

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
October 21, 2010

**BATTERY POINT LIGHTHOUSE ENHANCEMENTS**

File No. 10-025  
Project Manager: Deborah Hirst

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 to the County of Del Norte to complete Battery Point Lighthouse enhancements to ensure continued public access to the lighthouse building, island grounds and trail in Crescent City, Del Norte County.

**LOCATION:** Crescent City, Del Norte County

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Public Access

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Battery Point Lighthouse Photographs](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400-31409 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to the County of Del Norte (“the County”) to complete Battery Point Lighthouse enhancements to ensure continued public access to the lighthouse building, island grounds and trail in Crescent City, Del Norte County. Prior to the disbursement of funds, the County shall submit for the written approval of the Conservancy’s Executive Officer a work program and budget for the project, and the names and qualifications of all contractors to be used on 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 Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access to the coast.
2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines most recently updated by the Conservancy on June 4, 2009.
3. The project will serve greater than local needs."

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to the County of Del Norte ("the County"), to complete Battery Point Lighthouse enhancements to ensure continued public access to the lighthouse building, island grounds and trail in Crescent City, Del Norte County (see Exhibit 1).

The proposed project will enable the County to move forward with structural enhancements and repairs necessary to maintain safe public access to the Battery Point Lighthouse and the rock island where it is located just offshore from Crescent City (see Exhibit 2 for photographs). More than 15,000 coastal visitors tour the lighthouse tower and access the trail to the lighthouse island from the waterfront in downtown Crescent City each year. The landmark is a highly visible attraction on Del Norte County's section of the California Coastal Trail which, when completed, will extend from the Crescent City Harbor along the City waterfront, past the island where the lighthouse stands, along the coast up Pebble Beach Drive and out to Point Saint George Heritage over coordinated improvements funded in part by the Conservancy.

The continued public access to the island's lighthouse building is now at risk due to a recent failure in the cast iron roof of the lighthouse tower that is allowing water to enter and deteriorate the metal and masonry construction of the lighthouse. Coastal storms and seawater threaten to further damage the interior of the building and its masonry walls, and may preclude any public access due to the unsafe conditions. The keepers' quarters of the lighthouse are also at risk and concerns exist that without year-round resident keepers, or similar management presence, this historic coastal structure would become an attractive nuisance for vandalism and further decline. The enhancing this significant historical feature and the trail around the grounds on this rock island just offshore from the California Coastal Trail will promote public access to and enjoyment of coastal resources in Del Norte County.

Though the County has provided nine thousand dollars annually for regular maintenance and operations of the lighthouse since 1978, a number of long-term repairs have become pressing concerns that need to be addressed to eliminate deterioration. Over the past ten years, a number of these issues have been addressed through private foundation grants and donations in addition to County funds including replacement of all windows in the main building by a master craftsman in 2000, upgrade to cedar shingle roofs for three of the lighthouse island buildings in 2003, and on-going painting and maintenance work performed at a favorable rate by local contractors and lighthouse volunteers. Beginning

in 2007, the lighthouse keepers have been in contact with both West Coast and finally East Coast lighthouse experts to analyze and provide recommendations for the care of the lighthouse tower itself. As no local or regional contractors were able to provide input for the assessed needs of the Cape Cod-style lighthouse tower, specialists from South Carolina and Florida were brought in to develop the scope of work for the tower project.

Implementing the recommendations from expert analysis, the proposed project will complete the following enhancements and improvements to maintain safe public access and viable keeper operation of the lighthouse as an aid to navigation:

- \* Close the 20-inch crack in the cast iron roof using the metal stitching technique recommended by a lighthouse consultant team.
- \* Reconstruct deteriorated exterior metal bars supporting the keepers' watch railing and walkway around the lantern room; sandblast, prime and paint the restored railing and walkway.
- \* Replace lantern glass with tempered glass for safety and repair water-damaged lantern room metal surfaces, structural elements and fasteners; dry sandblast, prime and paint the metalwork with a finish coat in the historic colors.
- \* Rework one of two original brass ventilators and create a replacement for the missing second ventilator needed to reduce moisture in the lantern room's masonry walls; repair damage to walls of the lantern room and tower; recoat the masonry with a breathable stucco finish.
- \* Improve the lighthouse electrical panel and circuitry to provide adequate and consistent electricity for keepers and visitors; rewire lens and spiral staircase lamp to meet fire code; and install a modern lightning protection system.
- \* Enhance access from the beach to Lighthouse Island to address the severely eroded bottom portion of the ramp, degraded trail, steps and rails.

The County owns the lighthouse, its support buildings and the island on which they are located. The Del Norte County Historical Society, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, manages the lighthouse operations, plans and implements maintenance projects, recruits and retains rotating lighthouse keepers and lighthouse volunteers. Should the funds be secured with Conservancy support, the County anticipates the project can be initiated by Winter 2010, and work can be completed to protect the lighthouse structure by Winter 2011.

