged Frog Survey Project.

f. Two hundred thousand ($200,000) to the Los Angeles Conservation Corps for the Beach Bluffs Restoration Project.

g. One hundred fifty thousand dollars ($322,143) to Community Conservancy International for the Green Solution Project, Phase II.

h. One hundred thousand dollars ($100,000) to Santa Monica Baykeeper for the Stone Canyon Creek Restoration Project.

i. One million dollars ($1,000,000) to the City of Los Angeles for implementation of Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the Ballona Creek watershed.

j. One hundred eighty-nine thousand, six hundred-fifty-six dollars ($189,656) to the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy (PVPLC) for the Point Vicente Fishing Access Bluff Habitat Restoration Project.

k. Seventy-eight thousand four hundred seventy-six dollars ($78,476) to the PVPLC for the McCarrell's Canyon Habitat Restoration Project.

These authorizations are subject to the condition that prior to disbursement of funds for an individual project, the project grantee shall submit the following for review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy: a final work program, schedule and budget for the project; all contractors to be employed for the project; evidence of all permits and approvals for the project; a plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding; and a resolution from the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission authorizing the project for Conservancy funding."

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 projects are consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 6 of Division 21 (Sections 31251-31270) of the Public Resources Code, regarding the enhancement of coastal resources;
3. The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Community Conservancy International, Santa Monica Baykeeper and the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy are nonprofit organizations 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.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize up to $2,840,275 for specific projects to improve coastal water quality and enhance habitat within the Santa Monica Bay Watershed to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan (the Bay Plan), approved by the Conservancy on August 2, 2001. The projects proposed for Conservancy action in this authorization are described below.

Ballona Creek Watershed Studies **$600,000**

Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation

Three data and informational studies are proposed to address informational gaps in the Ballona Creek Watershed (BCW). The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation (SMBRF) as grantee will direct all three projects and perform part of the work as well as manage others to produce the three studies: an historical ecology study of the watershed; development of a water budget and natural spring mapping for the watershed; and development a Ballona Greenway Plan.

BCW Study 1 - Historical Ecology of Ballona Creek Watershed $300,000
The purpose of this study is to understand unique watershed characteristics that shape the current system and that can guide appropriate restoration work. This project requires extensive historical research as well as GIS mapping work and will result in a publication that elucidates the geologic, hydrologic and human development of Ballona Creek watershed. A similar report was produced by Eric Stein (SCCWRP), Shawna Dark (Cal State Northridge) and Travis Longcore (USC) for the San Gabriel watershed and this team would be contracted to produce the Ballona study. The San Gabriel study successfully identifies historical reference points in the watershed, as well as factors that influence landscape change, including land use, climate, floods and fires. It clarifies the factors controlling local habitats and how they change over time, and helps define restoration and management options for various locations and purposes throughout the watershed. A similar analysis is need for the Ballona Creek watershed to help plan watershed restoration and enhancement projects. Research already completed by SMBRF staff and contractors will be a significant in-kind contribution to this effort.

BCW Study 2 – Water Budget for the Ballona Creek Watershed $175,000
This study will identify inputs and outputs for the watershed including mapping natural springs and identifying natural flows in storm drains and stream channels. The information will help guide restoration planning to maximize water quality and habitat improvement benefits. The study will help inform decisions about where to place water treatment facilities and other BMPs, to ensure greatest benefit from treating stormwater rather than treating the cleaner, natural flows, which will ultimately contribute to more efficiently and cost-effectively meeting TMDL requirements in the watershed.

BCW Study 3 - Ballona Greenway Plan $125,000
This project will complete the Ballona Greenway Plan. The Greenway Plan was initiated by the Ballona Watershed Task Force and preliminary design work has been done. The outcome of this project will be final designs for portions of the Greenway including landscape guidelines for a Ballona-specific plant palette. This project has proceeded in close consultation with the MRCA and Baldwin Hills Conservancy on their pocket park and bike path beautification plans. SMBRF is working in cooperation with the Ballona Watershed Task Force.

Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study **$250,000**

California Department of Parks and Recreation

The Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study evaluates the various alternatives for removal of Rindge Dam, the furthest downstream fish migration barrier in Malibu Creek. Rindge Dam blocks the movement of endangered southern steelhead trout, which would otherwise have access to several miles of spawning habitat upstream of the dam. It also causes severe sediment imbalances leading to excess erosion and deposition problems upstream and downstream of the dam.

