

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
May 29, 2014

SAN FRANCISCO BAY TRAIL BLOCK GRANT NO. 5

Project No. 14-008-01
Project Manager: Betsy Wilson

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,000,000 to the Association of Bay Area Governments to fund design and implementation of projects to complete the San Francisco Bay Trail.

LOCATION: Various locations throughout the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [San Francisco Bay Trail Map](#)

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 up to \$1,000,000 (one million dollars) to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) to fund design and implementation of individual projects to complete the San Francisco Bay Trail. This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of Conservancy funds to any individual project grantee, ABAG shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, schedule, budget, and sign plan for the project.
2. Conservancy funds shall not be disbursed for any individual project unless the Conservancy authorizes ABAG to fund the project, which authorization may be by the Executive Officer if the Executive Officer determines that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
3. Projects proposed for funding pursuant to this authorization shall, to the extent feasible provide for the Bay Trail to be:
 - a. designed to reduce expected risks from, and increase resiliency to, sea level rise,

- b. designed and located to minimize costs to repair and relocate over the projected lifetime (typically 20 years) of the project, and
- c. constructed using measures to avoid or minimize greenhouse gas emissions.”

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 Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access to and around San Francisco Bay.
- 2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization of a grant of up to \$1 million to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) for purposes of funding the efforts of local governments, special districts and nonprofit organizations to complete the San Francisco Bay Trail (Bay Trail). (Exhibit 1.) The Bay Trail is a planned recreational corridor that, when complete, will encircle San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with a continuous 500-mile network of bicycling and hiking trails. It will connect the shoreline of all nine Bay Area counties, link 47 cities, and cross the major toll bridges in the region. To date, approximately 335 miles of the alignment—over 65 percent of the Bay Trail’s ultimate length—have been completed.

The proposed grant will provide funding for further steps toward the completion of this important regional trail, accessible to the densely populated urban areas of the nine Bay Area counties. Through this grant, over the next few years, thousands of Bay Area residents and visitors can expect to gain many miles of new Bay Trail and improved destination points along the trail.

The proposed grant will be managed by the San Francisco Bay Trail Project (Bay Trail Project), a nonprofit organization administered by ABAG. The mission of the Bay Trail Project is to plan, promote and advocate implementation of the Bay Trail. By making a “block grant” to ABAG that will be managed by the Bay Trail Project, the Conservancy benefits from the knowledge and experience of Bay Trail Project staff, who will select the projects to be funded pursuant to the proposed grant (with input from others including the Conservancy), administer the grants and perform many of the project management duties. Conservancy staff will assist in the pre-project analysis activities and provide oversight. This level of cooperation will help ensure the efficient and effective use of these funds. The Conservancy has used this arrangement for the past 15 years to provide efficient allocation and management of nearly \$20 million in Bay Trail block grant funding. This same effective relationship between the Conservancy and the Bay Trail Project, matched by the funds of others, has resulted in 48 new miles of Bay Trail that are now heavily used, as well as planning and design for 135 trail miles.

Bay Trail Project staff and Conservancy staff will work together to decide on the best method of distributing the grant funds. In previous years the Bay Trail Project has undertaken competitive grant rounds and evaluated the project proposals according to established criteria. Other projects have been initiated outside of the grant round process by either Conservancy or Bay Trail Project staff. All projects proposed for funding will require Conservancy approval, either by the Executive Officer for projects that are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or by the Conservancy board for projects that are not exempt from CEQA. Once a project is approved for funding by the Bay Trail Project and the Conservancy, ABAG will enter into a grant agreement with the grantee and will require a work plan, budget, sign plan, and other conditions. The grant agreement, work plan, budget, and sign plan will be provided to the Conservancy for review and approval prior to disbursement of any funds under the block grant.

The Bay Trail Project board of directors is made up of representatives from government agencies around San Francisco Bay, including the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the Conservancy and members of trail advocacy groups. The steering committee meets on a bi-monthly basis, and is involved in the project evaluation and selection process. The Bay Trail Project is a nonprofit organization administered by ABAG and dedicated to completing the San Francisco Bay Trail. ABAG is a joint powers authority consisting of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties and 101 cities. Its primary purpose is to provide region wide planning and local government services.

