

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 03, 2013

SOUTH COAST COMMUNITY FISHERIES REVITALIZATION PLANS

Project No. 13-030-01
Project Manager: Moira McEnespy

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$40,000 to Ecotrust to prepare community fisheries revitalization plans for ports and waterfront areas in Ventura and San Pedro.

LOCATION: Ventura and Los Angeles counties

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Urban Waterfront Restoration

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Locations Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31111 and 31300 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of up to \$40,000 to Ecotrust to prepare community fisheries revitalization plans for ports and waterfront areas in Ventura and San Pedro, provided that EcoTrust shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work plan, schedule, budget, and the names of 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 is consistent with section 31111 and Chapter 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding urban waterfront restoration.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
 3. Ecotrust is a nonprofit organization existing under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$40,000 to Ecotrust to prepare community fisheries revitalization plans for ports and waterfront areas in Ventura and San Pedro (see Exhibit 1).

For each location, Ecotrust will develop a revitalization plan that contains the following components: Business Description (including phased goals and objectives, organizational options, and an operations plan that addresses infrastructure and facilities needed to maintain local fishing), Marketing Plan (including industry trends, target markets, marketing strategies, and research of competition/integration), and Financial Plan (including organizational costs, required start-up funds, income/expense statements). Each plan will conclude with recommendations and next steps that community fishing associations and/or other interested parties (e.g., local business or restaurant, city government, etc.) will use to begin implementing actions to revitalize the area's waterfront.

Need: Vibrant fisheries and working waterfronts have long been integral parts of California's coastal communities—attracting and serving visitors, driving local and regional economies, and forming an iconic part of each community's heritage. In a *California Tourism and Fishing Heritage Study*,¹ tourism professionals and civic leaders rated “availability of local seafood for purchase” and “tourism stemming from an active waterfront” very highly as factors influencing their community's economy, and a majority indicated that having local, fresh seafood available is of great importance in attracting business to their community.² Similarly, the majority of visitors surveyed agreed that a community's culture, such as its identity as a fishing village, is worth preserving; that they enjoy seeing and visiting working waterfronts when traveling along the coast, including seeing fresh seafood being unloaded; and that they would more likely visit a community where they could get fresh local seafood.³ Finally, the most highly-ranked sentiment supported by visitors surveyed was that seafood “not be harvested in a way that endangers the fishery itself.” Although it was “important to know that seafood being served in a restaurant is caught by local fisherman,” the vast majority did not know whether seafood they consumed was locally-caught.⁴

While interest in and demand for sustainable seafood and a working-waterfront experience has been building, residents and visitors have become increasingly disconnected from working-waterfront activities (e.g., there are far more opportunities to buy souvenirs and t-shirts than locally-caught seafood).

¹ *California Tourism and Fishing Heritage Assessment* (Conducted for the Alliance of Communities for Sustainable Fisheries by Responsive Management, 2008).

² “Availability of local seafood for purchase” received a mean rating of 8.85 out of 10, with 75% rating it 10; “tourism stemming from an active waterfront” received a mean rating of 8.82 out of 10, with 50% rating it 10; 74% of respondents scored “having local, fresh seafood available is of great importance to attracting business” an 8 out of 10).

³ *California Tourism and Fishing Heritage Assessment*, pp. ix-x.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. x-xi.

Project Objectives and Approach: The proposed project seeks to provide an understanding of local and regional economic factors, and identify the organizational structures and other actions necessary to address the following objectives:

- Promote economic revitalization related to working waterfronts (e.g., a long-term goal may be direct waterfront retail fish markets; interim steps may be wholesale or fisherman’s markets);
- Enhance public access and tourism; facilitate access to and/or education about local fisheries and products, especially via direct interaction between fishermen and the public; strengthen local identity and heritage;
- Decrease the carbon “fin-print” (e.g., cultivate opportunities to provide local processing, promote sale of local fish and products, encourage restaurants and markets to buy and serve local fish and products);
- Promote sustainable fisheries (e.g., developing direct-to-consumer sales will support local community fishing associations that have a vested interest in maintaining the sustainability of local fisheries).

Because the southern California bight is a distinct eco-region—connected ecologically, economically, and socially, to varying extents—the planning approach will consider the region from Santa Barbara through San Diego. This grant will fund specific studies at two locations (Ventura and San Pedro) that have not yet received significant Conservancy assistance (as has San Diego). The studies will incorporate both local and regional factors, such that the resulting recommendations are integrated from a regional standpoint (e.g., marketing strategies will be developed taking into account what is being offered in neighboring ports, what consumer demand and unmet need looks like from a regional standpoint, and where specialized niche markets may be successful).