The study is being prepared by the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) is the local sponsor. The Conservancy previously awarded a $200,000 grant of SMBRC Proposition 12 funds to CDPR August 2, 2001 to fund a portion of the feasibility study and subsequently awarded CDPR another grant in the amount of $571,000 on April 24, 2003 to further the study. Currently, the Corps has contributed approximately $1.5 million to the study, local match contributions total approximately $1 million and CDPR in-kind contributions make-up approximately $250,000. At this time, the Corps requires an additional $250,000 from the local sponsor in order to complete the study. If funded, the anticipated completion date of the study will be Summer 2009. Completion of this study will make the dam removal project eligible for federal funding. Without this study, the costs of dam removal would be borne entirely by state and local entities.

California Red-legged Frog Survey Project **$100,000**

California Department of Parks and Recreation

The California red-legged frog *(Rana aurora draytonii)* (CRF) has been designated as Federally Threatened by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The proposed project addresses two of the four actions listed in the recovery plan necessary to recover CRF numbers in the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area: conduct focused surveys in the Santa Monica Mountains and implement site assessments and restoration programs to identify potentially suitable habitat prior to reestablishment of the frog. This authorization would allow CDPR to conduct focused California red-legged frog surveys and habitat suitability assessments for over 40,000 acres of CDPR land located within this core habitat area in support of the Red-Legged Frog Recovery Plan. Proposed survey areas include Point Mugu State Park, Leo Carrillo State Park, Malibu Creek State Park, Topanga State Park, and Santa Susana State Historic Park.

Beach Bluffs Restoration Project **$200,000**

Los Angeles Conservation Corps

The Beach Bluffs Restoration Project (BBRP) Master Plan, which was partially funded by SMBRC Prop 12 funds (Conservancy approval of $68,281 on April 24, 2003), identifies opportunities for restoration of the beach bluff habitat from Ballona Creek to the Palos Verdes peninsula. The proposed project focuses on parts of areas 71 and 73 in the BBRP Master Plan and encompasses three acres. The latter area is identified as a top priority restoration site in the BBRP Master Plan. The project area is located to the north and south of LA County Beaches and Harbors' new Youth Development Center at Dockweiler Beach. The proposed project will build upon and strengthen the efforts begun in 2003 which restored a two-acre demonstration

restoration site in southern Redondo Beach and illustrated the feasibility of bluff restoration utilizing at-risk youth for all aspects of the restoration process. The proposed project's proximity to the new Youth Center will provide numerous beneficial opportunities including serving as a meeting place for community based restoration activities; providing public awareness through tours; and increasing exposure to native plant ecology.

The El Segundo dunes were formed from sand that flowed to the Santa Monica Bay from the Los Angeles River when its mouth was at what is now Ballona Creek. The current active dune system was built on consolidated sandstone from dunes built during prior glacial period. Near the coast, this sandstone is exposed as a bluff. Elsewhere the active dunes reach the ocean and the bluff is not exposed. Most of the dunes and bluff have been either graded for urban development, or the native vegetation has been replaced by exotic landscaping. This has resulted in a loss of over 90% of the natural vegetation of the 90% of the area of the dunes and bluff.

The remaining fragments of the El Segundo dunes and bluffs — leaving aside the area remaining at the Los Angeles International Airport — have a significant potential to be restored with native vegetation. This project would have many benefits, including restoration of habitat for the federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly (*Euphilotes bernardino allyni*), reduction of erosion, beautification, and facilitation of a significant public education opportunity.

Green Solution Project, Phase II **$322,143**

Community Conservancy International

Green Solution Project, Phase I provided quantification and identification of urban lands within LA County that would be needed for conversion to pervious, multi-benefit projects (park, recreation, wetlands and natural lands) to help meet water quality improvement goals and regulatory requirements through the infiltration or treatment of stormwater before it reaches Santa Monica Bay. The study also identified publicly owned lands within the County to assess the extent to which these lands could be used for these projects. The products of Phase I include a series of GIS-based maps depicting publicly-owned parcels within the Santa Monica Bay watershed, along with their size and general land uses.

