

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

July 21, 2011

**CRYSTAL SPRINGS REGIONAL TRAIL CONSTRUCTION**

Project No. 11-010-01

Project Manager: Ann Buell

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$250,000 to the County of San Mateo (Department of Public Works, Division of Parks) to improve a 0.84-mile section of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail adjacent to Crystal Springs Reservoir in San Mateo County.

**LOCATION:** Crystal Springs Reservoir, Belmont, San Mateo County (Exhibit 1)

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

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**EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1: [Project Location, Site Maps, and Photographs](#)

Exhibit 2: [Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Crystal Springs Watershed Trails Project](#)

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 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of up to \$250,000 (two hundred fifty thousand dollars) to the County of San Mateo (Department of Public Works, Division of Parks) to improve a 0.84-mile section of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail adjacent to Crystal Springs Reservoir in San Mateo County, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to commencement of any work on the project, the County of San Mateo shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work plan for the project, including budget and schedule, and any contractors the grantee proposes to employ for the project.
  2. The County of San Mateo shall require that any contractor or subcontractor use best management practices (BMPs) for the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions during the construction of this project.
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3. The County of San Mateo shall ensure that Conservancy funding is acknowledged through the inclusion of the Conservancy logo, in a manner approved by the Conservancy's Executive Officer, in signs installed at the project site."

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 the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, sections 31160-31165.
3. The Conservancy, as a responsible agency, has independently reviewed and considered the information contained in the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the "Crystal Springs Watershed Trails" project pursuant to its responsibilities under CEQA, and finds no substantial evidence that the project as proposed, and with the identified measures to avoid, reduce or mitigate the possible significant environmental effects, will have a significant effect on the environment."

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### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize a grant of up to \$250,000 (two hundred fifty thousand dollars) to the County of San Mateo (Department of Public Works, Division of Parks) to improve a 0.84-mile section of service road along the Crystal Springs Regional Trail (CSRT) adjacent to Crystal Springs Reservoir (Exhibit 1). Conservancy funding would be applied toward the repaving of the existing service road, repairs to a culvert adjacent to the trail, and the addition of benches, information and entry signs, kiosks, fencing, and a restroom. The improvements will also make the trail compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The trail will be open for use from sunrise to sunset, every day of the year.

CSRT currently serves over 300,000 hikers, joggers, equestrians, and cyclists annually and is one of the most popular facilities operated by San Mateo County Division of Parks (formerly the Department of Parks but recently made a division of the Public Works Department). This ambitious and scenic regional trail system will be 17.5-miles long when complete, stretching from the City of San Bruno to the City of Woodside. To date, approximately 15 miles are complete.

The proposed project is located approximately 1,300 feet south of Crystal Springs Dam (thus also called the "South of Dam" project, and shown in yellow in Exhibit 1) and will move visitors off of Skyline Boulevard to a safe trail with a variety of amenities. The incomplete trail segment between Crystal Springs Dam to the north and the proposed project will be constructed at roughly the same time as the proposed project, using a different funding source and integrating trail construction with raising of the dam height.

As can be seen in the photos provided in Exhibit 1, in its current condition, the South of Dam segment is not fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The proposed project will upgrade the gates currently closing off the trail, and with minimal grading required, repave the trail surface so that it is 10-foot wide, level, and smooth the entire length of the trail (from the beginning to the end of this trail segment, there is only an eight-foot difference in elevation). Where feasible, there will be a two-foot-wide softer surface at the edge of the trail on the western (reservoir) side for joggers and equestrians. Drainage improvements and repair to a landslide area will be completed as part of this project as well, supporting the natural resources of the site and providing for more sustainable trail operations and maintenance. The new chain link gates to be installed at each end of the trail will block access to motorized vehicles except service or emergency vehicles, but will include a pedestrian gate to one side.

This section of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail is located within the San Francisco Watershed, a 23,000-acre protected area owned and managed by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC). The SFPUC and the County of San Mateo Board of Supervisors entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 1993 for the conveyance of permanent trail easements (granted in 1996), and the development and ongoing management and maintenance of specified segments of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail, including the proposed project. The time period specified in that MOU for actual trail construction has been extended numerous times and is currently valid through December 1, 2013, allowing the County of San Mateo enough time to complete construction of additional segments of the trail. See “Site Description” and “Project History” for more detail.