Site Description: The projects will be located along the Bay Trail spine (primary) alignment, as well as spur (shoreline point-access) and connector trails (to regional destinations located inland of the shoreline.)

Project History: Pursuant to state law, ABAG prepared and adopted the *San Francisco Bay Trail Plan* in July 1989, setting forth a proposed alignment for the Bay Trail. Since then, the Conservancy has authorized four Bay Trail block grants to ABAG: \$2,500,000 in September 1999 (funding from the General Fund), \$7,387,500 in December 2000 (funding from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund, “Proposition 12”), \$3,800,000 million in September 2004 (funding from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act, “Proposition 40”), and \$3,000,000 in September 2007, with a \$3,000,000 augmentation in December 2008 (funding from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, “Proposition 84”). A total of 126 Bay Trail projects have been undertaken through these four previous grants.

Several projects funded through this successful Conservancy/Bay Trail Project partnership are highlighted below:

- Moffett Field, Mountain View: A \$63,000 grant was awarded to the San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society to improve 2.4 miles of levee trail between Sunnyvale and Mountain View behind Moffett Field. Completion of the trail gap opened up over 25 continuous Bay Trail miles between East Palo Alto and San Jose.
- Cooley Landing Park, East Palo Alto: A \$244,649 grant was awarded to the City of East Palo Alto for construction of one mile of trail in Cooley Landing Park, opening a new shoreline destination area that had been off limits to the public for decades.

- San Leandro Slough Crossing: Three grants for planning, design and construction completed this short but important gap in San Leandro. The \$535,000 in block grant funds to the City of San Leandro were instrumental in completing construction of a bridge that was the last remaining gap along a 20-mile stretch of shoreline Bay Trail between Oakland and Hayward.
- Carquinez Scenic Drive, Contra Costa County: Several grants totaling over \$520,000 advanced this 1.7-mile trail gap through the stages of feasibility analysis, design and construction. The East Bay Regional Park District is currently constructing the trail and it is scheduled to open in fall 2014.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,000,000
Other sources*	<u>\$4,000,000</u>
Total Project Cost	\$5,000,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for the proposed authorization is the “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006” (Proposition 84, Public Resources Code Section 75001 et seq.). These funds are available for San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program projects that promote access to and enjoyment of coastal resources. Public Resources Code Section 75060(c). Design and implementation of the San Francisco Bay Trail will promote access to and enjoyment of San Francisco Bay and is consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code establishing the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program, as discussed below. Thus, the proposed authorization is an appropriate use of Proposition 84 funds.

*The Bay Trail Project anticipates matching Conservancy funds at a 1:4 ratio. With previous projects, matching funds were provided by cities, counties, special districts (e.g., park, recreation, and open space districts and ports), federal and local transportation funds, and other state and federal sources.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165 regarding San Francisco Bay Area projects.

The proposed authorization is consistent with Section 31162(a) because it will help achieve the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program goal of improving public access to and around the bay through completion of the Bay Trail, a regional trail system. The Conservancy will work with the Bay Trail Project to insure that all individual projects funded with the proposed grant will not have a significant adverse effect on agricultural operations, environmentally-sensitive areas or wildlife. Funding projects to complete the Bay Trail is consistent with many locally- and regionally-adopted Master Plans and General Plans, as nine counties and 47 cities have officially adopted the Bay Trail alignment in local plans or passed resolutions in support of the Bay Trail concept.

Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conservancy has cooperated with nonprofit land trusts and other organizations in identifying and adopting long-term resource and outdoor recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Goals for the San Francisco Bay Trail are outlined in ABAG's *San Francisco Bay Trail Plan* (July 1989) and more recently identified in the document entitled *The San Francisco Bay Trail Project Gap Analysis Study: A Report on Closing the Gaps in the 500-mile Regional Trail System Encircling San Francisco Bay*, ABAG and The San Francisco Bay Trail Project (September 2005).