Phase II is necessary to refine parcel data for selected land use categories; analyze hydrology and other parcel attributes related to suitability for stormwater infiltration/treatment; develop a ranking matrix to screen and prioritize candidate parcels for water quality project implementation; and develop concept designs for five high-ranking priority parcels.

Stone Canyon Creek Restoration Project **$100,000**

Santa Monica Baykeeper

The Santa Monica Baykeeper in partnership with Ballona Creek Watershed Coordinator and UCLA's Facilities Department and Institute of the Environment will play a lead role in restoring a stretch of Stone Canyon Creek on the UCLA campus. Out of the estimated 419 acres of campus, less than 12 acres remain of natural native habitat. Located behind a recently constructed business school, a naturally banked stretch of Stone Canyon Creek provides a green oasis. However, the creek banks are choked with invasive vegetation and are suffering from erosion despite artificial shoring efforts.

This site was part of previous small scale 1.5 year restoration effort funded by the Southern California Wetland Recovery Project's small grants program. The previous effort removed non-native vegetation from 0.36 acres of the site. The proposed project will build upon that effort by conducting continued weeding of invasive vegetation, maintenance of existing plants, planting of new native vegetation, and the replacement of 8 exotic trees with native trees. The proposed project will expand the restoration effort to approximately 0.25 additional acres of area along Stone Canyon Creek making the total area restored along the creek approximately 0.60 acres.

The Santa Monica Baykeeper has been successfully educating the community about the benefits of native plant restoration through direct involvement in restoration activities. This project includes use of community volunteers as well as UCLA students. The Stone Canyon Creek restoration will benefit the natural ecology and will greatly benefit the urban ecology of UCLA, a campus that has few natural features and is becoming increasingly built up due to extreme space constraints. Natural creek features are a beloved part of several California public University campuses such as UC Santa Cruz and UC Berkeley, and newly restored areas are becoming key educational and aesthetic resources at previously degraded campuses such as UC Santa Barbara. Yet recent informal surveys by UCLA biology instructors suggest that most students cannot name even five bird species that live on campus. Through both the habitat enhancement and educational components of the proposed work Santa Monica Baykeeper and its partners will have a positive impact for the habitat and the public.

Ballona Creek Watershed Stormwater BMP Implementation Program **$1,000,000**

City of Los Angeles

The Ballona Creek Watershed Stormwater BMP Planning and Implementation Strategy was funded with Proposition 12 funds approved by the Conservancy at its April 24, 2003 meeting ($150,000) and was completed in September 2005. This study identified and prioritized locations within the Ballona Creek watershed, identified and selected specific BMPs for those locations and developed a strategic implementation plan. The study involved numerous watershed stakeholders and resulted in a short list of preferred BMP projects in the watershed. From that list, this project was selected for implementation.

The goal of the proposed project is to significantly reduce the amount of precipitation that becomes runoff from targeted residential areas and ultimately improve water quality in the watershed. The proposed project will focus on retrofitting downspouts on residential lots to reroute roof runoff from the stormwater collection system to on-site pervious areas. The City of Los Angeles will prepare retrofit guidelines, informational brochures, and contract documents for downspouts to be retrofitted. An incentives program for residents will be established that will provide funding if retrofit is performed by property owners. For property owners that want to participate in the program but do not want to perform the retrofit work themselves, the City will hire contractors to retrofit those downspouts.

Subsequent to the implementation of this program, its success will be assessed, and runoff reduction and water quality impacts will be quantified. This pilot program, if successful, will have broader application within the Santa Monica Bay region, especially on areas with limited storm drain capacity and flood-prone locations.

Point Vicente Fishing Access Bluff Habitat Restoration Project **$189,656**

Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy

Located on the Palos Verdes Peninsula, the Bluffs at Point Vicente are an important coastal ecological resource for the Los Angeles region. This area supports several habitat types such as coastal bluff scrub and coastal cactus scrub. The recent discovery at this location of the federally endangered El Segundo blue butterfly *(Euphilotes battoides allyni)*, exemplifies the site's significance.

