

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
October 21, 2010

**PETALUMA TRESTLE REHABILITATION DESIGN**

Project No.: 10-017-01  
Project Manager: Deborah Hirst

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$475,000 to the City of Petaluma to complete analysis, engineered designs and permits for the rehabilitation of the historic trestle on the Petaluma River for public access in downtown Petaluma, Sonoma County.

**LOCATION:** Located on bank of the Petaluma River in downtown Petaluma (see Exhibit 1)

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Trestle Photographs](#)

Exhibit 3: [Trestle Rehabilitation Map](#)

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 the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement to the City of Petaluma of an amount not to exceed four hundred seventy-five thousand dollars (\$475,000) to complete analysis, engineered designs and permits for the rehabilitation of the historic trestle on the Petaluma River for public access in downtown Petaluma, Sonoma County. Prior to the disbursement of any Conservancy funds, the City shall submit for review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, schedule and budget, and the names and qualifications of any subcontractors that it intends to employ for this planning work.”

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 resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area, including the improvement of public access through regional and local trails connecting population centers and public facilities.”
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### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$475,000 to the City of Petaluma to complete analysis, engineered designs and permits for the rehabilitation of the historic trestle on the Petaluma River for public access in downtown Petaluma, Sonoma County.

The proposed project will enable the City of Petaluma to complete the necessary analysis of geotechnical and structural conditions to design an effective rehabilitation of the Petaluma trestle and stabilization of the riverbank beneath. The project will include analysis of and design plans for: the trestle structure, improvement of the trestle deck, bank stabilization as identified through the analysis, replacement of the railroad tracks, interpretive panels for both the riverfront history and the storm water runoff cycle readily observed at the project site, completion of the Petaluma River Trail for safe passage of bicyclists and pedestrians; and environmental review of the proposed designs to assess any potential impacts and provide appropriate mitigation measures where necessary. The restoration design will incorporate recreational, environmental, educational and accessibility elements for public access along the approximately 500-foot long historic railroad trestle.

*The Petaluma General Plan (2008), The Central Petaluma Specific Plan (2003) and The River Access and Enhancement Plan (1996)* emphasize the importance of reorienting the Petaluma community toward the River and enhancing this “green ribbon” with improved public access, recreation, education and river restoration. Transportation and commerce along the river have been defining aspects of the character and identity of downtown Petaluma, and the proposed trestle restoration project offers a means of preserving the highly visible trestle boardwalk element of the urban waterfront in Petaluma. There is urgency for the proposed project as the trestle has been fenced off from public pedestrian and bicycle access for a number of years due to deterioration of the wooden structure and supports while awaiting a path forward for restoration (see Exhibits 2 and 3).

The Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit District (SMART) owns the Petaluma trestle and is working in partnership with the City to address the risk the trestle now poses to public access. Development and operation of a 14 station passenger rail system and network of bike and pedestrian paths along the Highway 101 corridor between the ferry terminal in Larkspur in Marin County (Marin) and Cloverdale in Sonoma County (Sonoma) is the primary purpose of the quarter cent sales tax for SMART approved by Marin and Sonoma voters in November 2008. By 2014, SMART will complete and put into operation a system with 70 miles of rail service, as well as 54 miles of multi-use path and 17 miles of Class II bike lane in Sonoma and Marin as an alternative to driving; the \$590 million project is largely being funded by voter-approved sales tax revenue. The system will serve 5 stations in Marin and 9 stations in Sonoma, including the Petaluma station located within walking distance from Petaluma’s planned transit hub and the historic railroad trestle on the Petaluma River Trail. SMART’s existing rail corridor through Petaluma offers sufficient space to enable a future “rail with trail” design for multi-use public

access. Bicycle and pedestrian paths are a fundamental aspect of the SMART system for providing alternate transportation from highway driving. SMART staff is working with the City to identify other funding sources available to SMART to contribute to the restoration of the SMART-owned trestle on the river.

The City of Petaluma's *Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2008)* identifies the Petaluma River Trail and the SMART corridor rail-to-trail project as two of the five highest priority projects for bicycle and pedestrian access for the city. The trestle is considered an important segment of the Petaluma River Trail which begins on the eastern side of Petaluma at Prince Park and travels west into downtown Petaluma to the trestle area. Future extension of the Petaluma River Trail from the trestle south along the river has potential to connect additional parks and trails in Petaluma.

Three significant regional trails being developed with support from the Conservancy have potential to link to the trestle project's improvements. A proposed realignment for a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail would move the Petaluma section of the 580-mile trail off of local roads and onto an alignment along Adobe Creek and Northwest Pacific railroad right-of-way to Steamer Landing Park on the Petaluma River. A recent request by the City to the Association of Bay Area Governments proposes an extension of the current proposed alignment of the 500-mile San Francisco Bay Trail to include a connector trail into downtown Petaluma to the Turning Basin. Petaluma would serve as a junction for these regional trails along the Petaluma River, an existing bridge and the local Petaluma River Trail over the restored trestle downtown. In addition, the San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail has a pullout site at the Turning Basin across from the trestle and a recently improved floating dock with boat tie-up spaces has direct access from the river up to the public access downtown at the proposed project location.

