

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
June 5, 2008

PEBBLE BEACH DEL NORTE COASTAL TRAIL

File No. 08-050-01
Project Manager: Deborah Hirst

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$641,000 to the County of Del Norte for the construction of approximately two miles of California Coastal Trail, including construction of waterfront bike lanes, safe road crossings, trail signage, and improved public parking along Pebble Beach Drive in Del Norte County.

LOCATION: Crescent City, Del Norte County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map: Del Norte County](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Pebble Beach Project Site Map](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Current Public Access along Pebble Beach Drive](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Conservancy Projects in Crescent City Area of Del Norte County](#)
- Exhibit 5: [Letters of Support](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31410):

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$641,000 (six hundred forty-one thousand dollars) to the County of Del Norte for the construction of approximately 1.86 miles of California Coastal Trail, including construction of waterfront bike lanes, safe road crossings, trail signage, and improved public parking along Pebble Beach Drive in Del Norte County, subject to the condition that prior to the disbursement of any funds the grantee shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer:

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1. A work program, schedule and budget for the project; the names all contractors to be employed on the project; and evidence of all permits and approvals necessary for implementation of the project; and
2. A plan for erecting and maintaining signs recognizing Conservancy funding and identifying the trail as part of the California Coastal Trail.”

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding implementation of a system of accessways along the coast.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The project will serve greater than local needs.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$641,000 to the County of Del Norte for the construction of approximately 1.86 miles of California Coastal Trail, including construction of waterfront bike lanes, road crossings, trail signage, and improved public parking along Pebble Beach Drive in Del Norte County.

The proposed project will complete public access improvements and address road improvements along the highly scenic, waterfront road, Pebble Beach Drive, just north of the urban limit of Crescent City. Pebble Beach Drive is a priority in both the Del Norte County and Crescent City 2007 Bicycle Facilities Plan Update and in the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan Update. It is a popular route for local residents and for tourists on foot, by bicycle and by car; and also is, unfortunately, the location of a series of accidents due to difficult visibility and speed of vehicular traffic.

The proposed project will improve safe access through construction of approximately two miles of bike lanes on County road right-of-way for Pebble Beach Drive. The new bike lanes will connect with an existing bike route signed within the city limits of Crescent City to the south. To the north, the bike lanes will follow along coastal bluffs and up the shoreline on Pebble Beach Drive to the intersection with Washington Boulevard (Exhibit 2). The proposed bike lanes will serve as a multi-use path along the residential area on the bluff and along the beach-level segment of Pebble Beach Drive.

The County secured Surface Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) funds for the Pebble Beach Road improvement and these funds will pay for 57% of the total project cost. The overall road and access improvement project will include road widening and repaving, bike lane striping, installation of guardrail along the bluff and installation of up

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to 22 bike-route and California Coastal Trail signs. Slight realignment of the road will be made in a few locations to avoid the need to acquire additional road right of way. A four-foot wide bike way will be designated along the right of way for use by bicyclist and pedestrians (Class II). The bike way will be shared with motorists and pedestrians where there is insufficient bluff width for a full four foot bike lane to be striped (Class III). One intersection will be redesigned to better control of traffic and three speed humps will be added to slow traffic and mark safe pedestrian crossing locations. In addition, nine existing pull-out parking lots will be resurfaced to improve access to alcove beaches west of Pebble Beach Drive. The improvements will take approximately five months to complete and are anticipated to begin in late 2008 with the proposed Conservancy support.

Site Description:

The proposed project area consists of approximately two miles of coastal waterfront along Pebble Beach Drive north of Crescent City. This section of the coast has numerous pocket beaches with sandy alcoves, rocky outcroppings and sea stacks just offshore. Attractions on the coast include seasonal whale and bird migration, marine life, surfers, tide pools, light houses at Battery Point and on Point St. George Reef six miles offshore. Existing public access along Pebble Beach Drive includes two stairways to the coast, intermittent footpaths and nine pull-out parking areas (Exhibit 3). Currently, pedestrians thread on and off the roadway, between sections of rusted guardrail and along informal paths above the dramatic bluffs. Single family homes face the ocean on the east side of the road facing the water. Traffic moves rapidly in spite of the limited visibility and heavy use by those traveling by foot and bicycle. Improving the safety of public access along this two mile stretch of road is a key component of the proposed project. By connecting and promoting the natural resources along the Del Norte coast with the California Coastal Trail, a greater proportion of visitors will take advantage of the amazing resources that are within walking and biking distance from downtown Crescent City.

