

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 22, 2011

AT RISK: BAY AREA GREENBELT, 2012 EDITION

Project No. 11-048-01
Project Manager: Amy Hutzal

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$50,000 to Greenbelt Alliance to produce the 2012 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, which will contain maps of risks to open space in the San Francisco Bay area, an evaluation of policy measures to conserve open space, and an evaluation of the values of these lands.

LOCATION: San Francisco Bay Area

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [At Risk 2006 Edition Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

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

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed \$50,000 (fifty thousand dollars) to Greenbelt Alliance to assist with the production of the 2012 Edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* which includes maps of risks to open space in the San Francisco Bay area, as well as an evaluation of the open-space value of these lands and existing policy measures to conserve them. Prior to the commencement of work and the disbursement of funds, Greenbelt Alliance shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a detailed work program, schedule and budget and the names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed in carrying out 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 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 (Sections 31160-31165), regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
 3. Greenbelt Alliance is a nonprofit organization existing under Section 501(c)(3) of the United States Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization to disburse up to \$50,000 to Greenbelt Alliance to produce the 2012 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, and to develop an interactive, online map of the San Francisco Bay Area open space lands. Since 1989, Greenbelt Alliance has produced *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*, providing a snapshot of the greenbelt lands - working farms and natural areas - facing sprawl development pressure in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The report measures the imminence of development on open space. Maps show high-risk open space areas likely to be developed within 10 years, medium risk in 30 years, and low risk for unprotected open space lands unlikely to be developed within a 30 year time horizon. The report presents this information in a clear, simple format and is used by conservationists and elected officials throughout the region. Conservancy staff have utilized the report and map of at-risk lands in our planning processes.

The goals and objectives for the 2012 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* are as follows:

1. Incorporate additional Geographic Information System (GIS) data layers into the identification of at-risk lands

Greenbelt Alliance has compiled a robust data set of GIS layers that spatially map different risk factors. These layers include market factors (e.g. lands graded for construction with no structures built, proposed developments on open space that have entered the entitlement process in a city or county), location attributes (e.g. slope, proximity to roads, proximity to recent development), and policy or legal attributes (e.g. zoning, permitted parcelization). Each risk factor will be weighted to give greater significance to layers more likely to lead to development. These layers will be overlaid and cumulatively summed together to create a ‘risk score’ layer. The model will then take the results of this analysis to define areas as high, medium, and low risk in a similar format to the past reports. The addition of these new GIS layers will allow the 2012 analysis to be much more data-driven than past editions.

2. Map influence of policy protection measures on development threats

In addition to evaluating the risk of development, the 2012 analysis will for the first time include spatial representations of open space protection measures, including urban growth boundaries, hillside ordinances, wildlife and agricultural preserves, voter-adopted initiatives such as Solano County’s Orderly Growth Initiative, and endangered species protections. Incorporating this policy information into a GIS model will show how certain legal mechanisms protect areas that might otherwise be at risk, or protect lands with significant value. This new layer of analysis will be valuable as a decision support tool to land conservation professionals by providing

information about which natural lands are not already under some level of protection.

3. Show open space values of lands at risk

The 2012 analysis will also include, for the first time, information about the open space values of the lands most at risk, incorporating existing data layers on important wildlife habitat (e.g. Upland Habitat Goals and Conservation Lands Network), farm and ranchlands (e.g. Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program), water resource lands (e.g. National Wetland Inventory, USGS Groundwater Infiltration Areas), and recreational lands (e.g. regional trails). These will be used to educate readers on the importance of the lands at risk.

4. Provide an interactive web tool illustrating those three elements

For the first time, the results of the analysis will be presented in an interactive, online map. This will give users the opportunity to customize the display to show only layers of interest. Users will also be able to select a geographic area and get detailed information about the risk factors, protections, and open space values present in that area. We anticipate the site will be used as a decision-making and educational tool by many different audiences. Land trusts and conservation groups can use it for strategic planning for acquisition efforts and for other research projects. Conservation advocates can use it to strengthen the argument for land protection, both through local ordinance and through continued funding for acquisition. Regional trail planners can use it to identify trail gaps that are at risk of development.

The work by Greenbelt Alliance to identify open space lands at-risk of development, to map policy protection measures, to map the values of open space lands, and to make this easily accessible via an online mapping tool augments the Conservation Land Network developed by the Bay Area Open Space Council and will be of benefit to Conservancy staff during program planning and project development.