Potential also exists to restore a historic trolley line through the main commercial area of Petaluma's historic waterfront area to connect with the regional rail corridor being planned for Sonoma and Marin. The restoration of the trestle is a component necessary to attract support for the viability of a restored trolley service over the railway along the Petaluma River. The City has applied for Caltrans funds to pursue a feasibility study for restoration of the historic trolley line and will pursue this longer term, transit-specific project in addition to the public access and trails focus of the proposed project. The City's proposed trestle rehabilitation project with Conservancy funds will evaluate the difference in cost between a trestle with rail option and a trestle without rail option and explore the possibility that the public use design requirements and the trolley rail design requirements may be close in cost for construction. The Conservancy's funding for the proposed project provides an opportunity to design the trestle rehabilitation to meet the requirements for both public access and the restoration of the historic trolley line in Petaluma.

The City of Petaluma, SMART, Petaluma Trolley (a 501 (c)(3) organization), and other project partners anticipate seeking multiple sources of implementation funding to complete the trestle restoration project. Among the sources being explored are possible contributions from the Petaluma City Redevelopment Agency, SMART, the State Water Resources Control Board, public agency grants for transportation and smart growth, and foundation grants. Congestion Management Agency funds administered by Sonoma County Transit Agency through a joint power authority may also be a possible source as Sonoma County Regional Parks is applying for these funds to complete 1.3 miles of SMART trail in the City of Santa Rosa with Santa Rosa Redevelopment District funds as match.

**Site Description:** The proposed project is located in Sonoma County on the Petaluma River in Petaluma's historic downtown commercial district, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Since the 1850's, the defining features of the City of Petaluma have included the namesake river that runs through downtown, the Victorian-era shopping district and the area's distinctive waterfront industry warehouses. The Petaluma River begins 4 miles north of town, flows through the City and joins San Pablo Bay 14 miles to the south. This navigable waterway is tidally influenced with river level fluctuating up to nine feet. The railroad trestle constructed of redwood in 1922 was the main transit point between the river and commerce on land. The 500-foot trestle is elevated above the river between the Water Street Plaza completed in 2006 and the Petaluma Yacht Club on First Street. Across the river lies the historic Turning Basin where boats would turn on the river to travel back south to San Francisco Bay. Today, trade on the river continues with 800 to 1 million tons of cargo moving into and out of Petaluma by commercial boat each year. In addition, an estimated 500 recreational watercraft annually make Petaluma a destination. The City has approximately 58,000 residents and is within an hour's drive for much of the San Francisco Bay Area.

**Project History:**

The Conservancy provided support for the City of Petaluma's development of *The Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan (1996)*, which includes specific recommendations to restore the trestle and complete the Petaluma River Trail as part of the reorientation of the community toward the river. A structural evaluation of the trestle and a historical structure report were completed by the City in November 2007. This study concluded the trestle abutments, piles, support structure and wood decking are not currently capable of supporting pedestrian or trolley loads and identified rehabilitation approaches and cost estimates in the range of \$2 million to \$2.8 million. The study did not include a geotechnical component to evaluate the possible need for bank stabilization; this will be conducted as a component of the proposed project.

The City began discussion with Conservancy staff in 2007 and developed the current project with input from project partners in the Summer of 2010. In spite of challenges posed by the State economy and the economic conditions for the City and SMART, the partners have identified staff time that will be contributed to the proposed project and the identification of implementation funding. Petaluma Trolley is a Historical Railroad Museum organization that has worked with the City over a number of years to support the restoration of the trestle and the historic trolley line. Over the six-year process of developing the *River Access and Enhancement Plan*, members of the community and a large range of supporters including elected officials have come to see the trestle and trolley as important features for public access and the economic center of Petaluma. Recent attendance at the Petaluma River Revival Festival demonstrated the desire for individuals and families to access waterfront recreation with a historical theme. Until the closure of the trestle, annual River Festivals were held on and around the trestle with thousands of participants (See Exhibit 2 for photographs).

Specific improvements for trail, environmental education and open space made possible in part with Conservancy funding in the Petaluma area include *The Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan*, the McNear Peninsula Ridge Trail Link, Petaluma Marsh Trails, the Lynch Creek Trail and educational displays at the Point Reyes Bird Observatory San Francisco Bay Research Center. The Conservancy has also supported the preparation of the environmental document for the Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, working with Sonoma County

Regional Parks. This programmatic environmental document will benefit regional trails and bicycle improvements in Petaluma and the region as a whole.