The SFPUC has specific security requirements for its lands. It will require incorporation of a six-foot-high chain link fence on the western side of the trail (toward the reservoir), and a five-strand barbed wire fence on the eastern side of the trail (toward Skyline Boulevard and Highway 280). This fencing will help protect the watershed, wetlands, and sensitive habitats of federally listed rare and endangered plants by keeping park visitors from venturing off the planned trails. The chain link fence on the reservoir side of the trail prevents wildlife that is moving uphill from the reservoir from entering the trail system, which is near vehicle traffic on both Skyline Boulevard and Highway 280. Apart from the entry gate areas, the fences will not be noticeable in the oak woodland habitat surrounding this trail segment.

If all funding is secured in 2011, as expected, construction should begin in the fall of 2012.

**Site Description:** The proposed project is located alongside the San Andreas Fault at Crystal Springs Reservoir on the San Francisco Peninsula, midway between San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean (Exhibit 1). Crystal Springs Reservoir itself was created in the 1880s for water collection and storage for Bay Area residents. Crystal Springs Dam survived the 1906 earthquake but is being retrofitted in the next year or two.

Because of its use for water collection and storage, the San Francisco Peninsula Watershed has been protected from urbanization, and due to the diversity of climate, topography, geology and soils, a wide variety of habitat exists in the Watershed. These include old growth Douglas fir forests, characterized by trees over 200 years old; serpentine grasslands, dominated by native bunchgrasses; areas of coastal scrub and chaparral; stream corridors; and wetlands. These areas support one of the highest concentrations of rare, threatened and endangered species in the San Francisco Bay Area, and support mountain lions, deer, bobcats, coyotes, bald eagles and golden eagles, among other species. Although rare, threatened and endangered species have been

identified in the Watershed, none have been found specifically in the proposed project area, which has been a road corridor since the late 1800s when stage coach lines carried passengers from San Mateo to Half Moon Bay, turning uphill at the same location as today's Highway 92.

Given the importance of this watershed and the species it supports, the SFPUC and others have been careful to manage the watershed in a way that will protect habitat, species, and water quality. The area is designated as a State Fish and Game Refuge, which means that no hunting is allowed. Also overlaying the Watershed are a Scenic Easement (19,000 acres) and a Scenic and Recreation Easement (4,000 acres), established through a four-party agreement between the SFPUC, the U.S. Department of the Interior, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and San Mateo County.

CSRT passes the following cities along its alignment: San Bruno, Millbrae, Hillsborough, San Mateo, Belmont, San Carlos, and Woodside, all within San Mateo County. Most of the CSRT trail alignment is parallel but separate from Highway 280, Highway 35 (Skyline Boulevard), and Cañada Road. Nearby parks and sites of interest include Sweeney Ridge, San Andreas Lake and Lower Crystal Springs Reservoir, the Pulgas Water Temple, Huddart County Park, Crystal Springs Dam, and Filoli Mansion. Trails that intersect the CSRT include Ralston Trail, Sheep Camp Trail, Cañada Trail, and Edgewood Trail.

**Project History:** As noted above under "Project Summary," in 1993, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors and SFPUC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding for the conveyance of permanent trail easements and development of segments of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail, including the proposed project. In October 1994 a Mitigated Negative Declaration was certified for the entire alignment, and in 1996 the trail easements were granted.

In 1996 a Facility Plan was developed by County Parks for the CSRT based on extensive public comment and consultation from Caltrans, SFPUC, and the Department of Fish and Game. Over the years, County Parks has been developing specific plans for trail segments with the CSRT, obtaining permits, seeking funding, and implementing segments of the trail. In 1997, a Crystal Springs Trail extension Evaluation Report was developed to plan for additional trail extensions. Today, the entire San Andreas Trail (3.15 miles) and Sawyer Camp Trail (6.0 miles) are complete. The California Hiking and Riding segment (3.25 miles) is nearly ready to be opened.

