

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
January 19, 2012

WATSONVILLE SLOUGH ACQUISITIONS AUGMENTATION CLARIFICATION

File No. 08-101-01
Project Manager: Kate Goodnight

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$156,000 of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant funds to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County for restoration planning in the Watsonville Slough area of southern Santa Cruz County.

LOCATION: Coastal Zone, west of Highway One, southern Santa Cruz County near the city of Watsonville (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement and Integrated Coastal and Marine Resources Protection

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [November 6, 2008 Conservancy authorization](#)

Exhibit 3: [May 27, 2010 Conservancy authorization](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31118, 31220 and 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of up to \$156,000 (one hundred fifty-six thousand dollars) of funds from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Land Trust) for the purpose of restoration planning in Watsonville Slough, Santa Cruz County. This authorization is subject to the conditions of the November 6, 2008 and May 27, 2010 authorizations and to the following condition that prior to the Land Trust’s commencement of work, the Conservancy’s Executive Officer shall approve in writing a work program, schedule of completion, project budget, and any contractors to be employed.”

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 remains consistent with the findings made in the Conservancy’s November 6, 2008 and May 27, 2010 authorizations.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This authorization will allow the disbursement of up to \$156,000 of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetland Conservation (NCWC) grant funds to the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Land Trust) for restoration planning in the Watsonville Slough area of southern Santa Cruz County consistent with the Conservancy’s November 6, 2008 and May 27, 2010 authorizations (see Exhibits 2 and 3).

In January 2010, the Conservancy was awarded a NCWC grant for \$860,410 for the purpose of protecting and enhancing freshwater coastal wetlands, improving floodplain function in Watsonville Slough, preserving agricultural lands and providing compatible public access (see Exhibit 2). This was \$180,410 more than the estimate in the November 6, 2008 authorization. Of this amount, \$24,410 is budgeted for Conservancy staff time on the project. The remainder will be disbursed to the Land Trust for restoration planning in Watsonville Slough. The May 27, 2010 authorization referenced the additional funding in the staff recommendation but did not explicitly request authorization to disburse the additional amount. The proposed authorization corrects this oversight and allows the funds to be disbursed as anticipated in the May 2010 authorization.

Site Description and Project History: See Exhibits 2 and 3.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Authorizations to disburse federal funding:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant to the Conservancy:	
November 6, 2008 authorization to disburse to Land Trust	\$ 680,000
Proposed authorization to disburse to Land Trust	\$ 156,000
<u>Conservancy staff costs to be paid by grant</u>	<u>\$ 24,410</u>
Total amount	\$ 860,410*

Project Financing Summary:

Conservancy grant funds (approved Nov. 2008**)	\$ 6,500,000
Wildlife Conservation Board funds	\$ 5,500,000
The Nature Conservancy	\$ 1,500,000

*U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Coastal <u>Wetland Conservation Grant to the Conservancy</u>	<u>\$ 860,410</u>
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Total Project Cost **\$14,360,410**

**For additional project financing information, see Exhibit 2.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION, 2007 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES, AND LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed authorization remains consistent with these sections of the Conservancy's November 6, 2008 and May 27, 2010 authorizations. (See Exhibits 2 and 3). In addition, consistent with the revised project selection criteria adopted by the Conservancy on November 10, 2011, the planning project shall consider a range of sea level rise scenarios in order to assess project vulnerability and, to the extent feasible, reduce expected risks and increase resiliency to sea level rise.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: Restoration planning that includes environmental factors is statutorily exempt (14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15262) from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for the project.