This project includes removing non-native invasive vegetation, planting coastal bluff and cactus scrub species, re-vegetating informal trails and bare slope areas, and installing various trail improvements. The project activities will reduce soil erosion, provide habitat for the endangered El Segundo blue butterfly, and enhance habitat for two sensitive bird species, the federally-listed threatened California gnatcatcher and the Cactus wren, which is a California State Species of Concern. All work will be accomplished using hand tools. PVPLC's staff of restoration technicians will provide restoration training for all field staff involved in the project.

McCarrell's Canyon Habitat Restoration Project **$78,476**

Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy

McCarrell's Canyon currently supports riparian and coastal sage scrub habitat. However, a series of invasive non-native plant species, the Acacia trees *(Acacia greggi)*, wild fennel *(Foeniculum vulgare)*, and Tree tobacco *(Nicotiana glauca)* are threatening the ecological health of the native vegetation within the canyon as well as contributing to high volumes of debris and sediment discharge into the ocean. This project proposes to remove the non-native vegetation in the canyon and replace it with deeper-rooted riparian and coastal sage scrub plants throughout the canyon to reduce erosion and increase infiltration of runoff. The project would also include improvements to a key access trail that crosses the canyon to minimize trail erosion and decrease the amount of sediment entering the canyon and being carried to the ocean.

Site Description: The Santa Monica Bay watershed encompasses approximately 400 square miles subdivided into separate sub-watershed drainages. The Santa Monica Bay watershed is divided into two major topographic areas: the Los Angeles coastal plain and the Santa Monica Mountains. The Santa Monica Bay watershed is one of the nation's most highly urbanized regions. Bordered on the north by the Santa Monica Mountains divide, on the east by Griffith Park, on the south by Point Fermin, and on the west by the eastern portion of Ventura County, the watershed encompasses residential areas, commercial and industrial areas and undeveloped open space lands, primarily within the Santa Monica Mountains. There are 28 separate drainage basins within the Santa Monica Bay watershed.

All of the project sites are within at least one of the subwatersheds of the Santa Monica Bay Watershed. Most of the projects will take place on publicly held lands or lands owned by nonprofit organizations. The Stormwater BMP Program will take place on private lands and the property owners will enter appropriate agreements with the City and the Conservancy.
See Exhibit 1 for a regional map depicting the location of all of the projects.

Project History: In recognition of the need to protect Santa Monica Bay and its sub-watersheds, in May, 1988, the State of California and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) nominated and included Santa Monica Bay in the National Estuary Program (NEP). Established under the Water Quality Act of 1987 and managed by the US EPA, the NEP includes more than two dozen significant estuaries and coastal water bodies nationwide.

As an NEP, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project (SMBRP) is charged with assessing the Bay's pollution problems, and with producing the Bay Restoration Plan to serve as the blueprint for the Bay's long-term recovery. In 1995, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan was approved by the State of California and the US EPA. The Bay Plan includes 250 actions, including specific actions focused on habitat conservation, enhancement and restoration, pollution prevention and treatment control, and assessment, education and monitoring.

The Bay Plan lists several goals, including: (1) reducing pollutant loadings to and prevent degradation of the waters of Santa Monica Bay; (2) reducing human health risks associated with swimming in or harvesting seafood from the Bay; and (3) restoring, rehabilitating and protecting the marine ecosystem, living resources and biodiversity of the Bay and its watersheds. Specifically, the Bay Plan has identified the protection, restoration, and creation of wetlands within the Bay as a major goal of the project.

The Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Proposition 12) earmarked $25,000,000 to the Coastal Conservancy for restoration of Santa Monica Bay in accordance with the goals and priorities of the Bay Plan.

Proposition 12 requires the Bay Watershed Council, the stakeholder board of the Restoration Project, to determine project eligibility and grant priorities. Working with Conservancy staff, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project staff has solicited project proposals that would achieve the goals of the Bay Restoration Plan and address its water quality and natural resource protection objectives. All of the projects recommended for funding in this authorization were approved by the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission at its meeting on April 17, 2008.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Proposition 12: Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan	$2,840,275
US Army Corps of Engineers	$1,000,000
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy	$75,000
SMBRF (In-kind)	$75,000
Department of Parks and Recreation (In-kind)	$250,000
LA Conservation Corps (In-kind)	$60,000
Total Cost	**$4,300,275**

The source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation to the Conservancy from Proposition 12, the "Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000," for projects to implement the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270) provides for the Conservancy's participation in a program of coastal resource enhancement. Consistent with Section 31251, the proposed authorization would award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to enhance coastal resources that have become degraded due to invasive exotic plants and human-induced events impacting habitat and water quality. The proposed projects would contribute to the enhancement of the natural and scenic character of the region and the ability of the Santa Monica Bay watershed to support the federally listed California Red-legged Frog, southern steelhead trout and other wildlife species.