Project Details and Site Description: The proposed project will focus on the ports and waterfront areas in two communities along the southern California bight: Ventura and San Pedro. For each location, Ecotrust will develop a plan that contains the following components: Business Description (including phased goals and objectives, organizational options, and an operations plan that addresses infrastructure and facilities), Marketing Plan (including industry trends, target markets, marketing strategies, and research of competition/integration); and Financial Plan (including organizational costs, required start-up funds, income/expense statements). The plans will enable community fishing organizations and businesses to develop activities to bridge the gap between fish producers and consumers, and enhance tourism opportunities through engaging the public in a true working waterfront. Recommendations will identify implementation needs (e.g., organizational capacity and management, infrastructure), opportunities, and challenges. Ecotrust will also prepare a final report that discusses the regional synergies and opportunities between the two locations, and Santa Barbara and San Diego.

To ensure development of complete and useful plans, Ecotrust will engage stakeholders (such as fishermen, community leaders, and businesses) in the data collection and planning processes. Work is anticipated to be complete within six to eight months of the start date.

Ventura: Commercial fishermen in Ventura have established a nonprofit organization, the Ventura County Commercial Fishermen’s Marketing Association (the FMA). The primary

fishery of Ventura is “wetfish” (also known as coastal pelagics), which includes squid, sardines, and mackerel. Other fisheries include lobster, prawn, halibut, yellowtail, white seabass, crab, albacore, urchin, sea cucumber, and rockfish, all of which are ideal species to market directly to local consumers. Although the FMA initiated a fledgling Saturday Market at the harbor, a sustainable business model that incorporates more of the membership needs to be developed. The proposed project will focus on needs and opportunities around organizational capacity, physical infrastructure, fish processing, improving diversity of seafood products, and direct-to-consumer marketing.

San Pedro: Commercial fishermen in San Pedro fish for spot prawns, urchins, halibut, rockfish, squid, lobster, sea cucumber, sardines, and rock crab. A long-term vision is the establishment of a waterfront retail market and fishermen’s cooperative. The proposed project will focus on needs and opportunities around organizational capacity, physical infrastructure, target markets and marketing strategies (wholesale, direct-to-consumer, niche markets), and access points for consumers. Particular attention will be directed to understanding potential synergies with existing businesses, such as at the nearby “Ports of Call” development, and buyers. As the Port of Los Angeles’ Master Plan designates space for commercial fishing and fish processing on Terminal Island, the stakeholder group will include the Port of Los Angeles, as well as the City.

Grantee Description: Ecotrust is a nonprofit conservation and economic development organization that works to strengthen communities and the environment from Alaska to California. Ecotrust specializes in providing technical assistance in the areas of business-plan development, organizational capacity-building, communications, and marketing. In 2011, Ecotrust co-convened the Community Fisheries Network (<http://www.communityfisheriesnetwork.org/index.html>), a group of community-based fishing organizations from across the United States that joined together to address common challenges and increase the long-term social, economic, and environmental sustainability of commercial fishing communities. The Conservancy has successfully partnered with Ecotrust to assist the San Francisco Community Fishing Association with planning and starting to implement a sustainable seafood market at Fisherman’s Wharf.

Project History: In 2011, Ocean Protection Council (OPC) funds were granted to Ecotrust to assist the San Francisco Community Fishing Association in developing a pilot wholesale fish market at Fisherman’s Wharf. In a subsequent report to OPC members, response to the project was favorable, and it was specifically requested that a similar effort in San Pedro be considered. As a Conservancy grant funded the initial San Francisco market business plan, staff began to explore the potential for south coast projects.

Over the past ten years, the Conservancy has provided similar assistance to several locations, most notably the north coast, San Francisco Bay, Monterey Bay, Morro Bay, and San Diego:

- North Coast: Socioeconomic study of north coast fisheries, from Fort Bragg to Crescent City, to support sustainable fisheries management (\$140,000 to CA Sea Grant in 2007).
- San Francisco Bay: Business plan for a San Francisco Fisherman’s Wharf Sustainable Seafood Market (\$65,478 to Ecotrust in 2007), followed by development of a pilot wholesale market operated by the SFCFA (\$250,000 of Ocean Protection Council funds to Ecotrust in 2011).

