

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 4, 2008

STATE OF THE ESTUARY CONFERENCE

File No. 08-132-01
Project Manager: Amy Hutzal

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 to the Association of Bay Area Governments for the purpose of organizing and presenting the State of the Estuary Conference in the fall of 2009.

LOCATION: The conference will be held in Oakland, California, and is focused on the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

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

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$100,000 (one hundred thousand dollars) to the Association of Bay Area Governments for the purpose of organizing and presenting the State of the Estuary Conference in the fall of 2009. No Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing a work plan, including a budget and schedule, the names and qualifications of any contractors proposed to be used to carry out this project, and a plan for acknowledging the Conservancy’s contribution.”

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 Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the resource and recreational goals in the San Francisco Bay Area.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Conservancy staff recommends authorization of a grant of \$100,000 to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) for the purpose of organizing and presenting the San Francisco Estuary Project's State of the Estuary Conference (Conference) in the fall of 2009. ABAG administers the San Francisco Estuary Project, a federal-state-local program, one of 28 National Estuary Programs throughout the United States that were established under the Clean Water Act. For more than 20 years, the San Francisco Estuary Project has worked to protect and restore the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. Together with many other nongovernmental organizations and public agencies, the San Francisco Estuary Project developed, to protect and restore the Estuary, a plan of action called the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which was last updated in 2007.

The three-day Conference, which has been held every two years since 1993, provides the opportunity for scientists, managers, interest groups and the public to link the CCMP implementation to other ecosystem management programs and activities, address challenges, provide education, and solicit feedback on Bay-Delta Estuary restoration and protection. The Conference also provides a forum to hear about new research and monitoring data, political and scientific impacts on environmental policy, and priority ecosystem management issues, with 50-75 speakers presenting. The three-day conference includes both plenary sessions and concurrent sessions. The conference also includes a poster session, with over 200 posters on display at the 2007 conference providing an opportunity for many students, scientists, and resource managers to showcase projects and results. The 2010 State of the Estuary Report will summarize the findings presented at the 2009 State of the Estuary Conference and will be broadly distributed to local, state and federal decision makers. Media outreach and awards for innovative restoration and education projects are also included in the Conference.

Conservancy staff has attended and presented at past State of the Estuary Conferences, as well as participated in the organizing committee, and the Conservancy has provided small amounts of sponsorship funding in the past. This \$100,000 grant, if authorized, would represent our largest commitment to the Conference to date and would make the Conservancy the largest single contributor to the 2009 Conference. The Conservancy will play a significant role in the development of the 2009 Conference themes, proceedings, sessions, and overall organization. Conservancy staff will participate, as in previous years, on the Conference organizing committee, the Conservancy's support will be credited on all Conference materials, and Conservancy staff will present or moderate sessions on topics of concern to the Conservancy, such as wetlands restoration, watershed planning, invasive species, land conservation, and riparian restoration.

The other funding sources for the Conference will be co-sponsorships (ABAG anticipates generating over \$60,000 in additional sponsorships by public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and businesses) and registration fees, which are expected to generate over \$90,000. ABAG's goal is to keep the registration fees low and provide scholarships so that more participants can attend. The Conference budget includes: facility rental, the production, printing, and mailing of materials, including the conference program and the 2010 State of the Estuary Report, conference organization, travel for speakers, website production, and catering. Registration fees will be applied towards catering costs, which the Conservancy funds cannot cover.

Project History: The State of the Estuary Conference began in 1993; 2009 will be the 9th biennial Conference. The conferences began as a way to inform the public, scientists and decision-makers on the status of issues and actions described in the CCMP and has grown to become one of the key regional events for estuarine information. The 2007 Conference was attended by over 800 individuals, representing federal, state, regional, and local public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, businesses, corporations, and other interested parties. The Conservancy has assisted with the Conference in the past, participating in the organizing committee, providing sponsorship funding, attending the conference, moderating sessions, and presenting. The Conference provides a forum for discussion of management issues and policies affecting the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary, and scientific findings that help inform ecosystem management.

