

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 21, 2010

PALOS VERDES PENINSULA COASTAL TRAIL

Project No. 10-026
Project Manager: David Hayes

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorize disbursement of up to five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes for construction of approximately nine miles of the California Coastal Trail.

LOCATION: City of Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles County. (See Exhibit 1.)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Palos Verdes Peninsula Coastal Trail Map](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends the Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes an amount not to exceed five hundred thousand dollars to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes (RPV) to construct approximately nine miles of the California Coastal Trail located within the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of funds for construction, RPV shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy:
 - a. Evidence that RPV has obtained all necessary permits and approvals.
 - b. A final work plan (including the names of any contractors to be used in the completion of the project), and a project schedule and project budget.
 - c. A copy of an agreement between the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy sufficient to allow the PVPLC to build, operate and maintain the project for a period of no less than twenty years and which preserves the public’s right to access the project area in perpetuity.

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2. City of Rancho Palos Verdes, in coordination with the Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy, shall install and maintain sign(s), including interpretive panels, on the project site, the design, number and placement of which has been approved by the Executive Officer, acknowledging Conservancy funding participation and identifying the project as a segment of the California Coastal Trail.”
3. To the extent appropriate, City of Rancho Palos Verdes shall ensure that the final designs of project are consistent with the Conservancy’s ‘Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development’ and with all applicable federal and state statutes, regulations and guidelines governing barrier-free access for persons with disabilities.

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

“Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the 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 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding coastal access.
 3. The proposed project will serve greater than local needs.
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy provide up to \$500,000 to the City of Rancho Palos Verdes for final design and construction of the California Coastal Trail (“CCT”) through the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and the Palos Verdes Peninsula Preserve.

The proposed project will complete approximately nine miles of coastal trail through the City of Rancho Palos Verdes, linking the cities of Palos Verdes Estates and Los Angeles. (See Exhibit 2.) Portions of the trail currently exist, but the conditions vary widely from unimproved dirt single-track paths to improved trails with decomposed granite. However, the majority of the proposed route is currently unimproved dirt paths created by hiker use over the years. Most of these existing trails are localized and unmarked with few connections between the various bluff trails. The few improved trail segments consist of paved sidewalks, or decomposed granite and are generally unmarked. The proposed project will improve existing trails and create new connections to form a network of trails that will be signed and identified as the Coastal Trail.

The project will correct the existing deficiencies by upgrading existing dirt tracks with decomposed granite and expanding the trail width where appropriate, installing consistent CCT signs, directional trail markers, coastal interpretive panels, rest benches, trail access cross-walks and post and cable fence for, pedestrian safety, habitat protection and finally, replanting with native plants.

The project will complete the coastal trail along the City of Rancho Palos Verdes’ entire coastline. The trail will serve both pedestrians and bicyclists, in addition to providing wheelchair access where feasible. Bicyclists will be accommodated on some portions of the Coastal Trail, while other portions will utilize bike lanes. The trail will vary between soft surface (trail) and

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hard (sidewalk) along the route. The proposed trail improvements will be constructed over a route identified in both the 2008 Rancho Palos Verdes Coast Vision Plan and the City's Conceptual Trails Plan. The plan envisioned a mixed, multi-use (hike, bike, equestrian) trail with parts retained in a rugged state, while other parts are improved or sidewalk trails. In all cases the trail will create a continuous coastal trail system as close to the ocean as possible. Additionally, the trail will create connections to beaches and the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve with sufficient transportation access to encourage public use by the greater Los Angeles in-land communities.

The trail alignment traverses property within the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve. Palos Verdes Peninsula Land Conservancy ("PVPLC") and the City of Rancho Palos Verdes have entered into an agreement whereby PVPLC will construct the trail within the Preserve and on City-owned property. The PVPLC currently serves as habitat land manager for the City of Rancho Palos Verdes and the Palos Verdes Nature Preserve.

