

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
January 28, 2016

LIVING SHORELINES WORKSHOPS FOR SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Project No. 15-030-01
Project Manager: Megan Cooper

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$26,000 to the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association to conduct two workshops on living shorelines in San Diego and Los Angeles counties.

LOCATION: San Diego and Los Angeles counties

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement and Climate Change

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

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

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby approves the disbursement of an amount not to exceed twenty six thousand dollars (\$26,000) to Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (“SWIA”) to complete the collection and dissemination of information on living shorelines in Southern California through two workshops. Prior to the disbursement of funds, SWIA shall submit for review and written approval of the Conservancy’s Executive Officer a work program, including budget and schedule, and any contractors to be employed for these tasks.”

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 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding coastal resource enhancement.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
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3. The Southwest Wetland Interpretive Association is a nonprofit organization existing under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and whose purposes are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends disbursement of up to \$26,000 to the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association to complete the collection and dissemination of information on living shorelines in Southern California through two workshops. The goal of this project is to summarize and share lessons learned from multiple Conservancy projects as well as projects in other coastal areas to help municipalities and other coastal resource management entities develop a better understanding of living shorelines projects appropriate for the Southern California coastal environment. These lessons learned will be used to encourage and support the use of living shorelines as sea level rise adaptation measures by local government and other coastal resource management entities. This project will help develop a broader understanding around living shoreline options and the types of coastal environments where they may be most relevant, the multiple co-benefits of living shoreline projects, and where and how local government and coastal resource management agencies in Southern California are applying living shoreline concepts.

Projects that use natural habitat elements to protect shorelines from erosion while also providing critical habitat for wildlife are commonly referred to as “living shorelines” projects. Living shorelines can help build coastal climate resilience by providing coastal communities with important storm and coastal flooding protection, as well as numerous ecosystem and socio-economic benefits. In general, living shorelines utilize habitat restoration techniques to reinforce the shoreline, minimize coastal erosion, and maintain coastal processes while also protecting, restoring, enhancing, and creating natural habitat. While not a new concept, living shorelines projects are relatively new to the West Coast. The Conservancy has funded several pilot-scale living shoreline projects, including a native oyster reef restoration in San Diego Bay, a dune restoration plan for Cardiff State Beach, and a native oyster and eelgrass living shoreline project in Upper Newport Bay. These projects provide a valuable opportunity to learn more about the diversity of living shoreline projects, the value of the storm and erosion protection benefits provided, and the full suite of co-benefits provided by healthy coastal ecosystems.

Completed and on-going pilot projects can also serve as valuable examples for how cities can integrate living shorelines into local coastal plans to address coastal storm and sea level rise impacts. Currently, several cities in Southern California are undertaking Local Coastal Plan (LCP) updates with the help of State funding (Solana Beach, Del Mar, Carlsbad, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, and Newport Beach) and the California Coastal Commission’s Sea Level Rise Guidance encourages the use of living shorelines to mitigate climate impacts to coastal resources. However, local municipalities and other coastal management agencies are struggling to comprehend the wide range of living shoreline approaches and how to successfully implement them specifically in the Southern California coastal environment. Better communication, coordination, and outreach about these projects to the coastal managers and planners that are involved in coastal hazard planning and LCP updates, will increase opportunities to integrate living shorelines into broader climate change and coastal restoration efforts.

Specific tasks for the proposed project include information gathering on living shorelines knowledge and expertise, regional workshops, a project summary report, and online webinars. In the information gathering phase, brief interviews or questionnaires will be conducted to gather important information on what local government, scientists, and natural resource managers define as living shorelines, and what they know of living shoreline approaches or case studies for use in coastal flooding and resiliency planning. The two living shorelines workshops will take place in San Diego and Los Angeles counties and will convene living shoreline project managers, coastal managers, and relevant scientists. These workshops will provide attendees with the range of living shoreline approaches for Southern California and their application in coastal resilience strategies. The results from the pre-workshop interviews and the workshops will be summarized into a summary report and web-based information that can be used as communication tools for outreach and education to local municipalities and coastal managers about living shorelines. Finally, the summary report and project results will be shared through additional webinars for interested stakeholders who are not able to attend the workshops.

This project will be conducted by a small partnership of entities that work closely together in Southern California to integrate nature-based climate solutions and concepts into local government planning and policies. The grantee, the Southwest Wetlands Interpretive Association (SWIA) will work with the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Reserve (TRNERR), the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative, and the Climate Science Alliance to implement the project. SWIA has managed dozens of successful projects with the Conservancy over the years and currently manages approximately \$14 million in grant funds per year.