The Conservancy, with many other public agencies and nongovernmental organizations, is leading the effort to protect and restore tidal wetlands in the San Francisco Bay, managing the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project, Hamilton and Bel Marin Keys, and the Napa-Sonoma Marsh Restoration Project, and funding many other restoration planning and implementation projects, such as Sears Point, Bahia, and Bair Island. In addition, the Conservancy is leading the Invasive *Spartina* Project, and is funding several efforts to better understand processes in the Estuary, including the development of a three-dimensional hydrodynamic and sedimentation model. The Conference is an opportunity to present these projects, to learn about other projects, policies, and studies that can improve the Conservancy's efforts, and to identify opportunities for Conservancy involvement.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Coastal Conservancy	\$100,000
San Francisco Estuary Project	12,000
State Agencies	25,000
Federal Agencies	50,000
Local/Regional Agencies	22,000
Nongovernmental Organization	11,000
Consultants and Businesses	5,000
In-kind Support	25,000
Registration Fees	<u>90,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$340,000

The expected source of funds for this project is the FY 2007 appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Beach and Coastal Enhancement Account of the California Environmental License Plate Fund (Vehicle Code Section 5067) which may be used for purposes consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, to address resource and recreational goals in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Conference will be located in Oakland and focuses on the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. The Conservancy is authorized, under Sections 31160 and 31162 of the Public Resources Code, respectively, to address resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area, and to undertake projects and award grants to address resource and recreational goals in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

Under Section 31162(b), the Conservancy may act to protect, restore, and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional significance. The focus of the Conference is on sharing information in order to better protect, restore, and enhance the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary, an ecosystem of national significance.

Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conference provides the Conservancy an opportunity to cooperate with public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and other interested parties to identify and adopt resource goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Under Section 31163(b), the Conservancy is directed to participate in and support interagency actions and public/private partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area for the purpose of implementing Section 31163(a) and providing for broad-based local involvement in, and support for, the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Finally, the State of the Estuary Conference satisfies many of the criteria for determining project priority under 31163(c), as follows: (1) The conference is supported by adopted regional plans, namely the San Francisco Estuary Project's Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), which is a collaboratively produced, consensus-based agreement about what should be done to protect and restore the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. The CCMP was produced and adopted in 1993 and updated in 2007 CCMP, based on input from a broad community of stakeholders, including more than 100 representatives from federal and state agencies, local governments, environmental groups, business and industry, academia, and the public. (2) The project serves a regional constituency, in that the Conference focuses on the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary. (3) The Conference will be held soon, in September of 2009. (5) The Conservancy's funds are being matched by sponsors and registration fees.

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

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project assists the Conservancy in maintaining and updating lists of high priority areas for the Bay Area Program, including projects that restore natural habitats.

**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 Conference is supported by many agencies and organizations, including the San Francisco Estuary Institute, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, Save The Bay, and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board. Letters of Support are attached as Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** The Conference is located in Oakland and is focused on the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary.
5. **Need:** The Conference will not occur without Conservancy support, or will be significantly scaled back. The Conference has been significantly supported in the past by the California Bay-Delta Authority, which may be able to sponsor the 2009 conference, but not at the past funding level.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Conference focuses on management and science affecting the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary, an ecosystem of national significance and the largest estuary on the West Coast of the Americas.

Additional Criteria

7. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
8. **Readiness:** The San Francisco Estuary Project, under the auspices of ABAG, is prepared to organize and put on the Conference in 2009. The San Francisco Estuary Project has successfully conducted eight State of the Estuary projects to date.
9. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
10. **Cooperation:** The San Francisco Estuary Project, which organizes the Conference under the auspices of ABAG, is a federal-state-local program that works to protect and restore the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary's wildlife, wetlands, and other natural resources. Many entities take part in the San Francisco Estuary Project's activities, including organization of the State of the Estuary Conference.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Under 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15378, the State of the Estuary Conference is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), as the Conference does not have the potential for a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.