## PROJECT FINANCING

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	\$ 250,000.00
California Department of Parks and Recreation's Recreational Trails Program (awarded)	350,000.00
Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Regional Bicycle Program (awarded)	300,000.00
California Department of Parks and Recreation Land and Water Conservation Fund (pending)	<u>225,000.00</u>
<b>Total Project Costs</b>	<b>\$1,125,000.00</b>

Conservancy funds for this project are anticipated to come from the Conservancy's FY 2008/2009 allocation of Proposition 84 funds ("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 are available for all of the purposes of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code sections 31160-31165 and are thus appropriate for funding trail improvements in San Mateo County, one of the nine counties served by the program. The County of San Mateo has already funded the plans, specifications, and permits for the proposed project.

Two of the funding sources (one awarded and one pending) are federal. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. It is an assistance program of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Like the RTP, the Land and Water Conservation Fund is managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, but comes to the State of California through the National Park Service.

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

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, sections 31160-31165, regarding San Francisco Bay Area projects.

Consistent with Section 31162(a), this project will improve public access to and around the bay through completion and operation of a regional trail, is consistent with locally and regionally adopted master plans and general plans (San Mateo County General Plan, 1986; Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail Comprehensive Management and Use Plan, 1996; San Mateo County Trails Master Plan, 2001; San Mateo County Comprehensive Bicycle Route Plan, 2005; 2009 City/County Association of Government's Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee's Bicycle Map, among others), and will provide the public with trail-related facilities, such as a restroom, benches, and interpretive signage. Consistent with Section 31162(d), the project will enhance access to natural areas for urban populations for recreational and educational purposes. Consistent with Section 31163(c), this project is 1) supported by regional plans, as listed above; 2) is multijurisdictional because it is made possible by a cooperative agreement between the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and the County of San Mateo, and is within the San Francisco Watershed, which is considered a California Fish and Game Refuge; 3) can be implemented in a timely way as soon as the final funding is secured; 4) provides the benefit of opening an ADA-accessible section of trail where the old service road is now off-limits to the public; and 5) includes a large amount of matching funds from a variety of other entities.

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

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective I** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project completes 0.84 miles of a regional trail system.

Consistent with **Goal 11, Objective L**, completion of this gap in the Crystal Springs Regional Trail will include ADA-compliant elements, such as appropriate maximum slope, trail width, and restroom.

**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:** This project is supported by Senator Leland Yee, Assemblymember Richard Gordon, Assemblymember Jerry Hill, the San Mateo County Parks Foundation, and the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition (Exhibit 3).
4. **Location:** This project is located in San Mateo County, one of the nine counties in the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Program.
5. **Need:** This project will not occur without Conservancy funding.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The San Francisco Watershed and Crystal Springs Reservoir are major recreational attractions for the greater San Francisco Bay Area. More than 300,000 visitors enjoy the recreational facilities at this location annually.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** This project is not vulnerable to sea level rise. It is located on the San Francisco Peninsula, which divides the Pacific Ocean from southern San Francisco Bay, and is at an elevation of 340 feet above sea level.

**Additional Criteria**

8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** This project will complete and open to the public another segment in the 17.5-mile-long Crystal Springs Regional Trail, but just as importantly will provide almost a mile of trail that will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Readiness:** The County of San Mateo has designs and permits for construction of this segment of trail. Agreements with SFPUC are in place. When the final funding is awarded, the County will proceed with construction in coordination with the renovation of the Crystal Springs Dam nearby.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** The Bay Program of the Conservancy has sought opportunities to enhance recreational opportunities for the urban population of bayside San Mateo County. That goal is met, in part, with this project.
12. **Cooperation:** The memorandum of understanding between the SFPUC and the County of San Mateo regarding both construction and maintenance have made this project feasible.
13. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** This section of trail will be paved and will be sited well above Crystal Springs Reservoir, whose water height is controlled by the SFPUC. Climate change-induced changes to local precipitation patterns, storm frequency and duration, and temperature should not impact this project or its visitor-serving facilities.
14. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** Once constructed, the project will not be a new source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The new trail segment will add 0.84 miles of paved, ADA-compliant trail to the existing Crystal Springs Regional Trail. It is not opening

up an entirely new area to access. The trail segment will not require the use of electricity or otherwise cause impacts during the operational stage, as it will be paved and used by pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians, in-line skaters, strollers, and others traveling in like manners. During construction of the project, there will be a short-term increase in GHG emissions. However, although the County has not yet put the project to bid, these temporary increases in GHG emissions generated by equipment and vehicular trips during construction will be controlled through implementation of best management practices (BMP). Thus, the project's GHG emissions will derive only from construction equipment, the lifecycle emissions of the construction materials, and vehicle miles traveled for construction purposes.

**COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:**

In order to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the County of San Mateo (County) prepared a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the "Crystal Springs Watershed Trails" project. The MND analyzes the expansion of trails in the Crystal Springs Watershed. As stated in the project description summary from the MND, the proposed trail expansion "will provide approximately 3.25 miles to the north, .30 miles to the east, and 3.10 miles to the south of the existing Sawyer Camp Trail. The Sawyer Camp Trail is located on the easterly side of Crystal Springs Watershed, west of I-280, in San Mateo County." The proposed project under consideration by the Conservancy is included in this MND and is referred to in the "Crystal Springs Trail North" section, and more specifically within that section, as the "South of Dam" project.

The County Board of Supervisors certified the MND on October 17, 1994 after the County of San Mateo adopted it on October 4, 1994. Conservancy staff reviewed the MND carefully to assess whether the project and conditions at the project site remain substantially the same as when evaluated under CEQA in 1994, and have concluded that they are. As a result the MND remains valid for this project.

The County conducted an initial study for the project and, based upon substantial evidence in the record, found that the project will not adversely affect water or air quality or increase noise levels substantially, and the project will not have adverse impacts on the flora and fauna of the area or on traffic or land use. In addition, the project will not:

- Create impacts which have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment.
- Create impacts which would achieve short-term goals to the disadvantage of long-term environmental goals.
- Create impacts for a project which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable.
- Create environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly.

Based on the initial study the County determined that the environmental impact of the project is insignificant if mitigation measures are included in the project to avoid potentially significant effects. Those measures relevant to the "South of Dam" project are described below and are included either in the MND or in the Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Program developed by the County, or both.

Land Suitability and Geology

(f) Drainage improvements will be required on the San Mateo Creek Trail Connection, and the Crystal Springs Trail North at the service road on Water Department lands, and the old State Hiking and Riding Trail on the eastern side of Skyline Boulevard. Mitigation measures include:

Mitigation Measure Land – 2 (MMRP):

- Culverts, as agreed upon by San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Department and San Francisco Water Department staff, will be installed and maintained to allow runoff to drain off of the trails and prevent puddling or erosion.
- Foot bridges will be installed on the San Mateo Creek Trail Connection, and the Crystal Springs Trail North at the old State Hiking and Riding Trail to allow facilitation of both trails, and natural drainage channels.
- Erosion reduction measures, as are necessary, will use either physical means to divert or intercept siltation or shall use revegetation.

(j) The trails will not affect any existing wetlands as drainage to the wetlands will not be changed. Mitigation measures (from MND) include:

- Fencing will be installed to protect wetlands.
- Signs will be posted warning trail users to stay on the trail.
- Culverts will be installed to drain runoff off the trails and prevent puddling or erosion.
- Erosion reduction measures will use either physical means to divert or intercept siltation, or shall use revegetation.
- County Park Rangers will monitor the trail.

Vegetation and Wildlife

(a) Rare plants are known to occur in the vicinity of the proposed trail system. Mitigation measures (from MND) include:

Mitigation Measure Veg -1:

- Prior to construction of the San Mateo Creek Trail Connection, plant surveys of the populations of Marin Dwarf Flax will be done in the summer, and a survey of the *Plantago erecta* will be done in the winter. Native seed will be collected for post trail revegetation.
- Native soils and native plants will be used for construction of the San Mateo Creek Trail Connection, and the southern portion of the Crystal Springs Trail North.
- Fencing will be placed adjacent to the trails to protect pristine serpentine grasslands from encroachment by trail users.
- County Park Rangers will monitor the trail.