Site Description: The project will take place across Southern California, with workshops in San Diego and Los Angeles County to gather entities that are implementing pilot living shoreline projects in Southern California and locally-based natural resource and coastal resilience experts. The workshops will include participants from San Diego, Orange, Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

Project History: The Conservancy has funded several pilot-scale living shoreline projects in Southern California. These projects provide a valuable opportunity to learn more about the diversity of living shoreline projects, the value of the storm and erosion protection benefits provided, and the full suite of co-benefits provided by healthy coastal ecosystems. The Conservancy has worked closely with the project partners to develop the proposed project in order to share the information that has been gathered from our pilot projects with decision-makers and local governments.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$26,000
Others	\$0
Project Total	\$26,000

The expected source of funds for this project is a fiscal year 2014/15 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, Public Resources Code sections 75001 et

seq.). Proposition 84 funds may be used for projects that protect and restore the natural habitat values of coastal waters and are consistent with Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, and specifically for protection of coastal and bay watersheds within San Diego County (Sections 75060(f) and 75072.6). Proposition 84 defines the term “protection” as “those actions necessary to prevent harm or damage to . . . natural resources or those actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, development, restoration, preservation and interpretation.” (Public Resources Code Section 75003.5(m)). In addition, a portion of Proposition 84 funds may be used for broad-based planning “necessary for the successful design, selection, and implementation of the projects authorized under” Proposition 84 (Section 75072). Proposition 84 funds are available for the proposed project because the project involves gathering and explaining data and other information on living shorelines projects to help insure the successful design of coastal resource protection and restoration projects along the shoreline in San Diego County. The proposed project is consistent with Division 21, as described below.

The grantee will provide approximately \$10,000 of in-kind labor.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 Sections 31251-31270.

Consistent with Section 31251 of the Public Resources Code, the proposed project would award a grant to a nonprofit agency to undertake activities necessary for the enhancement of the natural resources of Southern California that have suffered loss of natural and scenic values. The proposed project will share the lessons learned from several of the Conservancy’s living shorelines projects with decisions-makers and local governments. This information-sharing will encourage the continued usage of living shorelines projects in areas where coastal habitat is threatened by sea-level rise and other human-induced events and nearby development is threatened by sea level rise such that living shorelines, which can address both the habitat and development needs will enhance natural resources and help communities adapt to sea level rise. As municipalities in southern California update their local coastal programs, many are expected to identify areas in need of restoration that is compatible with adaptation to sea level rise.

The Project will also be undertaken pursuant to Section 31113 of the Public Resources Code. This section states that the Conservancy is authorized to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within its jurisdiction. Pursuant to this authorization, the Conservancy may award grants that address sea level rise, storm surge, beach and bluff erosion, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources. The proposed project will increase understanding of the usage of living shorelines, which are intended to address climate change through increasing shoreline protection while at the same time increasing subtidal habitat values.

The proposed project is consistent with Local Coastal Programs in Southern California as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies below.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2013 STRATEGIC PLAN
GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S), AS REVISED JUNE 25, 2015:**

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will help in the development of plans for the restoration and enhancement of coastal intertidal habitat.

Consistent with **Goal 7, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will help develop adaptation strategies to address the threats of sea level rise.

**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 October 2, 2014, 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. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:**
California Water Action Plan (Action 4): Protect and restore important ecosystems
The proposed project will encourage the implementation of living shorelines projects as sea level rise adaptation measures. Usage of living shorelines as shoreline stabilization methods will increase ecological functions of important coastal ecosystems.
4. **Support of the public:** Local decision-makers and resource managers have requested the information that will be collected and disseminated through this project. See Exhibit 3 for support letters.
5. **Location:** The proposed project would be located is intended to affect restoration and enhancement of coastal resources within the coastal zone of multiple cities within Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties.
6. **Need:** The proposed project is needed to increase understanding among municipalities and coastal resource management entities of the benefits of living shorelines projects, and no other funding sources are available at this time.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project will serve coastal communities throughout Southern California.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project will help develop sea level rise adaptation strategies that can be used to lessen the impacts to coastal areas.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** The information on living shorelines is needed urgently to assist the multiple municipalities have already begun to update their Local Coastal Programs.
10. **Resolution of more than one issue:** Living shorelines are inherently multi-benefit projects that address both coastal protection and habitat restoration.
11. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
13. **Innovation:** The Project will share information on innovative techniques for restoring valuable shallow subtidal habitat while also providing shoreline protection.
14. **Readiness:** The grantee is ready to start the project immediately.
15. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.
17. **Cooperation:** The proposed project is a partnership between non-profits, local governments and scientists.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

There are approximately 30 municipalities with Local Coastal Programs (LCPs) within the project area. Currently, several of these municipalities are undertaking LCP updates with the help of State funding (Solana Beach, Del Mar, Carlsbad, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, and Newport Beach). The Coastal Commission’s Sea Level Rise Guidance (August 2015) encourages the use of living shorelines to mitigate climate impacts to coastal resources, and the proposed project will provide additional information that municipalities need to incorporate the Commission’s guidance.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15306 because the project involves only data collection, research and resource evaluation activities that will not result in a serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval.