

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

November 6, 2008

COASTAL TRAIL PROJECT ASSISTANCE

File No. 08-115-01

Project Manager: Timothy Duff

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse an amount not to exceed \$600,000 to Coastwalk, Inc. to sign and map existing and new segments of the California Coastal Trail, and to provide information about the trail to the public.

LOCATION: Statewide Coastal Zone

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Coastal Trail Emblem](#)

Exhibit 2: [Signing Event Photos and Articles](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

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 \$600,000 (six hundred thousand dollars) to the nonprofit organization Coastwalk, Inc. to sign and map existing and new segments of the California Coastal Trail, and to provide information about the trail to the public. This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to the disbursement of any funds, Coastwalk shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, budget, schedule, and the names of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the 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 authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines last updated by the Conservancy on September 20, 2007.

3. Coastwalk is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize funding to the nonprofit organization Coastwalk, Inc. (“Coastwalk”) to sign and map and promote public awareness and use of the California Coastal Trail (“CCT”). A majority of the requested grant funds would be used over the next two years to sign 300 miles of new and existing trail segments with the CCT emblem (Exhibit 1). Coastwalk will also map new and existing segments of the trail and put the maps on their website along with detailed trail information. Signing and mapping existing and new segments of the CCT are recommended actions in the Conservancy’s 2007 Five-Year Strategic Plan and the *Completing the California Coastal Trail* report (“*Coastal Trail Report*”) prepared by the Conservancy with Coastwalk support in 2003.

The proposed mapping of existing and new trail segments is necessary for planning and construction of future trail segments. The maps will enable agency planners, land managers, and the public to identify and eventually complete critical trail gaps. Signing each segment of the CCT requires the advance approval of the agency or nonprofit entity that owns and operates that trail segment as well as approval by Coastal Commission staff. Signing the trail will, therefore, result in formal designation of these trail alignments as official segments of the CCT. As stated in the *Coastal Trail Report*, agency agreement on the location of the existing CCT is critical to future planning, permitting and construction of new trail segments.

Consistent with a *Coastal Trail Report* recommendation to use the internet to distribute information to potential trail users, in addition to facilitating the planning of future trail segments, the maps will also be available on the internet and will have the added benefit of promoting public use of the CCT. With previous Conservancy grants, Coastwalk staff and volunteers developed and maintain a dynamic and robust website (coastaltrail.info) that provides the public with detailed information on the latest efforts to complete the CCT. The website includes over 450 individual maps, developed using a geographic information system (GIS), that enables visitors to the site to discover where the trail is located in any community along the coast. The availability of these detailed maps on the website also provides Conservancy and other agency staff with easily accessible information needed for the planning and development of new trail segments.

To generate greater interest in and support for completing the CCT by public agencies, elected officials and the public, and to increase the Conservancy’s profile as the lead agency for developing the CCT, Coastwalk will provide private funds to help organize media events over the next two years to coincide with the completion and signing of Conservancy-funded CCT projects. These ceremonial events will be modeled after previous events put on by Coastwalk throughout the state this past summer and fall, including events held in Santa Cruz, San Diego, Morro Bay and San Clemente (Exhibit 2).

Established in 1983, Coastwalk has been the principal statewide nonprofit group supporting development of the CCT. With local chapters in most coastal counties, Coastwalk is well positioned to generate greater community awareness and public support for future use and development of the trail. All of the work proposed above will be central to meeting the public goal of completing the CCT and would have to be undertaken by consultants and public employees at considerably greater expense if Coastwalk staff and volunteers were not willing to provide this service. Over the past several years

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Coastwalk has demonstrated the ability to effectively promote the CCT and collaborate with the Conservancy and numerous other agencies and nonprofit groups that together share a commitment to completing the trail.

Site Description: Signing and promoting the CCT would occur at sites located throughout the statewide coastal zone.

Project History: Creation of a continuous California Coastal Trail has been a major goal from the outset of the state's Coastal Management Program. Proposition 20 of 1972, the voter initiative that established the original Coastal Zone Conservation Commission, provided that "a hiking, bicycle and equestrian trails system shall be established along or near the coast". In 2001, Assembly Concurrent Resolution 20 declared the CCT an official state trail and urged the Coastal Conservancy to work cooperatively with other agencies to complete it. Senate Bill 908 (Chapter 446, Statutes of 2001) amended the Public Resources Code to add Sections 31408- 31409 directing the Conservancy to coordinate the planning and development of the CCT in consultation with the Coastal Commission and State Parks.

In response to SB 908, staff members of the Conservancy, Coastal Commission and State Parks conducted a series of meetings with representatives of Coastwalk and produced the *Coastal Trail Report* in January 2003. This report describes the extent of the need for additional public actions to realize the goal of creating a continuous trail system that would provide public access to and along the state's shoreline.