Air Quality, Water Quality, Sonic - Trash and other forms of water pollution should be avoided. Mitigation measures from the MND and MMRP include:

- Fencing will be installed next to permanent wetland and settling ponds next to pump stations located along the trail.
- Permanent vault toilets and garbage cans will be made available and maintained at the following locations:
  - San Andreas Trail North on the existing service road near the on ramp to Highway 280.
  - Crystal Springs Trail north on the existing service road where the trail exists onto Skyline Blvd.
  - Crystal Springs Trail north on the existing service road off of Canada Road.
  - At the existing trailhead of Sawyer Camp Trail at Crystal Springs Road.
- Additional garbage receptacles will be located at the following locations:
  - San Andreas Trail North at on ramp to Highway 280.
  - At southern end of San Andreas Trail North at Larkspur Drive.
  - Garbage receptacles currently exist at the southern end of the existing Crystal Springs Trail head at Crystal Springs Road.
  - At Crystals Springs Trail North where trail enters service road on Water Department lands.
- County Park Rangers will monitor use.

Transportation – The County Division of Parks staff will maintain communication with Caltrans staff to monitor parking needs, and develop additional parking facilities, if needed, as trail use increases. Mitigation measures from the MND and MMRP include:

Parking is proposed:

- On CalTrans property at San Bruno Ave at intersection of Skyline Blvd.
- At the Crystal Springs Trail North, the existing parking lot on the north side of the Crystal Springs Dam will be reconfigured to provide additional parking spaces.
- At the eastern end of the San Mateo Creek Trail Connection, parking may be developed at some time in the future where the Old Stage road meets Bunker Hill Road.
- The shoulders of Canada Road will be improved to provide additional parking.

CalTrans will need to determine the need for bike paths at the following locations:

- On the San Andreas Trail South along Skyline Blvd from Larkspur Drive to Hillcrest Blvd.
- On the Crystal Springs Trail North along Skyline Blvd from where bicyclists exit Water Department lands to Highway 92.

Because increased access to trails is expected to result in increased numbers of “trail bikes,” the County will install fencing 10 to 20 feet from the edge of on all trails where bicycles are allowed to prevent off-trail bike riding.

Land Use and General Plans – Large groups of pedestrian or bicyclists will probably congregate only on weekends and holidays. Large congregations of recreational trail users, generated by special events, will be managed by the County’s permit process. Garbage receptacles will be maintained by the County. Mitigation measures from the MND include the placement of garbage receptacles at various locations, including:

- On the existing service road at the Crystal Springs Trail North where the trail enters SFPUC lands south of the Crystal Springs Dam.
- On the existing service road of the Crystal Springs Trail North prior to where the trail exits SFPUC lands onto Skyline Boulevard.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions The MND for the Crystal Springs Regional Trail did not analyze greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at the time it was developed because such analysis was not yet required by law under CEQA. Although the environmental effects of GHG emissions were generally recognized at that time, the specific GHG emissions of this project were not discussed or considered significant. As discussed under “Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines” above, the proposed project will not emit GHGs during the operational phase of the project, as the trail is designed mainly for pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian use and the trail is also not opening an entire new area to public use, thereby generating vehicle trips that did not occur before.

During construction of the 0.84-mile trail, there will be some emissions. According to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), construction emissions represent a small portion of the Bay Area’s GHG emissions (less than two percent). In terms of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalence, the Crystal Spring Regional Trail construction for the 0.84 miles of trail would be very small because the project is relatively small. The specific quality and quantity of these emissions is unknown at this time because the County has not yet selected a contractor. However, as a condition of this board authorization the Conservancy is requiring that the contractor selected by the County adhere to BMPs for the reduction of GHG. It does not appear that the proposed project would contribute considerably to the cumulative effects of GHG emissions such that it would impair the state’s ability to implement Assembly Bill 32 (AB32, or California Global Warming Solutions Act).

The County issued a Mitigation Measure Monitoring Program (“MMMP”) in August 2010 to ensure that the Crystal Springs Regional Trail project is constructed and operated in conformance with all mitigation measures identified in the MND.

Based on the foregoing, Conservancy staff concludes that the Crystal Springs Regional Trail project as proposed and mitigated, and as additionally tracked as required in the MMRP, poses no potential for significant environmental effects. Therefore, staff recommends that the Conservancy concur with the MND prepared and adopted by the County of San Mateo and attached as Exhibit 3, and that the Conservancy find that there is no substantial evidence that the trail improvements, as mitigated, may have a significant effect on the environment. Staff will file a Notice of Determination upon the Conservancy’s approval of the project.