- **Monterey Bay:** Port fishing infrastructure upgrades, such as completion of a cold storage building in Santa Cruz (\$50,000 to the Santa Cruz Port District in 2003); business feasibility study for a sustainable fish off-loading and processing facility to be co-located with a research facility in Moss Landing Harbor (\$50,000 to Moss Landing Marine Lab in 2007).
- **Morro Bay:** Economic feasibility study to determine the viability of a nonprofit cooperative leasing and managing a shorefront site to promote the commercial fishing industry (\$35,000 to Wise Consulting in 2003); contribution toward purchase of an ice machine (\$207,000 to City of Morro Bay in 2004; preparation of a business plan and marketing plan, and testing of innovative low impact fishing gear (\$130,000 to City of Morro Bay in 2006).
- **San Diego:** Commercial fisheries revitalization and coastal public access plan for Driscoll’s Wharf and Tuna Harbor (\$465,000 to the Unified Port of San Diego in 2007), followed by renovation of the unloading facility, purchase of an ice machine and live seafood holding tank, and planning for a local fisherman’s market (\$285,500 to the Port in 2011). San Diego also has a community-based fisherman’s marketing association, the San Diego Fishermen’s Working Group, that is a part of the Community Fisheries Network.

Although the Conservancy has made a significant contribution towards implementing the Los Angeles Harbor Area Public Access and Urban Waterfront Plan, that effort focused on public access improvements such as development of California Coastal Trail and community linkages. Aside from a significant contribution in San Diego, there has been little to no Conservancy funding for urban waterfront restoration in the context of fisheries/economic revitalization for other communities along the southern California bight. Staff therefore recommends the proposed project, which will address two important urban communities in a regional context.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$40,000
Project Total	\$40,000

The anticipated source of funds is an 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 authorizes the use of these funds to protect “beaches, bays, and coastal waters and watersheds, including projects to...protect 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.” (Pub. Res. Code § 75060).

Consistent with this authorization, the proposed project seeks to protect and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters (in this case, fish and local fishing grounds), and promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state by enhancing opportunities to learn about working waterfronts, understand the significance of local resources and fishing heritage, and purchase locally-caught fish. In addition, Section 75060(b) of the Public Resources Code specifically allocates funding to the Conservancy for expenditure pursuant to the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. As discussed in the section found

immediately below, the project is consistent with Section 31111 and Chapter 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.

Ecotrust is providing a significant in-kind match of staff time and travel valued at \$28,100.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31111, which authorizes the Conservancy to award grants for feasibility studies that implement Division 21 of the Public Resource Code, and pursuant to Chapter 7 (Sections 31300 *et seq.*) regarding the restoration of urban waterfronts.

Section 31301 states that California's urban waterfronts are in need of restoration in order to be the vital economic and cultural components of communities that they once were, and that the encouragement of tourism, public access to the coast, and planned private sector development in these areas is a benefit to the citizens of the state, as well as the local citizenry in affected urban waterfront areas. Consistent with this section, the proposed project could facilitate the revitalization of two waterfronts along the southern California bight (Ventura and San Pedro). Specifically, business, marketing, and financial plans to support community-based fishing associations would be developed for the purpose of restoring and enhancing working waterfronts that have long been integral parts of California's coastal communities—and which attract and serve visitors, drive local and regional economies, and form an iconic part of each community's heritage.

Section 31305 directs the Conservancy to consider revitalization grants that promote excellence of design and integrate man-made features into the natural coastal environment. The successful San Francisco Fisherman's Wharf project developed a wholesale market that encourages local commerce and supports local, sustainable fishing practices in the San Francisco Bay Area. The proposed project seeks to reproduce that effort to support local fishing practices, and develop venues through which to engage public appreciation and use of these urban waterfront areas.

Section 31307 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies and nonprofit organizations for the restoration of urban coastal waterfront areas. Consistent with this section, the proposed project would grant funds to Ecotrust, a nonprofit organization, to plan for revitalization of urban waterfronts, which will eventually enhance tourism and economic development.

Section 31308 authorizes the Conservancy to provide up to the total cost of any urban waterfront project. Consistent with this section, the level of Conservancy funding for this project has been determined through consideration of the total amount of funding available for urban waterfront projects, the significant in-kind contribution by Ecotrust, and the relative urgency of the project (see below).

Section 31316 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants for urban waterfront activities that are compatible with the preservation, restoration, or enhancement of ocean, coastal, or watershed resources, or that facilitate environmental education related to these resources. Examples of such projects include development of amenities and infrastructure consistent with the chapter. Consistent with this section, the proposed project would award a grant to develop business, marketing, and financial plans to support actions of community-based fishing associations

toward revitalization of working waterfronts. Such recommended actions may include development of direct-to-consumer markets (e.g., “Saturday Markets” out on the dock) and other activities that will attract tourism as well as local visitors, and provide education about sustainable fishing practices and local resources and heritage.