Public Resources Code Section 31253 provides that the Conservancy "may provide up to the total cost of any coastal resource enhancement project including the state or local share of federally supported projects."

Section 31261 allows for private development as proposed in the downspout retrofit program where such development is compatible with primary objectives of coastal resource protection and enhancement. This project is consistent with this section as the goal is to improve water quality in a coastal watershed.

Under Section 31251, the Conservancy may award grants for enhancement of coastal resources that, because of natural or human-induced events, or incompatible land uses, have suffered loss of natural and scenic values. Consistent with this section, the proposed Stone Creek Restoration project would lead to improvements in the quality and availability of degraded habitat in the upper Ballona Creek watershed of Santa Monica Bay and is therefore consistent with this section.

Consistent with Section 31252, the proposed projects have been identified in their respective Local Coastal Plans as requiring action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems, as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies below.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objective A**, the list of proposed projects includes three plans that will be developed to address the protection and enhancement of coastal watershed habitats:

Ballona Greenway Plan;
Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study; and
Green Solution Project.

In addition, three other proposed studies are designed to help guide future restoration efforts in the Santa Monica Bay watershed, including the California Red-legged Frog Survey Project.

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objective B**, the list of proposed projects includes four restoration projects that will serve to restore and enhance coastal habitats, including coastal wetlands,

coastal bluffs and stream corridors by improving water quality, controlling invasive species and restoring native riparian habitat in the Santa Monica Bay watershed:

Stone Canyon Creek Restoration Project;
Beach Bluffs Restoration Project;
Point Vicente Fishing Access Bluff Habitat Restoration Project; and
McCarrell's Canyon Habitat Restoration Project.

Consistent with **Goal 5 Objective D**, four of the proposed projects specifically target the control and eradication of invasive animal and plant species that threaten native coastal habitats by removing non-native invasive vegetation and planting native plants to restore the habitat:

Stone Canyon Creek Restoration Project;
Beach Bluffs Restoration Project;
Point Vicente Fishing Access Bluff Habitat Restoration Project; and
McCarrell's Canyon Habitat Restoration Project.

In addition, at least two of the above projects involve educating volunteers and public citizens about habitat restoration and how to prevent the spread of invasive species.

The following projects involve the development of plans that aim to preserve and restore Santa Monica Bay watershed, a significant coastal watershed, consistent with **Goal 6 Objective A**:

Ballona Greenway Plan;
Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study; and
Green Solution Project.

Consistent with **Goal 6 Objective C**, the Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study plans for the removal of Rindge Dam which will allow for fish passage for the federally endangered steelhead trout to inland habitat in Malibu Creek watershed.

The Green Solution Project is consistent with **Goal 6 Objective E** as it would prioritize candidate parcels in the watershed and develop concept designs for five high-ranking priority parcels for water quality project implementation aimed to improve water quality in the Santa Monica Bay watershed resulting in beneficial impacts to coastal resources downstream.

