

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
June 20, 2013

BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL: NAPA VALLEY VINE TRAIL/CALISTOGA PLANNING

Project No. 13-012-01
Project Manager: Betsy Wilson

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$50,000 to the City of Calistoga for planning and design of a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail and Napa Valley Vine Trail known as the “Fair Way” extension in the City of Calistoga, Napa County.

LOCATION: Extending north from the end of the Dunaweal Lane-Washington Street bike path to Lincoln Avenue, City of Calistoga, Napa County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location and Site Maps](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Bay Area Ridge Trail GoNorth Realignment](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [Project Site Photos](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [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 fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to the City of Calistoga for planning and design of a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail and Napa Valley Vine Trail, commonly known as the “Fair Way” extension, in the City of Calistoga, Napa County, subject to the condition that no Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing a final work plan, including a budget and schedule, and any contractors proposed to be used.”

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 the purposes and objectives of Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the improvement of public access to,

within, and around the bay, coast, ridgetops and urban open spaces of the San Francisco Bay area.

2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization of a grant of up to \$50,000 to the City of Calistoga for planning and design of a concurrent segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail) and Napa Valley Vine Trail (Vine Trail), referred to as the “Fair Way” extension, in the City of Calistoga, Napa County. The proposed project will complete environmental documentation and construction plans for the Fair Way extension, a 0.6-mile segment of trail extending north from the end of the existing Dunaweal Lane-Washington Street bike path to Lincoln Avenue (See Exhibit 1). When constructed, this trail segment would complete a high-visibility section of the Ridge Trail and the Vine Trail, provide trail users with safe, off-street access, and connect an existing 1-mile long paved bike path to Calistoga’s downtown area.

In December 2012, the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (BARTC) adopted a new “GoNorth” route for the northern alignment of the Ridge Trail (See Exhibit 2). The planned trail is routed through park and open-space properties, including Rector Reservoir Wildlife Area, Lake Hennessey, Moore Creek Park, Las Posadas State Forest, Wildlake Ranch, Duff Ranch, Robert Louis Stevenson State Park, and Bothe-Napa Valley State Park. The trail will also follow the planned Vine Trail from the Oat Hill Mine Trail in Calistoga to the entrance of Bothe-Napa Valley State Park. In addition, the Vine Trail running south of Bothe-Napa Valley State Park will serve as a Ridge Trail connector.

The Vine Trail is a proposed 47-mile hiking and cycling path stretching from Calistoga to the Vallejo Ferry Terminal. The approximately 5-mile Calistoga segment of the Vine Trail runs from the Oat Hill Mine Trail at Silverado Trail and Highway 29, south through downtown Calistoga and on to Bothe-Napa Valley State Park.

The proposed project would use Conservancy funds to complete the environmental documentation and construction plans for the Fair Way extension segment of the Ridge Trail and Vine Trail. The Fair Way extension would extend the City’s existing paved bike path, which currently runs approximately 1 mile from Dunaweal Lane to Washington Street, north on City-owned property to Lincoln Avenue, providing a 1.5 mile stretch of Class 1 trail (i.e., paved trail separated from roadways), and significantly improving access and safety for recreational users and commuters. The Fair Way extension is identified as a high priority project in the Calistoga Bicycle Plan adopted in October 2012.

The estimated construction cost for the Fair Way extension is \$350,000 to \$400,000. The Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition has indicated that once design and environmental review is completed, the Fair Way extension will be one of the most “shovel-ready” sections of the Vine Trail and will be a top priority for construction funding. Potential funding sources include the state Bicycle Transportation Account, Transportation Development Act Article 3, Transportation Fund for Clean Air, Recreational Trails Program, and the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition.

The City of Calistoga is committed to developing and maintaining a safe and comprehensive countywide bicycle transportation and recreation system that provides access, opportunities for healthy physical activity, and reduces traffic congestion and energy use. The City has received and successfully managed several transportation grants for pedestrian/bicycle improvements. The City will receive assistance from the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition, a community-supported nonprofit organization formed in 2008 to take the lead in advocating for the design, funding, construction, and maintenance of the Vine Trail.

Site Description: The proposed Fair Way extension will be routed through an area that is owned by the City of Calistoga. The trail will be on top of a former Southern Pacific railroad bed. It overlooks grasslands to the east. Photographs of the project area are included as Exhibit 3.

Project History: The vision for the Bay Area Ridge Trail is a 550-mile multi-use (serving hikers, mountain bicyclists and equestrians), continuous trail that rings San Francisco Bay high on the ridgeline. Under the leadership of the Conservancy and BARTC, and supported by a diverse group of project participants, the Ridge Trail creates an interconnected system of open space and trails that provides recreational opportunities and scenic views to the public. Begun over 25 years ago, over 340 miles of trail are now dedicated and/or open to the public in all nine Bay Area counties.

In December 2012, BARTC adopted a new “GoNorth” route for the northern alignment of the Ridge Trail. Planning for the northern extension began in 2009, when BARTC began working with agency partners including the Napa County Park and Open Space District, Sonoma County Regional Parks Department, and Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. The planned trail is routed through park and open-space properties, including Rector Reservoir Wildlife Area, Lake Hennessey, Moore Creek Park, Las Posadas State Forest, Wildlake Ranch, Duff Ranch, Robert Louis Stevenson State Park, and Bothe-Napa Valley State Park. Many of these properties have been publicly acquired since the original Ridge Trail route was laid out, and their advantageous positioning along Napa’s eastern ridgeline allows an opportunity to create a connected open-space corridor. The trail will also follow the planned Vine Trail from Calistoga to the entrance of Bothe-Napa Valley Park.