Site Description:

The 13.6-square mile coastal City of Rancho Palos Verdes is located on the southwest side of the Palos Verdes Peninsula in Los Angeles County. It is bounded on the north by the communities of Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, and Palos Verdes Estates and to the east by the San Pedro neighborhood of the City of Los Angeles.

The Palos Verdes Peninsula constitutes the southern boundary of Santa Monica Bay, a crescent-shaped embayment of about 250 miles. Unlike the flat sandy beaches and densely populated communities in the North Bay, the Palos Verdes Peninsula sits on high bluffs overlooking picturesque cove and rocky beaches.

Project History:

In Rancho Palos Verdes, the CCT has been part of open space planning for many years. In 2008, a route was finalized in the Rancho Palos Verdes Visions Plan. The city has taken steps to increase open space and preserve coastal habitat. The Coastal Conservancy has worked with PVPLC and the City on a variety of projects in support of conservation efforts on the peninsula. The CCT on the Palos Verdes Peninsula location has long been a high priority for the Conservancy South Coast Region, and if authorized this will be the first step toward the goal of linking the 22-mile segment traversing the beaches of Santa Monica Bay around the point to Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$500,000.00
City of Rancho Palos Verdes	\$60,000.00
Total Project Costs	\$560,000.00

The expected source for the Conservancy funds for this project is the FY 08/09 appropriation to the Conservancy from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River

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and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, Public Resources Code section 75001 et seq. (“Proposition 84”). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of bond funds for projects that promote access to the coastal resources of the state and are consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code § 31000 *et seq.* (Public Resources Code § 75060(b)). Consistency of the project with the Conservancy’s statutory mission is discussed below in “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation.” The proposed project will improve existing trails and create new connections to form a network of trails along the City of Rancho Palos Verdes coast. The City of Rancho Palos Verdes has set aside \$60,000 to assist with the Coastal Trail improvements. PVPLC is under a long-term contract for management and maintenance of Ranch Palos Verdes Preserve, and has committed to continue its volunteer programs. PVPLC is well qualified and experienced with engaging volunteers, as demonstrated by logging in 12,197 volunteer hours in 2009.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Division 21, Chapter 9 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31409), regarding public access and enjoyment of coastal resources. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy shall have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline. In particular, this project is consistent with Public Resources Code Sections 31400.1 and 31400.3, which allows the Conservancy to provide grants to local governments to develop lands for public access purposes to and along the coast and provide assistance to public agencies in establishing a system of public coastal accessways. Through the proposed action, the Conservancy would continue its role supporting the development of an important public accessway, the CCT. The proposed Rancho Palos Verdes segment of the CCT will provide nine miles of continuous trail system along the Palos Verdes Peninsula and establish the Coastal Trail on the Palos Verdes peninsula.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE COASTAL CONSERVANCY’S STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACCESSWAY LOCATION AND DEVELOPMENT:

The Rancho Palos Verdes section of the CCT is consistent with the Conservancy’s Standards for Accessway Location and Development as follows:

Standard No. 1: Protect the Public and Coastal Resources

Consistent with this standard, the trail improvements would be located and designed in a manner that would: minimize alteration of natural landforms and be subordinate to the setting’s character; prevent unwarranted hazards to the land and public safety; ensure the privacy of adjoining residences; and protect environmentally sensitive habitats.

Standard No. 2: Correct Hazards

Consistent with this standard all trails and other accessways will be set back from eroding bluff edges and designed and located in a manner that will prevent further bluff erosion.

Standard No. 4: Privacy

Consistent with this standard, all trails would be located in a manner that protects the privacy of

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adjoining residences.

Standard No. 5: Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Consistent with this standard, all trails would be located and designed to avoid impacts to environmentally sensitive areas.

Standard No. 8: Trails

Consistent with this standard, the Coastal Trail will provide a continuous trail along the coastal bluff, along with vertical trails that connect streets and parkland with the shore and scenic overlooks.

Standard No. 10: Coastal Bikeways

Consistent with this standard, the Coastal Trail will provide both Class I and III bike paths and routes along the coast.

