

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
December 6, 2012

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA CONSERVANCY PROGRAM:
LAND CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP**

Project No. 08-023-03
Project Manager: Matthew Gerhart

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$390,000 to the San Francisco Parks Alliance to conduct conservation planning in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, including outreach and coordination among Bay Area land conservation entities, with all activities to be undertaken through the Bay Area Open Space Council.

LOCATION: All nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area (San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, Solano, Sonoma, Napa, and Marin)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [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 \$390,000 (three hundred ninety thousand dollars) to the San Francisco Parks Alliance (the “Alliance”) to further the natural resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program by undertaking the following activities through the Bay Area Open Space Council (the “Council”): (1) develop regional media for promoting understanding of the value of regional open space; (2) develop a unified regional approach to park and trail online technology; (3) increase stewardship capacity for land managers in the Bay Area through meetings, technical resources, and case examples; (4) provide updated and expanded public information on the

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Conservation Lands Network and lead its implementation; and (5) update the Bay Area Protected Areas Database. Prior to the commencement of work and the disbursement of funds, the Alliance and the Council 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 criteria of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31160-31165), regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
 3. The San Francisco Parks 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 \$390,000 to the San Francisco Parks Alliance (the Alliance) to develop regional media for promoting understanding of the value of regional open space; develop a unified regional approach to park and trail online technology; increase stewardship capacity for land managers in the Bay Area through meetings, technical resources, and case examples; provide updated and expanded public information on the Conservation Lands Network (CLN) and lead its implementation; and update the Bay Area Protected Areas Database, all in order to further the natural resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The Alliance will administer this project as fiscal sponsor for the Bay Area Open Space Council (the Council), the members of which include over 50 Bay Area non-profit conservation organizations and public land management agencies throughout the Bay Area, and will work with a broad array of additional organizations within and beyond the conservation community to accomplish the project objectives.

More specifically, the tasks proposed for funding under this grant include the following:

1. *Develop regional media for promoting understanding of the value of regional open space.* The Council will prepare a report detailing the economic benefits of open space in the Bay Area, targeted towards the public, open space managers and public officials; will lead a multi-media marketing campaign to promote open space conservation for the region using consistent messaging and materials; and will present tools to the regional land conservation community for more effectively connecting people to regional open spaces.
2. *Develop a unified regional approach to park and trail online technology.* The Council will design and pilot a unified regional approach to web-based and mobile technology that increases public engagement with the outdoors and enhances user experiences onsite. This

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will result in a collaborative regional park, trail and open space web platform (including mobile options) that builds from the Transit & Trails platform. The new web platform will include interpretive content, way-finding functions, flora/fauna information, and other functions to create a seamless experience for the end-user. Pilot users will test and develop the capabilities of the platform and facilitate its roll-out to members of the open space community.

3. *Increase stewardship capacity for land managers in the Bay Area.* The Council will provide information, resources, and coordination on land stewardship issues as the region moves from an emphasis on new acquisitions toward the increased need for stewardship on conserved lands. It will convene member organizations and other involved land management organizations to identify common stewardship challenges and limiting factors, to assess technical science and research needs regarding those challenges, and to develop stewardship case studies detailing solutions with regional applicability. Results will be promoted through Council gatherings and the annual Open Space Conference.
4. *Lead implementation of the Conservation Land Network.* In 2010 the Council released the Conservation Lands Network (partially funded by the Conservancy), the first comprehensive science-based plan for conserving the region's biodiversity. The Council will analyze implementation of the CLN to date, issuing a "report card" detailing progress toward meeting terrestrial habitat conservation goals across the region. This will include an update to the network itself that will guide further protection of resource lands in the region. Revised CLN information and resources will be incorporated into the region's integrated land-use, housing and transportation plan (the Sustainable Communities Strategy) and will be provided to the public and member organizations via the web, meetings, and conferences.
5. *Update the Bay Area Protected Areas Database (BAPAD),* a descriptive and quantitative tool now relied upon by the Bay Program and many other federal, State, regional and local organizations to select and track land protection projects and to inform regional plans, such as the Conservation Lands Network and Bay Area Critical Linkages.

This project is a priority for the Conservancy, as it greatly expands the ability of the Conservancy's Bay Program staff to implement the directive to the Conservancy in Section 4.5 of its enabling legislation (Public Resources Code Div. 21) to "participate in and support interagency actions and public/private partnerships in the San Francisco Bay area for the purpose of...[identifying and adopting long-term resource and outdoor recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay area], and providing for broad-based local involvement in, and support for, the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program."

The proposed grantee, the San Francisco Parks Alliance, is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 2011 by the merger of the San Francisco Parks Trust and the Neighborhood Parks Council. Its purposes include the encouragement and appreciation of parks and open space and related activities. The Alliance has successfully administered three previous Conservancy grants, including previous work to support the Council. The Council, through which the Alliance would be carrying out the proposed project, has now successfully carried out several Conservancy grants over a period of 12 years. Since the Council itself is neither a public agency nor a private nonprofit organization, it has carried out each grant project in cooperation with a qualified nonprofit which is an eligible grantee and which administers the grant funds for

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work carried out by the Council. Additional administrative background is provided below in “Project History.”