**Site Description:**

Of sixteen lighthouses originally built on the West Coast in the 1850s only four are still in existence. Del Norte's Battery Point Lighthouse, one of the last four, is the only 1850s lighthouse still manned by a lighthouse keeper on the West Coast. Approximately 15,000 to 20,000 visitors per year tour the small rock island where the lighthouse stands just off shore of the Crescent City coast. The island is accessible during low tide by walking over a rock and sand trail to a cement ramp up to stairs on the island. There is opportunity to tour the lighthouse and the walkway around the island all through the year, with most

tours occurring between April and October. On tours, the public can walk up the lighthouse tower's spiral staircase to the lantern room for 360-degree views of the coast, Castle Rock National Wildlife Sanctuary, Crescent City Harbor and Crescent City Beach.

This distinctive icon of the Del Norte coast is located at the highly visible northern edge of the crescent shaped bay that gives the city its name. The lighthouse is also situated on the route of approximately 7 miles of California Coastal Trail being planned and constructed by the Harbor, Crescent City and the County. Battery Point Lighthouse is a destination for public access that can be seen over the length of trail from Crescent City Beach through the Harbor and along the waterfront of the only incorporated city in Del Norte County.

**Project History:**

Crescent City Harbor was built in a natural bay at Crescent Beach in the mid-1850s and grew along with the discovery of gold and the export of old growth redwood. In 1865 the Battery Point Lighthouse was constructed to guide ships safely into the harbor. Timber export by boat peaked after World War II as supply of old growth redwood declined and more recently environmental protections began to increase. Commercial fishing became a mainstay of the economy with timber, but this industry too has declined following its peak in the 1950s. In 1964, a powerful tsunami created by the Great Alaska Earthquake (magnitude 9.2) devastated much of Crescent City. Subsequently, the Army Corps of Engineers dredged the harbor and deposited the spoils along the perimeter of the harbor creating present day Beachfront Park, a portion of the RV Park and the current waterfront north of the harbor.

The Conservancy has assisted Crescent City with waterfront revitalization and access efforts since 1984. In 1985, the Conservancy provided funding for improvements to the ramp to Battery Point Lighthouse and for the access trail around the small rock outcrop island where the lighthouse is situated. In addition, Conservancy funds have supported for improvements to the Crescent City "B" Street Wharf, waterfront planning and a visitor destination study, and the Harbor Trail segment of the City's Coastal Trail at the southern edge of the city.

At its August 5, 2010 meeting, the Conservancy authorized support for the Crescent City Harbor District to complete Harbor design guidelines and engineered plans for a Harbor Promenade Design and the Harbor link for the California Coastal Trail. These recommendations were made in the Crescent City Harbor District Harbor Master Plan (2006), also supported in part by the Conservancy. The Conservancy's investment in Del Norte County's coastal access and visitor serving facilities is significant for the local economy of this geographically small, coastal County supported by a population of less than 40,000 residents and declining income from forestry and fishing.

The proposed project will secure the structural integrity of a coastal historic feature that encourages public access to and enjoyment of the Crescent City waterfront and is used prominently in tourism and business promotions for Del Norte County. The proposed

project is a high priority for the County that fits within the community leaders' efforts to improve the vitality of the local economy by attracting visitors to the harbor, the California Coastal Trail, local visitor serving businesses and natural resource destinations around the Crescent City area. The County is prepared to move forward with the proposed project, should the project be approved.

**PROJECT FINANCING:**

Coastal Conservancy	\$ 100,000
Historical Society	\$ 45,175
Historical Society (in-kind)	\$ 8,325
County of Del Norte	\$ 9,000
<u>County of Del Norte (in-kind)</u>	<u>\$ 8,000</u>
 Total Project Cost	 \$ 170,500

Conservancy funds for this project are expected to derive from the Conservancy's FY 2008/2009 allocation of Proposition 84 funds ("California Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006," Public Resources Code section 75001, et seq.). These funds may be used "to promote access to and enjoyment of coastal resources" in accordance with the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. See Public Resources Code section 75060. The proposed project will promote access to and enjoyment of the waterfront in Crescent City by enabling the County of Del Norte to complete enhancements to the Battery Point Lighthouse to allow public tours of the lighthouse to continue and to enhance access to the lighthouse island grounds adjacent to California Coastal Trail improvements in Crescent City. As discussed below, the project is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21.

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

The proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 (Public Resources Code sections 31400-31409) of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access.

Funding the proposed project is consistent with the legislature's intent that the Coastal Conservancy have a principal role in the development of public accessways to and along the state's coastline, as indicated in Public Resources Code section 31400. Conservancy funding of the Battery Point Lighthouse enhancements will help in providing the public with an enhanced coastal accessway, as provided in Public Resources Code section 31400.3. Improvements to public access are needed as part of revitalizing the Crescent City coast and harbor area, which will promote and enhance public access in Del Norte County.

Consistent with Section 31400.1 and 31400.2, the proposed project will provide funds to a public entity, the County, to complete improvements on County property. The access improvements at the Lighthouse and on the island walkways will provide views of the Battery Point Lighthouse, the harbor and Crescent Beach, and will improve public access for regional and international tourists that visit the Crescent City while traveling through Del Norte County between northern California and Oregon. Thus, the proposed project will serve greater than local public needs, as required by Public Resources Code section 31400.1.