The Downspout Retrofit Program is consistent with **Goal 6 Objective F,** as it will directly address water quality improvement in a significant portion of the Santa Monica Bay watershed by implementing hundreds of retrofits that will each incrementally reduce stormwater runoff resulting in beneficial impacts to the coastal watershed and beaches.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on 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 broad level of support for habitat restoration, water quality improvement and environmental education in the Santa Monica Bay area is indicated by the cooperation of multiple agencies and organizations and participation of large numbers of people in the development and implementation of these projects. Support letters are provided in Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed projects are all located within the Santa Monica Bay watershed.
5. **Need:** The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan identifies significant natural coastal resources that require public action to conserve, enhance and restore natural resources of statewide interest. These projects will be funded with monies appropriated to the Conservancy specifically for implementing the Bay Plan.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Santa Monica Bay has been identified by both the State of California and the US EPA has a coastal water body of national significance. The Santa Monica Bay watershed contains much of the remaining wetlands within Los Angeles County, a priority of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** The Prop 12 funding for these projects is due to expire at the end of this fiscal year if the funding is not encumbered, thus, approving the grants at this time is necessary to allow the projects to occur with available funding.
8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The projects will provide multiple benefits by fulfilling various habitat restoration, water quality improvement, public access and education needs throughout the Santa Monica Bay region.
9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
11. **Readiness:** Each project grantee is prepared and ready to begin its project as soon as funding is approved.
12. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** The Conservancy has been involved in resource protection, enhancement and restoration projects within the Santa Monica Bay watershed for more than a decade, including projects focused on improving coastal water quality and coastal nearshore resources within the Bay. Implementation of these projects at this time will contribute to the fulfillment of long-standing Conservancy goals. The Conservancy has also been involved in enhancement and restoration planning for the Malibu Creek and Ballona Creek watersheds for the past several years.
14. **Cooperation:** The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Project is a cooperative venture involving a broad range of interested and affected stakeholders including private industry, citizens, environmental groups, and local, regional, state and federal agencies. In addition, many of the proposed projects rely on partnerships and close coordination with other agencies and organizations.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

Ballona Creek Watershed Studies

No Local Coastal Program (LCP) has ever been completed for the lower Ballona Creek watershed area and the upper portion of the project extends outside of the coastal zone. For the portion that lies within the coastal zone, the project will be analyzed for consistency with Coastal Act policies.

The proposed project is consistent with the policies contained in Sections 30230 and 30231 of the Coastal Act regarding protection and enhancement of coastal water quality and marine resources. Section 30230 states: "Marine resources shall be maintained, enhanced, and where feasible, restored… Uses of the marine environment shall be carried out in a manner that will sustain the biological productivity of coastal waters and that will maintain healthy populations of all species of marine organisms adequate for long-term commercial, recreational, scientific, and educational purposes." Section 30231 states "The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored. . ." The proposed Ballona Creek Watershed studies are consistent with these policies as they are designed to help guide restoration planning efforts to attain the greatest water quality and habitat enhancement benefits. Further, as stated in Section 30251, the studies will protect the scenic resources and open space of the watershed.

Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration and California Red-legged Frog Survey

The Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study and California Red-legged Frog Survey Project, are located in the Malibu/Santa Monica Mountains area of the coastal zone. The lower portion of the projects extend into the City of Malibu's certified LCP area and the larger areas of both projects are in an area that does not have a certified LCP. Thus, the project will be analyzed for consistency with Coastal Act policies and Malibu LCP policies.

The proposed projects would both be consistent with the policies contained in Sections 30230 and 30231 of the Coastal Act. Section 30230 states: "Marine resources shall be maintained, enhanced, and where feasible, restored… Uses of the marine environment shall be carried out in a manner that will sustain the biological productivity of coastal waters and that will maintain healthy populations of all species of marine organisms adequate for long-term commercial, recreational, scientific, and educational purposes." Section 30231 states "The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored…" Consistent with these policies, the former project would restore the resources of Malibu Creek, sustain and enhance its biological productivity, and allow for healthy populations of steelhead to re-enter and inhabit the inland areas of the creek. The latter project would address the health of the red-legged frog populations and their habitat helping to guide efforts toward enhancing and sustaining biological resources in those critical habitat areas included in the project. For these reasons, the projects are consistent with the policies of the Coastal Act.

Further, the projects are consistent with the Malibu Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (LUP). In Section 4.2 MARINE AND LAND RESOURCE PROTECTION, the LUP recognizes

the importance of both sensitive marine and land resources, including the terrestrial riparian, wetland and associated upland habitats. The LUP includes several policies requiring the conservation, restoration and enhancement of these important coastal resources. The proposed projects aim to enhance natural values within coastal streams and riparian areas.

Beach Bluffs Restoration

The Beach Bluffs Restoration project will occur in an area that does not have a certified LCP, thus it will be analyzed for consistency with Coastal Act policies. The proposed restoration project is consistent with Coastal Act policies regarding public access and recreation, marine resources, and visual resources. Specifically, the project is consistent with Section 30240(a), ensuring that environmentally sensitive habitat areas are protected against significant disruption of habitat values by removing non-native invasive plant species with hand tools and replanting the area with native bluff vegetation.