In 1958, Dorothy Erskine, Jack Kent and colleagues founded Citizens for Regional Recreation and Parks, an organization of environmentally concerned individuals and groups created to protect parks and recreational areas in the Bay Area. In 1969, the organization was renamed People for Open Space to reflect the group's new commitment to preserving additional spaces such as ranch lands, agricultural lands, and wildlife preserves. In 1987, People for Open Space became Greenbelt Alliance: with a focus on grassroots activism and policy research and a goal of establishing a permanent regional greenbelt. Greenbelt Alliance has been successful in securing 33 urban growth boundaries in the nine-county region and remains instrumental in preserving open space and protecting the quality of life in the Bay Area. Greenbelt Alliance served as the fiscal sponsor for the Bay Area Open Space Council for nearly 20 years and managed five grants from the Conservancy for the Council.

Project History: The Conservancy has not funded previous editions of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*. Greenbelt Alliance approached the Conservancy about participating in the development and production of the 2012 edition based upon Conservancy involvement in the Upland Habitat Goals effort, which resulted in a Conservation Lands Network for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$50,000
Greenbelt Alliance	40,000
Individual Donors	25,000
Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund	20,000
Arntz Family Foundation	<u>10,000</u>
Total Project Costs	\$145,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the fiscal year 09/10 appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84) (Public Resources Code sections 75001 *et seq.*) for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. Under section 75060, this funding source may be used for the protection of bays and coastal waters and watersheds, pursuant to the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. Consistent with Section 75060, the proposed authorization is to be used to plan for and assist projects intended to protect the natural habitat values of the San Francisco Bay and its watershed and is undertaken pursuant to the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, as discussed below. A portion of Proposition 84 funds may also be used for broad-based planning “necessary for the successful design, selection, and implementation of the projects authorized under” Proposition 84 (see section 75072).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project is undertaken in accordance with Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

Under Section 31162, the Conservancy may award grants within the Bay Area that achieve the following goals: (a) improve public access to, within and around the San Francisco Bay, coast, ridgetops, and urban open spaces; (b) protect natural habitats and connecting corridors; c) assist in the implementation of the adopted plans of local governments and districts; and (d) promote and assist projects that will provide open space and natural areas accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes. The proposed authorization will provide funding for a mapping effort will assist resource and recreation managers in the planning and implementation of projects within the Bay Area that achieve exactly these objectives.

Section 31163(a) directs the Conservancy to cooperate with local and regional government bodies, non-profit organizations, and other interested parties in identifying and adopting long-term resource and recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. The 2012 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt* will enhance the ability of Bay Program staff to plan and implement projects in cooperation with other organizations.

This project is appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in Section 31163(c) in that: (1) it is supported by a multitude of local and regional plans, including the San Francisco Bay Plan, that call for coordinated action to protect open space, agricultural, and recreational opportunities for local and regional use; (2) it serves a regional constituency – the

nine-county Bay Area; (3) it can be implemented in a timely way because funding and staff are already in place; (4) it will generate information that can be used to protect resource and recreational areas that could be lost; and (5) it includes matching funds.

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

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective 9A** of the Conservancy's 2007 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will help the Conservancy maintain a list of high priority resource and recreational areas.

**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:** Letters of support are included as Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** The proposed project addresses land conservation values and risk factors in the entire nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.
5. **Need:** Without Conservancy Funding, Greenbelt Alliance will not have sufficient funds to complete the 2012 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project is regional in scope, addressing values and risk factors facing open space throughout the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** This project is focused on the open spaces in the San Francisco Bay Area, which includes land that may be vulnerable to sea level rise, but their analysis focuses on short term risks to the lands from development and current resource, agricultural, and recreational values of the land. To the extent the project seeks to promote open space and conservation of low-lying areas it will help to alleviate problems associated with sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

8. **Urgency:** This project is intended to convey the urgency of protecting natural resource and recreational lands in the San Francisco Bay Area that are most at-risk of being lost. Conservancy funding is necessary to undertake the project.
9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.

10. **Innovation:** For the first time, the results of Greenbelt Alliance’s at-risk analysis will be presented in an interactive online map. This will give users the opportunity to customize the display to show layers they are most interested in and the ability to select a geographic area and get detailed information about the risk factors, policy protections, and open space values present in that area.
11. **Readiness:** Greenbelt Alliance is ready to start work on this project.
12. **Return to Conservancy:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
13. **Cooperation:** Greenbelt Alliance will collect information from multiple sources and organizations, working in collaboration with others to develop and produce the 2012 edition of *At Risk: The Bay Area Greenbelt*.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

Under California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 15262, feasibility and planning activities are statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. All of the activities that would be undertaken for this project are properly characterized as feasibility and planning. Upon authorization, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.