Standard No. 13: Barrier-Free Access

Consistent with this standard, the Coastal Trail will be improved to allow for barrier free access, as required by and consistent with all applicable federal and state statutes, regulations and guidelines governing barrier-free access for persons with disabilities.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective 1B**, the proposed project would result in Coastal Trail signs along nine miles of Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective 1D**, the proposed project would result in construction of approximately nine miles of Coastal Trail.

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 June 4, 2009, 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 proposed project has strong support from City of Los Angeles Councilwoman Janice Hahn as well as the public. See project support letters in Exhibit 3.

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4. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes.
5. **Need:** Without Conservancy funding to complete the Rancho Palos Verdes segment of the California Coastal Trail, the trail would remain in its current state, limiting regional connectivity with the greater 1,200 mile CCT.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The City of Rancho Palos Verdes / Palos Verdes Peninsula Preserve is an important open space and coastal habitat resource for inland communities of Los Angeles County that has an urban population of nearly 10 million people. When completed, approximately nine miles of continuous Coastal Trail will not only serve residents of several surrounding communities, but also serve the larger population by providing improved and new access opportunities through inland trail links, public transportation, or other forms of transportation. Additionally, it will link existing city, county and state beach parks and access facilities into a coordinated access system of regional and statewide significance.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:**
The proposed trail route traverses areas well outside the elevations projected for sea level rise vulnerability. The Coastal Trail alignment traverses along ocean bluffs which average between 100-200 feet in elevation. The Rancho Palos Verdes Coastal Specific Plan trails will be setback from the bluff edges a minimum of 15 feet and use erosion control native plants restoration where needed. Maintenance, by PVPLC, will correct potential erosion from trail use when needed.

Additional Criteria

8. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
9. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See the “Project History” section above.
10. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The City of Palos Verdes and the Palos Verdes Land Conservancy will use mostly hand tools and other low emissions construction techniques wherever possible when constructing trails, however some mechanized construction methods may be necessary, but will be kept to a minimum.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

Palos Verdes Peninsula Coastal Trail involves properties that are located within the Coastal Zone and are subject to the jurisdiction of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes Specific Coastal Plan (adopted 1978; certified 1983). The proposed project is consistent with the relevant sections of the Specific Coastal Plan (SCP) and the City of Rancho Palos Verdes’s General Plan.

The SCP’s Path and Trail Networks Subsection within the Urban Environment Element recognizes “that recreational and environmental amenities found along the coastal area are of regional and state-wide significance.” Specifically, a network of paths and trails are “an integral part of the locomotion component of the infrastructure, walkways, bikeways and coastal access” in the SCP. (U-50) “Therefore, the various path and trail networks should be designed to the local and broader demands, while maintaining the unique character of the coastal area.” (U-50) The network of paths and trails will consist of a primary corridor walkway (U-57) with

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secondary corridor walkways in three segments along the bluff and providing coastal access (U-58). The proposed project implements the Path and Trail Networks Subsection of the SCP.

The Corridors Element of the SCP also addresses a network of trails and access along the coast. The Corridors Element “joins together the various physical elements proposed by the Plan through their use, preservation, and enhancement of access, edges, and visual and natural characteristics.” (C-1) The SCP identifies Palos Verdes Drive West/South/25th Street as the primary “access corridor” within the coastal region and acts as the “spine” of the access corridor concept, connecting “a series of laterals and loops within the coastal region.” (C-5) The proposed project implements the SCP’s Access Corridor. (see Exhibit 2)

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The City of Rancho Palos Verdes has determined that the construction of the RPV Coastal Trail will not result in adverse impacts to the environment under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”). The RPV segment of the CCT primarily transverses existing paths that need minor site or roadway improvements or the installation of identification signs. These improvements to the existing trail will not adversely impact the environment including biological resources.

The project is categorically exempt from CEQA under 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15301, for Existing Facilities, and Section 15304 for Minor Alterations to Land in that no major structures such as bridges or retaining walls will be constructed as part of the project. The trail will follow existing paths and roadways requiring minor grading or alteration to the land.

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