Project History: The Council has played a unique role in the history of the Conservancy’s Bay Area Program, guiding the coalition of public agencies, nonprofit land conservation organizations, and environmental, business and agricultural interests that won passage of the legislation establishing the Bay Area Program in 1997. Founded in 1990, the Council has served its members and the general public as a leader in land conservation planning and implementation, and has helped the Bay Area Program stay up-to-date on challenges and opportunities around the Bay Area. Additional Council accomplishments include preparation of the Conservation Lands Network project (formerly referred to as the Upland Habitat Goals), which is the first science-based regional process for conservation planning in the Bay Area; development of a web-based tool for finding public transportation to Bay Area parks and open space; convening bi-monthly membership meetings to address common issues and opportunities; and convening an annual parks and open space conference.

As the Council is a membership-based organization which is not incorporated, the Conservancy helped fund its projects until recently through Greenbelt Alliance (“Greenbelt”), which is a private non-profit organization. Past grants to Greenbelt for purposes of assisting the Council total approximately \$1.86 million, with roughly an equal amount of matching funds provided by foundations and public agencies. In 2009, at the request of both Greenbelt and the Council, Greenbelt was replaced by the San Francisco Parks Trust (now, the Alliance) as the grantee with respect to the Conservancy grant then in effect and for subsequent grants to carry out the purposes of the Council.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$390,000
Additional Anticipated Contributions	
Membership	\$190,000
Individual donors	145,000
Foundation funding	400,000
Events	120,000
Fee-for-service contracts	100,000
Total Anticipated Project Funding	\$1,345,500

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is the fiscal year 08/09 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, including projects to protect

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and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters and lands and projects and expenditures to promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state, pursuant to the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. 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). Consistent with sections 75060 and 75072, the proposed project would plan for and implement projects that 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.

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 that will assist in the planning and implementation by the Council of projects within the Bay Area that achieve 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. Section 31163(b) directs the Conservancy to participate in and support interagency actions and public/private partnerships in the San Francisco Bay Area for the purpose of implementing subdivision 31163(a), and providing for broad-based local involvement in, and support for, the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The Council greatly enhances the ability of Bay Program staff to cooperate and participate in regional planning through the meetings, training, committees and workshops it organizes for both its membership of more than 50 conservation organizations and agencies and for the interested public at large.

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 that call for coordinated action to protect open space and recreational opportunities for local and regional use, including the policies of county general plan open space elements throughout the region; over a dozen cities' urban limit and urban growth boundary policies; policies and plans of local conservation districts such as the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Marin County Open Space District, and Santa Clara County Open Space Authority; as well as regional conservation plans of entities such as the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG); (2) it serves a regional constituency – the nine-county Bay Area; (3) it can be implemented in a timely way because many projects and all staff are already in place; and (4) it is anticipated to include 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 for the San Francisco Bay Area.

**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 November 10, 2011, 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 Council, supported by the Alliance, comprises more than 50 public agencies and nonprofit land conservation organizations. Project letters are included in Exhibit 1.
4. **Location:** The proposed project addresses land conservation needs and opportunities in the entire nine-county San Francisco Bay Area.
5. **Need:** Without the Conservancy's financial support, the Council would not be able to provide important services and work products for the open space community, including regional materials supporting the value of open space, updates and upgrades to the Conservation Lands Network, BAPAD and Transit and Trails web platform, and development of improved stewardship capacity for the region. It would likewise be difficult for the Council to keep in place the regional networks and relationships that make it possible to respond effectively to land conservation issues in support of the purposes of the Bay Program.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project has a regional scope, addressing land conservation needs in all nine Bay Area counties.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The project is itself not subject in any way to sea level rise, and plans developed under this authorization will consider vulnerability to future sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

10. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.

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12. **Innovation:** The Council seeks to employ innovative, technology-based approaches to bringing the land conservation community together around joint stewardship, media, and conservation planning.
13. **Readiness:** The Alliance and the Council have demonstrated through their previous work funded by the Conservancy that they will be able to conduct the proposed project in a timely manner. Both organizations have staff experienced with carrying out the work that will be required of them.
14. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” section above.
16. **Cooperation:** The Council builds cooperation among federal, State, regional and local agencies and private nonprofit organizations as a primary focus of its mission.
17. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** While the proposed project does not entail physical improvements that could be vulnerable to climate change impacts, the project’s updates to the Conservation Lands Network will for the first time provide detailed climate information including site-level projections regarding climate change vulnerabilities, for use by local land managers.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA: Under California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 15262, the feasibility and planning activities in the proposed project are statutorily exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review. Upon authorization, staff will file a Notice of Exemption.