The surrounding area has a diversity of natural and cultural resources including the National Historic District at Point Saint George, the nearshore rock islands in the California Coastal National Monument and the international bird migration of the Pacific Flyway. An estimated 2.4 million people visit Del Norte County each year for the coast, the Redwood National and State parks, the Smith River National Recreation area and other regional attractions.

Project History:

The proposed project is one component of a larger Conservancy effort to coordinate implementation of the California Coastal Trail with Crescent City, Del Norte County and the Crescent City Harbor District. The Conservancy supported the development of the Crescent City Harbor Master Plan (2006) and the Point Saint George Management Plan (2004) each of which include future segments of the California Coastal Trail. The County has completed initial access improvements at Point Saint George and is working

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with state and national parks and local tribes to develop the route for the Coastal Trail in this area. The City of Crescent City is currently constructing a pedestrian bridge and the Harbor Trail North segment of the California Coastal Trail with Conservancy support.

Del Norte County is actively promoting the economic benefit of parks and trails highlighting the County’s dramatic coast. The County has successfully completed access improvements at Point Saint George and participated in the conservation acquisition of the property with funding from the Conservancy.

Pebble Beach Drive is listed as a high priority bicycle transportation improvement project in the Del Norte County and Crescent City 2007 Bicycle Facilities Plan Update and a high priority road rehabilitation project in the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan Update. The County prepared designs for improvements to Pebble Beach Drive in 2003, the *Pebble Beach Feasibility Study*, and held an initial public meeting on the conceptual plans for improving access on Pebble Beach Drive in 2004. The proposed project will construct the revised design which incorporates public input of the project.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$ 641,000
Surface Transportation Improvement Program	<u>\$ 841,000</u>
 Total Project Cost	 \$1,482,000

Conservancy funds for the proposed project are expected to be derived from the Conservancy’s FY05/06 and FY06/07 allocations of Proposition 12 bond funds (“Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000”) for development projects north of the Gualala River. Proposition 12 provides grants to government entities and nonprofit organizations for the purposes of Division 21, and for the development of coastal resources, beaches, waterfronts, and public accessways. (Pub. Res. Code § 5096.352(c)). Consistent with the purposes of these funds, the County would use the Conservancy grant for coastal access improvements in Del Norte County under Chapter 9 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 (Section 31400 *et seq.*) of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline.

Section 31400.1 authorizes the Conservancy to award a grant to a local public agency to develop and manage lands for public access to and along the coast, so long as the accessway will serve more than local public needs. The proposed project will meet this goal by connecting coastal access to and along the coast in an area recognized as a

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destination of regional, national and international interest to millions of people annually in Del Norte County.

Section 31400.2 authorizes the Conservancy to provide up to the total cost of acquisition of interest in lands and the initial development of public accessways by any public agency or nonprofit organization, as provided in Section 31400.1. The proposed project is consistent with this section as project funding will derive from the Conservancy and another public agency, the County of Del Norte, for the development of an accessway in the Crescent City area. Staff has evaluated the project in light of the total amount of funding available for coastal accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the grantee, the urgency of the project and other factors herein described in recommending this grant.

Section 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to award a grant to a local public agency to aid in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division. The proposed project will meet this goal by implementing a public coastal accessway which will become a 1.86-mile section of the California Coastal Trail.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will refine the alignment of a two-mile segment of the California Coastal Trail in Del Norte County.

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will sign two miles of California Coastal Trail from the urban border of Crescent City, along Pebble Beach and up to the bike lane connection to Point Saint George.

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will construct improvements for two miles of California Coastal Trail within public road right of way in Del Norte County.