Consistent with Section 31400.2, the amount of funding proposed for this project has been determined by the total amount of funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the County, the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects, and the application of factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of determining project eligibility and priority in order to more effectively carry out the provision of the division. Discussion of the application of these factors is set forth in the next section of this report.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES:**

Consistent with **Goal 2 – Objective B**, the proposed project will improve a waterfront park by enhancing public access to the lighthouse island and access to the coastal views and experience the lighthouse provides.

Consistent with **Goal 2 – Objective E**, the proposed project will improve a coastal recreational facility more than 20 years old for public use by enhancing the safety of the lighthouse structure and public access around the lighthouse island.

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

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted 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 project has strong support from elected officials including the Del Norte Board of Supervisors and organizations such as the Del Norte County Historical Society (see Project Letters in Exhibit 3).

4. **Location:** The proposed project is located in the coastal zone in Del Norte County.
5. **Need:** Conservancy funding is necessary to complete the proposed public access improvements and enhancements for the Battery Point Lighthouse. Without Conservancy funding, the urgently needed lighthouse enhancement could not be completed.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** Improvements to public access at Battery Point Lighthouse, adjacent to recently funded plans to link the Coastal Trail throughout the Harbor from Crescent Beach to the City of Crescent City and further north in the County, will serve the greater-than-local interest of local community members and the growing number of travelers visiting between Oregon and northern California.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The Battery Point Lighthouse is at an elevation of roughly 45 feet above sea level. The coastal access improvements to Battery Point Lighthouse on Lighthouse Island will remain more than 40 feet above the projected sea level rise of 16 inches by 2050 and will have limited vulnerability to sea level rise over the course of the Conservancy's 20-year grant agreement. Should sea level rise reach 59 inches by 2100, the lighthouse improvements on the island will remain 40 feet above sea level. As the island is only accessible by foot at tides below 4 feet, pedestrian access may be possible during shorter periods between low tides over time until alternate mode of access may become necessary. Public access improvements for the ramp and trail leading up the edge of the island will be improved as well as possible to withstand daily tidal influence and rise in sea level over time.

#### **Additional Criteria**

8. **Urgency:** Recently discovered structural failure in the cast iron roof of the lighthouse and degraded windows are allowing water damage to undermine the integrity of the lighthouse tower. Without immediate repair, public tours and public access to the lighthouse will no longer be safely permitted.
9. **Leverage:** The County will provide a match of more than 40% for the proposed project, and will continue to seek additional funding to complete non-maintenance, special projects to enhance the lighthouse infrastructure and public access improvements for the island.
10. **Readiness:** The County is ready to complete the proposed project.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
12. **Cooperation:** The proposed project will involve coordination between the County, the Historical Society and lighthouse specialists.

13. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Should there be an increase in storm event frequency or severity as a result of climate change, the lighthouse can anticipate heavy wave and wind action. The public access improvements in the proposed project will be constructed to withstand these types of impacts, to the extent feasible. The island's native plants are appropriate to the type of heavy wind and rains that can be expected for the climate.
14. **Minimization of Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Minimal greenhouse gas emissions are anticipated from the project because it does not require the use of heavy machinery to enhance and improve the lighthouse and public access. The County will insure the materials and techniques used in the enhancement of the lighthouse are as low impact as possible.

**CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The proposed project is located within the Coastal Zone and is within the jurisdiction of Del Norte County's Local Coastal Program. The Public Access Component of the LCP, Section III.C.1 states: "[t]he County shall work actively towards attainment of maximum coastal access for the public, where it is consistent with public safety, property owner rights and the protection of fragile coastal resources." The proposed project implements improvements to maximize safe public access to Battery Point Lighthouse and Lighthouse Island consistent with this policy.

Section III.C.4 states: "The design and construction by any public entity of a shoreline access facility (e.g., parking, trails, stairways, etc.) shall consider safety from potential vandalism and the protection of fragile resources." The proposed project will improve existing trail access and extend safe access in a highly visited historic coastal building along the coast in Del Norte County consistent with this policy.

Thus, the proposed project is consistent with the Del Norte County LCP as it will enable the County to complete enhancements and repairs necessary for maximum coastal access and for the safety of shoreline access facilities at Battery Point Lighthouse and Lighthouse Island.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

This project only involves structural enhancements and repairs necessary to maintain safe public access to the historic Battery Point Lighthouse and appears categorical exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act. ("CEQA")

California Code of Regulations title 14, chapter 3, section 15301 provides for a categorical exemption from CEQA for projects limited to minor improvements to existing public facilities that will not expand the existing use. The proposed project consists of enhancement and repair of existing public facilities including a cement ramp,



a pedestrian trail, steps and railing for coastal access and does not require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Review (“EIR”) or Negative Declaration, but does require the consideration of environmental factors.

California Code of Regulations title 14, chapter 3, section 15331 provides a categorical exemptions for projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historical Properties with Guidance for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995). Because the proposed project consists of reconstruction, repair and restoration on a historical resource for public access, the project does not require the preparation of an EIR or Negative Declaration but does require the consideration of environmental factors.

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.