

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 25, 2008

THE GREAT CALIFORNIA DELTA TRAIL: PLANNING PROCESS
Development of the Trail Planning Process for Contra Costa and Solano Counties

File No. 08-075-01
Project Manager: Michelle Jespersen

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 to the Delta Protection Commission to conduct planning for development of the Great California Delta Trail Plan in Contra Costa and Solano Counties.

LOCATION: Shoreline areas of Contra Costa and Solano Counties, including the cities and communities of Antioch, Brentwood, Isleton, Oakley, Pittsburg, and Rio Vista (Exhibit 1).

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Chapter 12 \(Section 5852 et seq.\) to Division 5 of the Public Resources Code](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [Delta delineation map for Contra Costa and Solano Counties](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)
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RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31165 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$100,000 to the Delta Protection Commission to conduct planning for development of the Great California Delta Trail Plan in Contra Costa and Solano Counties. This authorization is subject to the condition that no Conservancy funds shall be disbursed to the Delta Protection Commission until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing a work plan, including a budget and schedule, and the names and qualifications of any contractors proposed to be used to carry out 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 current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
 2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code regarding the Conservancy's public access goals for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program."
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

The proposed grant of \$100,000 will enable the Delta Protection Commission ("DPC") to conduct planning for development of the Great California Delta Trail ("Delta Trail") Plan in Contra Costa and Solano counties (the "project"). Conservancy funds will allow the DPC to begin "Phase One" of a multi-phased planning process that will result in a Delta Trail Plan and programmatic environmental review document that can be adopted and implemented by local jurisdictions of the Delta region. Conservancy funds will only be used to support planning for future development of portions of the Delta Trail Plan in and to shoreline areas of Contra Costa and Solano counties.

In 2006, the legislature added Chapter 12 (Section 5852 et seq.) to Division 5 of the Public Resources Code ("PRC"), which requires the DPC to develop and adopt a plan for a continuous recreation corridor, including bicycle and hiking trails, around the Delta, including a finance and maintenance plan for the trail. A copy of the legislation is included as Exhibit 2. The Delta Trail Plan must include links to the San Francisco Bay Trail and planned Sacramento River trails; local transportation planning agencies and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission are authorized to allocate funds for pedestrian and bicycle trails to the DPC for those activities. The completed Delta Trail Plan will include a specific route for a bicycling and hiking trail, connections to existing and proposed park and recreational facilities on land and water, interpretative signage, and links to existing and proposed public transportation hubs.

Pursuant to PRC Section 5855, the DPC must also establish a "Technical Advisory Committee" to review trail planning, implementation and funding proposals, and a "Stakeholder Advisory Committee" to represent concerns with the environmental and ecological aspects of the Delta, agriculture, private land owners, and other business interests of the Delta's land and water, as well as biking, walking, boating, horseback riding, and other recreational activities.

The proposed authorization will enable DPC to begin the Delta Plan development process by establishing baseline conditions for the Delta region. To do this, the DPC will gather necessary background data on land use and environmental conditions in Contra Costa and Solano counties and assess existing and proposed plans for trails, connectors, public transportation and other amenities that could become part of the envisioned Delta Trail Plan.

More specifically, during Phase One, DPC will:

- (1) Gather information on existing conditions and land use plans, including parks, trails, recreation amenities, open space and public lands; develop protocols for a GIS database that would be used for future mapping efforts; and establish "best practices" in planning major trails by reviewing existing trail plans like the California Coastal Trail and San Francisco Bay Trail.
- (2) Review and analyze technical documents related to large-scale, multi-stakeholder trail planning processes and trail development, and from this, outline tasks necessary to

develop the Delta Trail Plan. Analyze issues that may arise that could impede implementation of the plan such as trail engineering with regard to the safety of levees, liability, rights-of-way, and impacts to agricultural lands.

- (3) Interview stakeholders from local government agencies and interest organizations to collect information on existing and planned activities relevant to the Delta Trail, collect feedback on opportunities and concerns with the Delta Trail concept, and establish connections with organizations and people that will be integral to the planning process, including private land owners. Identify partners and related organizations that could assist with garnering the funds needed to develop and implement the Delta Trail Plan and conduct outreach to those groups.

DPC will produce a final report that will serve as the “blue print” for creating the Delta Trail Plan in Contra Costa and Solano counties. The final report will detail the steps necessary to complete the Delta Trail Plan, suggest general locations for segments of the Delta Trail in Contra Costa and Solano counties and connections to the San Francisco Bay Trail, and identify key policy issues to be addressed in the plan, and potential opportunities and constraints to implementation of the Delta Trail Plan. The report will also include an analysis of necessary public outreach including how best to gather input from engaged citizens and integrate this information into a comprehensive vision for the Delta Trail in these counties. A stakeholder map will be developed for the two counties and will recommend roles and representatives for the stakeholder and technical subcommittees for each of the two counties. DPC has solicited bids and selected a consultant to develop this project to create a Delta Trail Plan that meets the requirements of Chapter 12, Division 5 of the PRC.

Established in 1992 by the California State Legislature, the DPC works collaboratively with local and regional governments, state and federal agencies, and Delta region stakeholders to protect, preserve, and enhance the agricultural, habitat, and recreational resources in the 1,150-square mile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The Commission itself is made up of stakeholders and representatives from state and local government entities from throughout the Delta region. As the entity responsible for carrying out the planning of the Delta Trail Plan by law, the DPC is the most qualified and appropriate entity to carry out this project.

Site Description: The proposed project will begin planning for the Delta Trail along the shoreline regions of Contra Costa and Solano counties. This area is depicted on the maps of Contra Costa and Solano County contained in Exhibit 3.

More generally, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta encompasses a diverse geographic area that includes six counties and 12 cities with borders of Sacramento to the north, Tracy to the south, Stockton to the west and Pittsburg to the east. The envisioned Delta Trail will connect the San Francisco Bay region to Sacramento and Yolo counties and will traverse the unique ecology of the Delta. The Delta is composed primarily of islands created largely by humans as a result of efforts to dike and drain the prehistoric marshes of the region. Agricultural lands have replaced the most of the wetland habitats, once surrounded by riparian woodlands. Remnants of natural habitat are located largely along sloughs and rivers and on small, channelized islands; pockets of wooded or wetland habitats still exist on some islands. Despite the loss of natural habitat, the Delta still supports a diverse array of wildlife, water fowl, and biological resources.

Project History: When the Delta Trail legislation was passed, the legislature did not allocate funding for development of the Delta Trail Plan but it was anticipated that DPC would need to

seek grant funding from state and local sources with similar goals and objectives. When built, the portions of the Delta Trail in the Bay Area counties of Contra Costa and Solano will provide enhanced opportunities for recreation and regional trail connectivity; consequently, the Bay Area Conservancy Program believes providing the start-up funding for the trail planning processes is a strategic and worthwhile investment. In addition, the Delta Trail would begin where the Bay Trail ends, thus enhancing prior Conservancy investments in the Bay Trail.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$100,000
Contra Costa County (expected)	\$300,000
National Park Service (in-kind staff time)	\$12,200
Delta Protection Commission (in-kind staff time)	<u>\$10,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$422,200

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the fiscal year 2007-2008 appropriation to the Conservancy from the “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006” (Proposition 84). These funds may be used, consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, to promote access to and enjoyment of coastal resources, including the San Francisco Bay. The proposed project will provide planning needed to develop the Delta Trail in Contra Costa and Solano counties and connect the future Delta Trail with Bay Area regional trails, consistent with the purposes of these funds.

Note: Some of funds provided by Contra Costa County for this project may be used for future phases of developing the Delta Trail Plan as not all funds may be needed to complete Phase One.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area to help achieve stated goals of Section 31162 described in more detail below.

Pursuant to section 31162(a) of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help improve public access. The proposed project will facilitate development of the Delta Trail Plan including linkages to regional bay, coast, water, and ridge trail systems and local trails connecting to population centers and public facilities. The proposed project will help ensure that the Delta Trail Plan is developed consistent with locally and regionally adopted master plans and general plans. As required by Section 31162(a), the project will not have a significant adverse impact on environmentally sensitive areas.

Consistent with section 31162(d), the proposed project will enhance access for urban populations to open space and natural areas for recreational and educational purposes. It is envisioned that the Delta Trail Plan will provide for multi-use recreational opportunities and interpretative signage along the trail route throughout the open space and natural areas of the Delta region.

Finally, the project also satisfies criteria for determining project priorities under 31163(c) because the project: (1) will ensure that the Delta Trail Plan will be consistent with the adopted local and regional plans; (2) includes multi-jurisdictional participation from other state, county, and local agencies and special districts and serves a regional constituency that will enjoy public access through the implementation of the Delta Trail Plan; (3) can be implemented immediately; and (4) includes matching funds from Contra Costa County and in-kind support from the National Park Service and DPC.

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

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective H** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will facilitate development of a plan for regional significant public access trails and community connectors, including links between the Bay Trail and links between regional trails and urban communities.

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 project is supported by Senators Tom Torlakson and Patricia Wiggins, Assembly members Mark DeSaulnier and Lois Wolk, Congressional representatives Ellen Tauscher and George Miller, Contra Costa County Board of Supervisor Mary Piepho, the City of Benicia, the San Francisco Bay Trail Project, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, the Greater Vallejo Recreation District, and members of the Antioch Sportsman Yacht Club (see Exhibit 4).
4. **Location:** The project includes trail planning in Contra Costa County and Solano County, two of the nine Bay Area Counties.
5. **Need:** Conservancy funds are needed to leverage local funds as the expected grant from Contra Costa County requires a ten percent match from other sources.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Delta Trail is envisioned to begin where the Bay Trail ends and traverse through the Delta in a network of land and water-based trails with interpretive signage, providing many people with the opportunity to enjoy the scenic, natural, agricultural, and historic/cultural resources of the region. The planning process will include public-interest stakeholders, business representatives, private landowners, and government entities from a multitude of sectors and across state, regional and local levels.

Additional Criteria

7. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The Delta Trail planning process will ensure that connections are made between the future Delta Trail and the existing San Francisco Bay Trail, possibly the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail, and to trail connections between different population centers and public facilities.
8. **Leverage:** Conservancy funds are needed to leverage local funds and in-kind support. See the “Project Financing” section above.
9. **Conflict Resolution:** The proposed project will engage multiple interested groups in a process to identify conflicting interests at the outset in order to avoid conflicts during development and implementation of the Delta Trail Plan.
10. **Readiness:** The DPC has selected a consultant that is prepared to start work as soon as funding is available for this project.
11. **Cooperation:** The proposed project relies almost entirely on the cooperation of state, local and regional government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community groups, business interests and private landowners to participate in this planning phase to create the Delta Trail Plan. These entities will be called upon for information, asked to participate in committees and working groups, and looked to for their expertise in creating the Delta Trail Plan.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15262, in that it involves only planning studies, evaluation and permitting for possible future actions, which the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded. It is categorically exempt under Section 15306, in that it consists of data collection, research and resource evaluation, which will not result in serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. As required by Section 15306, the Delta Trail Plan will take into account environmental factors and, in particular, concerns with the environmental and ecological aspects of the Delta.

Upon Conservancy approval of the proposed project, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.