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective E** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will enhance coastal recreational opportunities for residents and visitors by upgrading and improving safe crossings, signage, guardrails, parking areas and access along Pebble Beach Drive and connecting visitor destinations from Crescent City to Point Saint George via bike lanes.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted September 20, 2007, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

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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 project is supported by Congressman Mike Thompson, Assemblywoman Patty Berg and the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors. Letters of support are included in Exhibit 5.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located north of the City of Crescent City in the coastal zone of Del Norte County.
5. **Need:** The Conservancy's funding is necessary to supplement Surface Transportation Improvement Program financing in order to complete the project.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project will serve greater-than-local interest as it connects a number of highly scenic areas via the California Coastal Trail from Crescent City to Point Saint George and natural resources in the adjacent Department of Fish and Game Lake Earl Wildlife Area and Tolowa Dunes State Park. The project will improve coastal access opportunities for visitors from Oregon, northern California and, increasingly, national and international locations.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** There is a pressing need to improve the safety of Pebble Beach Drive and provide improved access for bicyclists and pedestrians in this high traffic area.
8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The project includes improvements to public parking at existing coastal access points as well as construction of road improvements to allow bi-directional bike lanes along the California Coastal Trail connecting Del Norte County visitor destinations and urban Crescent City.
9. **Leverage:** The Conservancy’s contribution to this project is leveraged by \$841,000 in Surface Transportation Improvement Program funds secured by the County of Del Norte. Conservancy funds make up less than 45% of the total project cost. See “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Readiness:** The County is prepared to move forward with the construction of the proposed project.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
12. **Cooperation:** The proposed project is one component of an effort to link public

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access improvements and coastal tourism destinations in Del Norte County working with the City of Crescent City, the Crescent City Harbor District, local tribes and nonprofit organizations.

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

The Conservancy-adopted "Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development" is relevant to the proposed project. The proposed project is consistent with several of the applicable standards, including Standard No. 1, No. 5, No. 8, No. 9 and No. 10 as discussed below.

Consistent with Standard No. 1, the project has been designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms, prevent unwarranted hazards to the land and public safety, and protect environmentally sensitive habitats.

Consistent with Standard No. 5, the project has been to avoid and minimize public access impacts by constructing improvements in the location of existing facilities.

Consistent with Standard No. 8, the proposed improvements will enhance parking along the coast and adjacent to existing stairways for vertical access to Pebble Beach.

Consistent with Standard No. 9, the proposed improvements will enhance turnouts where there are scenic overlooks along the coast and beach at Pebble Beach Drive.

Consistent with Standard No. 10, the proposed project will construct Class II and Class III bike way along the right-of-way on Pebble Beach Drive, including striping and signs.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed project is located within the coastal zone and is within the jurisdiction of Del Norte County's Local Coastal Program. The Public Access Component of the LCP, Section III.C.1 states: "[t]he County shall work actively towards attainment of maximum coastal access for the public, where it is consistent with public safety, property owner rights and the protection of fragile coastal resources." The proposed project implements improvements designed in the Pebble Beach Feasibility Study consistent with this policy.

Section III.C.4 states: "The design and construction by any public entity of a shoreline access facility (e.g., parking, trails, stairways, etc.) shall consider safety from potential vandalism and the protection of fragile resources." The proposed project will improve existing parking areas and extend safe access in a highly visited residential area along the coast at Pebble Beach Drive.

Section III.C.6 states: "Shoreline access should be clearly signed on adjacent major highways and streets. A uniform shoreline access signing system should be developed". The proposed project will sign the California Coastal Trail and bike lanes along Pebble

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Beach Drive consistent with this policy.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed parking lot paving improvements, road improvements and sign installation are categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15301 which concerns minor alterations to existing facilities involving negligible expansion of use. Examples given by the guidelines include the repair of existing streets, bicycle and pedestrian trails as well as road grading for the purposes of public safety.

The proposed road improvement for Pebble Beach Drive is also categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15302, which exempts the replacement or reconstruction of existing facilities where the new facilities will be located on the same site as that replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the facilities replaced.

The proposed construction of bike lanes is categorically exempt pursuant to Section 15304 which exempts minor alterations to land which do not remove mature, scenic trees, including the creation of bike lanes on existing rights-of-way. (14 Cal. Code Regs. § 15304(h)).

Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon Conservancy approval of the project.