The City of Petaluma has given a high priority to this extremely visible and pressing urban waterfront access restoration project and is ready to immediately begin the proposed project should it be approved.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	\$475,000
City of Petaluma	\$15,000
Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit	<u>\$10,000</u>
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the fiscal year 2008/09 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 are available for all the purposes of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program and are appropriate for the funding planning for the restoration of the Petaluma trestle for public access on the Petaluma River Trail. The City anticipates matching Conservancy funds in-kind by 5% with support from SMART.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

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 to improve public access to, within, and around urban open spaces, consistent with the rights of private property owners, and without having a significant adverse impact on agricultural operations and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife. Consistent with Section 31162(a), the proposed project will enable a local government to plan for the rehabilitation of a public access along a historic downtown railroad trestle on Petaluma River. In addition, the proposed project will be designed to not have a significant impact on environmentally sensitive areas or wildlife, which will be confirmed through California Environmental Quality Act review pursuant to this authorization.

Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conservancy cooperates with cities, counties and districts in identifying and adopting long-term resource and outdoor recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Completion of the Petaluma River Trail and restoration of the Petaluma trestle are identified in (1) *The City of Petaluma: General Plan 2025 (2008)*, (2) *The City of Petaluma Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (2008)*, (3) *The Central Petaluma Specific Plan (2003)*, and (4) *The Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan (1996)*.

Finally, the proposed project is appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in Section 31163(c) for the following reasons:

- (1) The project is supported by adopted local plans including *The City of Petaluma: General Plan 2025* and *The Petaluma River Access and Enhancement Plan*.
- (2) The project serves a regional constituency by contributing toward the completion of a riverfront trail with proposed connections to multiple regional trail systems in the San Francisco Bay Area.

- (3) The project can be implemented in a timely manner, as the authorization supports a high priority project identified by the City.
- (4) The project provides benefits that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented as the blocked public access on the river will continue and the trestle will further deteriorate if the momentum to restore access over the trestle is not acted upon.
- (5) The proposed project leverages matching funds from both the City of Petaluma and SMART.

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

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will plan a project that provides for recreational facilities.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective H** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will provide a plan for a link in a regional 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 elected officials including Congresswoman Woolsey, State Senator Wiggins, State Senator Leno, Assemblyman Huffman and the Petaluma City Council as well as the public. See project letters and the Petaluma Trolley petition in Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The Petaluma trestle is located on the western bank of the Petaluma River across from the historic turning basin within the City of Petaluma. Approximately 500 feet long, the trestle begins at the Yacht Club at 1<sup>st</sup> Street and runs to Western Avenue where it ends at the recently renovated Water Street Plaza.
5. **Need:** The City of Petaluma and SMART must address the failing trestle and find a resolution to restore public access along the Petaluma River in the highly scenic business district downtown. Without Conservancy support for the proposed project the City risks potential loss of the historic trestle structure for waterfront public access.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The trestle and historic downtown of Petaluma are draws for tourists, visitors and sailors from the Bay Area and beyond due, in part, to the public access along the Petaluma riverfront and the Petaluma River Trail. The San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail, the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Bay Area Ridge Trail are regional trails with potential connections to the trestle on the Petaluma River Trail.

7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The Petaluma River has an upper bank of more than 15 feet in the area of the trestle in downtown Petaluma, fourteen miles up river from San Pablo Bay; current tidal influence results in a fluctuation of water surface height between extreme low and high tides by approximately 9 feet. Future actions designed and permitted through the proposed project will not be vulnerable to projected sea level rise of 16 inches by year 2050 or 55 inches by year 2100.

**Additional Criteria**

8. **Urgency:** The proposed project will address the currently unsafe, fenced-off public space along the Petaluma River where the existing historic trestle has become dilapidated. Without the proposed project, the trestle structure will continue to deteriorate and risk failure.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Readiness:** The City of Petaluma is ready to complete the proposed project, and has identified both City staff time and a commitment for SMART staff time to support the project.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.”
12. **Return to Conservancy:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
13. **Cooperation:** The City of Petaluma and the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit District are working in partnership to develop specific rail and trail related infrastructure for Petaluma, including the proposed trestle design project. The project also enjoys the participation and cooperation of other organizations including Petaluma Trolley.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

California Code of Regulations title 14, section 15262 states that a project involving only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions that have not yet been approved does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) or Negative Declaration under the California Environmental Quality Act but does require the consideration of environmental factors. The proposed project consists of planning and design work, including the preparation of engineered plans, permit applications and environmental review documents for possible future action that has not yet been funded by the Conservancy (or approved by any other public entity). Accordingly, the proposed project does not require preparation of an EIR or negative declaration. There are no actions associated with the proposed project that raise environmental considerations. Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for the project.