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

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective A** of the Conservancy’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project would increase accessibility to working waterfronts, support commercial and recreational fishing, encourage economic revitalization, and enhance cultural and historic resources.

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective A** of the Conservancy’s 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project would plan for activities to improve public understanding of coastal resources, particularly sustainable fisheries and working waterfronts.

**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 proposed project is supported by State Assemblymember Bonnie Lowenthal, the Port of Los Angeles, the Ventura Port District, community fishing associations in Ventura and San Pedro, the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation, the Aquarium of the Pacific, and a researcher at CSU, Dominguez Hills. See letters of support in Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zones of the County of Ventura and the County of Los Angeles.
5. **Need:** Although Ecotrust is contributing significant staff time to the proposed project, Conservancy funds are needed to enable its completion, especially given the regional context which requires research and plan development at multiple sites.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Ventura and Los Angeles waterfronts are iconic destinations that attract national and international visitors, as well as local residents.
7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project consists of developing business, marketing, and financial plans. Although community fishing associations may eventually implement recommended projects or actions at waterfront locations (such as holding a “Saturday Fish Market”), the owners and operators of those facilities (e.g., cities and port

districts) bear the responsibility for assessing facility vulnerability under various sea level rise scenarios, and assessment of the vulnerability of future implementation actions will be conducted at such time those actions are ready for funding/implementation.

Additional Criteria

8. **Innovation:** The proposed project seeks to develop innovative approaches to marketing fish caught using sustainable methods, stimulate restoration of urban waterfronts and commercial fishing, attract visitors, and engage local residents and visitors with a working waterfront experience.
9. **Readiness:** The grantee has funded reconnaissance site visits and research, and stands ready to commence work as soon as funds are available.
10. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
11. **Cooperation:** The proposed project would engage community fishing associations, other fishermen, restaurant and business owners, and other key stakeholders.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM (LCP) POLICIES:

The *2005 Ventura General Plan*⁵ specifically states that it satisfies State requirements for the City’s LCP, and that actions in the *General Plan* that affect coastal resources are intended to become part of the LUP portion of the LCP, which will be accomplished through specific or community plans. Policy 2D calls for expanded tourism opportunities, including visitor-serving commerce and recreation. Consistent with this policy, the proposed project would encourage visitor-serving uses related to enjoyment of a working waterfront.

The relevant portion of the City of Los Angeles’ LCP is the San Pedro segment,⁶ which is comprised of the San Pedro Local Coastal Land Use Plan (LUP) and the San Pedro Specific Plan. Policy 6-3.1 states that “existing coastal-oriented recreational facilities be maintained, developed, and expanded where needed to provide local as well as regional access to and enjoyment of San Pedro’s unique coastal resources.” Consistent with this policy, the proposed project would promote coastal tourism and recreation by promoting restoration of and education about San Pedro’s unique working waterfront. Policy 6-5.2 states in part that “existing lower cost visitor and recreational facilities shall be protected where feasible, and new ones encouraged, by allowing them as permitted uses in the appropriate land use categories.” Consistent with this policy, the proposed project would encourage visitor-serving uses related to enjoyment of a working waterfront.

⁵ The Coastal Commission certified the LUP portion of the City of San Buenaventura’s LCP on January 25, 1984, and the zoning portion on February 23, 1984 (date when the City accepted modifications that were certified July 29, 1983). An updated General Plan that will become part of the LUP portion of the LCP was adopted by the City of San Buenaventura on August 8, 2005.

⁶ The Coastal Commission certified the San Pedro LCP with suggested modifications on April 14, 1988. A revised Land Use Plan portion, the San Pedro Local Coastal LUP, was certified by the Coastal Commission on May 8, 1991; the San Pedro Specific Plan was adopted by the City in 1986 and amended in 1990 as the implementation portion of the LCP, but it has not yet been revised for submittal to the CCC (as the implementing ordinance portion of the LCP).

Finally, the Port of Los Angeles Port Master Plan⁷ provides support for commercial fishing facilities and water-oriented recreational activities, and states that the Fish Harbor area will remain oriented to the fish-processing industry.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the following sections of 14 Cal. Code of Regulations: Section 15262 in that it involves only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions which the Conservancy has not approved, adopted, or funded; and Section 15306 in that it involves basic data collection, research, and resource evaluation activities which will not result in any disturbance to an environmental resource, and which will be undertaken as part of a study which may lead to an action which the Conservancy has not yet approved, adopted, or funded.

⁷ The Coastal Commission certified the Port of Los Angeles Master Plan on April 15, 1980.