This authorization will further the Conservancy's statutory and strategic goals of improving access around San Francisco Bay, and is consistent with previous Conservancy authorizations to negotiate and acquire trail easements, prepare trail construction plans and designs, and construct and open trail segments to the public.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$50,000
Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition	<u>\$12,700</u>
Project Total	\$62,700

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this grant is the fiscal year 2008/09 appropriation to the Conservancy from the “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006” (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 funds may be used for the purposes of promoting access to and enjoyment of the urban open space resources in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area in accordance with the provisions of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation. Consistent with the purposes of Proposition 84, the proposed project will be undertaken pursuant to the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program (Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code), as described below.

The Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition is directly contributing \$5,000 to the project and providing topographic survey work estimated to be worth \$7,700.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Funding of the project is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31165, which addresses resource goals in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Pursuant to Section 31162(a) of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help to improve public access to, within, and around the ridgetops, consistent with the rights of private property owners, and without having a significant adverse impact on agricultural operations and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife. Consistent with Section 31162(a), the proposed project is located in Napa County, one of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties, would provide planning for a concurrent segment of the Ridge Trail and the Vine Trail, is not located in or near any agricultural operations or environmentally sensitive areas, and will be designed to avoid significant adverse impacts to wildlife.

Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conservancy cooperates with nonprofit land trusts and other organizations in identifying and adopting long-term resource and outdoor recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Completion of the Ridge Trail is identified in (1) *The San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program Regional Needs Briefing Book (Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, July 1999)* and (2) *400 Miles and Beyond: A Strategic Plan for Completing the Bay Area Ridge Trail (BARTC, Draft 2006)*.

The proposed project satisfies all of the criteria for determining project priority under Section 31163(c), since the project: 1) is supported by adopted regional plans including: the Calistoga Bicycle Plan (October 2012), the Napa Countywide Bicycle Plan (May 2012), Napa Greenway Feasibility Study (February 2009), and the new “GoNorth” Ridge Trail alignment adopted by the BARTC (December 2012); 2) serves a regional constituency by creating additional trail length for the Ridge Trail and the Vine Trail; 3) can be implemented in a timely manner; 4) provides an

opportunity for safe public access through City-owned lands that could be lost if the City of Calistoga does not receive outside funding assistance; and 5) will include matching funds from the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013
STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Goal 12 of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan is to improve public access, recreation, and educational facilities and programs in and around San Francisco Bay, along the coast, the ridgelines, in urban open spaces, and natural areas. Consistent with **Goal 12, Objective F** to plan segments of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, the proposed project will plan a 0.6 mile segment of the Ridge Trail.

**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 project has broad support from Congressman Mike Thompson, State Senator Noreen Evans, State Senator Lois Wolk, County Supervisor Diane Dillon, Napa County Regional Parks and Open Space District, Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition, Napa County Bicycle Coalition, Calistoga Vitality Group, and BARTC. Project letters are included as Exhibit 4.
4. **Location:** The proposed project is located in Napa County, within the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program and will benefit the San Francisco Bay Region by completing the planning needed to further extend the Ridge Trail and the Vine Trail.
5. **Need:** Without Conservancy funding, planning and design of the proposed Fair Way extension would not occur until other funding could be obtained. The Conservancy is ideally suited to provide funding in a timely manner to ensure completion of the project.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Ridge Trail and the Vine Trail are both major regional attractions and amenities. When completed, the Ridge Trail will offer spectacular views of the entire Bay Area and will link many urban areas, parklands, and preserves. Completion of the Ridge Trail is one of the goals identified in the Bay Area Open Space Council's "*Regional Needs Briefing Book*." When completed, the Vine Trail will provide a 47-mile, multi-use trail from Calistoga to the Vallejo Ferry Terminal.

7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The project is not vulnerable to potential future sea level rise as the project is at an elevation of approximately 350 feet above sea level and is not located close to a shoreline.

Additional Criteria

8. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
9. **Readiness:** The project is ready to begin as soon as the necessary funding can be obtained.
10. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.”
11. **Cooperation:** The Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition, a community-supported nonprofit, is working with a diverse set of partners in Napa Valley to design, fund, construct, and maintain the proposed 47-mile Vine Trail. The BARTC works in close partnership with agencies and local government, parks, land trusts, and other stakeholders and volunteers to plan, acquire, design, build, care for, and promote the 550+ mile Ridge Trail. The Coalition and BARTC are partnering on the 5-mile Calistoga segment which forms a key connection of both trails.
12. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** When completed, the project will encourage trail users, including commuters, to walk and cycle and reduce vehicle trips.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations (CCR) Section 15262 (“Feasibility and Planning Studies”), since it is for possible future actions which the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded. The planning studies will include consideration of environmental and cultural factors, to avoid impacts to sensitive environmental and archeological resources.

Part of the project consists of basic data collection and resource evaluation activities, including those necessary for planning the trail alignment and preparing environmental review documents for construction of the trail. These information-collecting activities will be designed and implemented in a manner that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource and are thus categorically exempt from CEQA review, under CCR Section 15306 (“Information Collection”).

Upon approval, staff will file a Notice of Exemption for the project.