Consistent with Section 31163(c), completion of the Bay Trail is supported by an adopted regional plan (see "Consistency with San Francisco Bay Plan" section), serves a regional constituency, can be implemented in a timely way, and includes matching contributions from other sources of funding or assistance (see the "Project Financing" section).

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

Consistent with **Goal 12, Objectives D and E** of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed authorization will result in the development of plans for and construction of segments of the San Francisco Bay Trail.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed authorization 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:** Past block grants from the Conservancy to ABAG for management by the Bay Trail Project have been very successful, with many local governments and special districts benefiting from the program and 48 miles of trail constructed and 135 miles planned, benefiting large numbers of people in the Bay Area. Project letters are attached in Exhibit 2.
4. **Location:** The proposed project will be carried out on the San Francisco Bay Trail alignment as set forth in ABAG's *The San Francisco Bay Trail Plan* (July 1989), which follows the shorelines of the nine Bay Area counties.
5. **Need:** Completion of the Bay Trail is not likely to occur absent Conservancy participation.
6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The San Francisco Bay Trail is a regional trail network that will be approximately 500 miles in length when completed. This authorization will help further the completion of the trail, of which approximately 335 miles have been completed to date.

7. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Planning projects receiving Conservancy grant funds will assess project vulnerability to sea level rise and, to the extent feasible, reduce expected risks and increase resiliency to sea level rise. Construction projects will be designed and located to minimize costs to repair or relocate over the projected lifetime (typically 20 years) of the project.

Additional Criteria

8. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
9. **Readiness:** Bay Trail Project staff, having managed four previous block grants, is ready to begin allocation of these funds within the calendar year.
10. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See “Project History” above.
11. **Return to Conservancy:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
12. **Cooperation:** The Bay Trail Project will continue to work with regional and local jurisdictions, special districts, nonprofit organizations, landowners, and the public to design and implement projects to complete the Bay Trail. To date, over 55 organizations have received grants from the Bay Trail Project, including cities, counties, special districts, and nonprofit organizations.
13. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The Bay Trail facilitates the use of non-motorized transportation around the region and in some areas the trail functions as a bicycle commute corridor. Thus, providing funding that can be used to complete the Bay Trail will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the Bay Trail Project will require that project design and construction methods include measures to avoid or minimize greenhouse gas emissions to the extent feasible and consistent with the project objectives.

CONSISTENCY WITH SAN FRANCISCO BAY PLAN:

The proposed project is consistent with the applicable policies contained in Part IV, Development of the Bay and Shoreline: Findings and Policies, of the San Francisco Bay Plan (Bay Plan) adopted by BCDC in 1969, as amended.

Promoting public access opportunities along the bay shoreline is consistent with the Bay Plan Public Access Policies. Public Access Policy No. 9 states that access to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available. It also states that diverse and interesting public access experiences should be provided which would encourage users to remain in the designated access areas to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects on wildlife and their habitat. The proposed authorization to provide funding for projects that help complete the Bay Trail is consistent with this policy.

Public Access Policy No. 11 states that federal, state, regional and local jurisdictions, special districts and BCDC should cooperate to provide appropriately sited, designed and managed public access, especially to link the entire series of shoreline parks, regional trail systems (such as the San Francisco Bay Trail) and existing public access areas to the extent feasible without additional Bay filling and without significant adverse effects on Bay natural resources. The

proposed authorization to provide funding for projects that help complete the Bay Trail is consistent with this policy. The proposed authorization will enable the Bay Trail Project to work with regional and local jurisdictions and special districts, and eligible nonprofits to close gaps between existing public access areas to and help complete the Bay Trail.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed authorization grants funds to ABAG for future grants by ABAG to other entities for projects that will help complete the Bay Trail. The proposed authorization does not approve funding for any particular project and therefore it does not have the potential to result in any physical changes to the environment. All specific projects proposed for funding by ABAG pursuant to this grant require Conservancy approval; the Conservancy will comply with CEQA prior to deciding whether to approve any specific project. Accordingly, the proposed authorization is not a “project” subject to CEQA, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15378.