Green Solution Project

As the proposed project encompasses the entire Santa Monica Bay watershed, the project area spans several cities with certified LCPs including Malibu, El Segundo, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, Palos Verdes Estates, Rancho Palos Verdes as well as some areas without LCPs. The project is consistent with all of these LCP policies as well as policies and objectives of the Coastal Act. Specifically, the project is consistent with Section 30231 which states that "the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of ground water supplies and substantial interference with surface waterflow, encouraging waste water reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams." Consistent with this section of the Coastal Act, the proposed project will address non-point source pollution problems identified in several of the LCPs.

Ballona Stormwater BMP Implementation

This project addresses water quality improvement of urban run-off in the Ballona Watershed in Los Angeles County. This project is identified in the Ballona Creek Watershed Stormwater BMP and Implementation Strategy as a pilot project to improve water quality from urban roof runoff and provide alternatives for stormwater runoff with beneficial impacts consistent with Section 31251.2. (a) of the California Public Resources Code, and affects and improves water quality in areas partly outside and partly inside of the coastal zone of Santa Monica Bay.

Stone Canyon Creek

This project is located in the Ballona Creek Watershed, but it is not located in the Coastal Zone. The project is consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation as discussed above with respect to enhancing coastal resources.

Point Vicente Fishing Access Bluff Habitat Restoration Project and McCarrell's Canyon Habitat Restoration Project

The Point Vicente Fishing Access Bluff Habitat Restoration Project and McCarrell's Canyon

Habitat Restoration Project are located in the Rancho Palos Verdes LCP area of the coastal zone. Both projects are consistent with the Rancho Palos Verdes Coastal Plan's Urban Environment (UE) and Natural Environment (NE) Policies which promote public access to the coast and habitat enhancement and protection.

Specifically, the former project is consistent with the UE "Path and Trail Networks" policy, which states: "...Recreational and environmental...[resources] along the coastal area are of regional and state-wide significance" and "the various path and trail networks should be designed to reflect the local and broader demands, while maintaining the unique character of the coastal area." The latter project would reduce runoff, siltation and canyon-wall erosion within McCarrell's Canyon, consistent with NE Policy #7. Both projects address are consistent with NE Policy #9 as they will revegetate with native plant materials where clearing of non-native vegetation will occur and NE Policy #20 as they are restoration efforts designed to enhance the coastal environment.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed projects are either statutorily or categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Sections 21000 *et seq.*), as follows:

Feasibility and Planning Studies. Projects involving only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions which the agency, board, or commission has not approved, adopted, or funded are statutorily exempt under Title 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15262. Consistent with this section, staff has considered environmental factors of the proposed projects. The following projects are exempt from CEQA under this section because they will study the feasibility and conduct planning for restoring natural resources within the watershed:

Ballona Creek Watershed Studies;
Malibu Creek Environmental Restoration Study; and
Green Solution Project.

Information Collection. Projects involving basic data collection, research, experimental management, and resource evaluation activities which do not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource are categorically exempt under Title 14 CCR Section 15306. The following projects are exempt because they only involve basic data collection:

California Red-legged Frog Survey Project.

Repair, Maintenance or Minor Alteration of Existing Public or Private Structures and Facilities. The following project, involving the minor alteration of existing structures and facilities involving negligible or no expansion of an existing use, are exempt from CEQA under 14 CCR Section 15301:

Downspout Retrofit Program.

Small Habitat Restoration Projects. The following projects, involving the restoration of an area not to exceed five acres in size to assure the maintenance, restoration, enhancement, or

protection of habitat for fish, plants, or wildlife provided that there would be no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare or threatened species or their habitat; there are no hazardous materials at or around the project site that may be disturbed or removed; and the projects will not result in impacts that are significant when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects, are exempt from CEQA under 14 CCR Section 15333:

Stone Canyon Creek Restoration Project;
Beach Bluffs Restoration Project;
Point Vicente Fishing Access Bluff Habitat Restoration Project; and
McCarrell's Canyon Habitat Restoration Project.

Upon approval, staff will file Notices of Exemption for these projects.