Following approval of the CCT emblem by the Conservancy and Coastal Commission in 2006, Coastwalk began a signing program in cooperation with the Conservancy, Coastal Commission, State Parks, local agencies and land trusts that own and operate coastal park land. To date, nearly 100 miles of the CCT have been signed with over 500 emblems. In addition, in 2007 and 2008 several ceremonial emblem signing events were organized by Coastwalk to highlight for the public, elected officials and the media the progress that has been made to construct and sign segments of the CCT (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy:	\$600,000
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Coastwalk, Inc.:	<u>\$400,000</u>
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Total Project Cost:	\$1,000,000
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The expected source of funds for this project is the FY 2007/2008 appropriation to the Conservancy from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund (Proposition 12) designated for completion of the Coastal Trail (Public Resources Code § 5096.352(c)(4)).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed funding authorization is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. Public Resources Code Section 31408 specifically directs the Conservancy to coordinate the development of the Coastal Trail. Section 31400 states that “. . . it is the intent of the Legislature that the State Coastal Conservancy have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. . . .” Public Resources Code Section 31400.1 provides that the Conservancy may award grants to nonprofit organizations to develop, operate or manage lands for public access to and along the coast, and 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to provide assistance to nonprofit organizations “in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division.” The activities that would be supported through the recommended grant to Coastwalk are all directly related to the development and operation of the California Coastal Trail, a principal part of the system of public shoreline access.

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

The 2007 Strategic Plan describes development of the California Coastal Trail as the Conservancy's “core public access strategy.”

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective A**, signing additional segments of the CCT will serve to support efforts to obtain consensus and refine the alignment of the Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 1 Objective B**, the project will result in the posting of CCT signs on 300 miles of existing trails within public and private ownerships.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, and updated September 20, 2007, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the “Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation” section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Support of the public:** Strong public support has been repeatedly expressed for completion of the California Coastal Trail. See Project Letters in Exhibit 3.
4. **Location:** The project is located within the coastal zone statewide.
5. **Need:** The Conservancy is the only state agency that currently has funding appropriated for development of the Coastal Trail, and additional funding is needed to continue Coastwalk's signing and mapping program..

6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Signing the CCT statewide, completing maps to facilitate development of future trail alignments and providing the public with internet access to the maps will promote use of the trail by the hundreds of thousands of visitors from throughout the country and world who visit our coast each year.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** Conservancy funds are urgently needed to continue Coastwalk's CCT signing and mapping as current grant funds are depleted.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** Development of a continuous shoreline access trail system has been a principal goal of the Conservancy since the inception of the agency. The proposed signing and mapping activities will serve to further this goal.
15. **Cooperation:** Signing and mapping the CCT and promoting completion of the trail requires the cooperation of numerous federal, state and local agencies, nonprofit groups and community leaders and volunteers.

CONSISTENCY WITH COASTAL ACT POLICIES:

Policies encouraging the development of public access facilities, including the Coastal Trail, are among the most prominent features of the state's Coastal Management Program. The California Coastal Act indicates in Public Resources Code 30001.5(c) that the "basic goals of the state for the coastal zone" include the need to "maximize public access to and along the coast ..." Public Resources Code Section 30210 requires that "... maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people ..." Public Resources Code Section 30530 expresses the intent of the Legislature that a program to maximize public access to and along the coastline be prepared and implemented "consistent with the provisions of Chapter 9 of Division 21" including the mandates for Conservancy action to create the Coastal Trail.

Similarly, the Coastal Act includes several references to the need to increase public knowledge of access opportunities and to involve community organizations in such efforts. Public Resources Code Section 30214(c) directs the Coastal Commission and other public agencies to "... encourage the utilization of innovative access management techniques including, but not limited to, agreements with private organizations which would minimize management costs and encourage the use of volunteer programs." Public Resources Code Section 30012 includes the Legislative finding that "an educated and informed citizenry ... is necessary to protect

California's finite natural resources [and] ... through education, individuals can be made aware of and encouraged to accept their share of responsibility for protecting and improving the natural environment." These purposes would be promoted through continuation of the Coastwalk signing and mapping program that would be supported by the recommended grant.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Upon independent evaluation, Conservancy staff finds that the proposed project is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15303, which exempts "...construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities, or structures...". The proposed action involves only the posting of trail signs on existing or new posts or fencing. Section 15303(e) specifically provides an exemption for accessory structures such as fences. The portion of this project involving mapping is also categorically exempt from CEQA under section 15306 which exempts basic data collection and resource evaluation activities for information gathering purposes and to be disseminated to the public."

Upon approval staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.