

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
January 28, 2016

COASTAL TRAIL PROJECT ASSISTANCE – PHASE III

File No. 08-115-03
Project Manager: Timothy Duff

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$105,000 total to the California Coastal Trail Association to continue to manage and expand the California Coastal Trail Association, provide member services, and promote public use and continued development of the California Coastal Trail.

LOCATION: Statewide Coastal Zone

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [CCTA Brochure](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400 *et seq.* of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred five thousand dollars (\$105,000) over a three a three-year period to the California Coastal Trail Association (CCTA) to manage the California Coastal Trail Association, to promote public use and continued development of the California Coastal Trail, and to pay Conservancy dues for membership in the CCTA. This authorization is subject to the condition that prior to the disbursement of any funds, CCTA shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, budget, schedule, and the names 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 authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.

3. The California Coastal Trail 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 that the Conservancy authorize a three-year grant to the California Coastal Trail Association (CCTA) to continue to manage and expand the California Coastal Trail Association and to promote public use and continued development of the California Coastal Trail (CCT). Key activities to be undertaken with this grant include continued management of the CCT signage database, development of tools and information resources to aid CCTA partners in management and development of the CCT, and continued collaboration with the Conservancy and Coastal Commission on development of CCT and interpretive content for the Explore the Coast web application. Staff also recommends that the Conservancy authorize the payment of membership dues to CCTA for the Conservancy’s membership in CCTA. The CCTA intends to recruit other state agencies to join the association, including the state Department of Transportation (Caltrans), State Parks, Coastal Commission and Resources Agency, and will set membership fees based upon those discussions. It is anticipated that the Conservancy will consider funding future years of the CCTA pending the successful outcome of the proposed three year project.

California boasts one of the most diverse and spectacular coastlines in the world. Visitors and residents alike are drawn to its sandy beaches, tide pools, dramatic coastal cliffs, densely forested coastal mountains, and large bays. The variety and breath-taking beauty of its coast are a critical component of California’s economy and quality of life for its citizens. The vision of the CCT is for a continuous public trail spanning over 1200 miles from Oregon to Mexico for both recreation and transportation purposes. The CCT encompasses not only the lateral north to south trail but all of the vertical accessways and support facilities such as parking lots and restrooms that serve to connect the public to the state’s bluffs and beaches.

Today about 700 miles of the trail exist. Completion of the trail and continued improvement of support facilities and connecting trails is the core of the Conservancy’s coastal access program. In order to realize the vision of the CCT, state agencies, local governments, and community organizations will need to work together to integrate the network of existing and planned future coastal accessways into a defined trail system that offers multiple recreation, transportation, and economic benefits to local communities. The mission of the CCTA is to assist coastal communities in planning, developing, managing, and promoting the CCT.

The CCTA is modeled after other successful long-distance trail associations such as the nonprofit Pacific Crest Trail Association. To date CCTA has successfully recruited all 15 coastal counties to join as dues paying members of the CCTA, and by this spring expects to have most of the 54 coastal cities on board ahead of the inaugural conference to be held in May in Southern California. The proposed Conservancy grant and membership dues will enable the CCTA to continue to recruit additional members, including special districts, ports, harbors, open space and park districts, and transportation agencies, as well as nonprofit organizations and private businesses in the tourism and recreation industries. In addition, CCTA member services will

continue to be developed, including an online mapping tool that will enable members to map existing trail segments and identify priority gaps for future planning and development. The CCTA will also develop web-based content to assist members in promoting their coastal trail, park resources, and associated visitor attractions, and to provide them with guidance on state and federal grant programs. See Exhibit 1 for a description of member benefits and services.

The CCTA was initially created in 2014 as a program of Coastwalk California. Coastwalk has now officially changed its name to the California Coastal Trail Association. Established in 1983, Coastwalk California has been the principal statewide nonprofit group supporting completion of the CCT. Coastwalk has also been instrumental in raising awareness of the trail with local and state elected officials, and has planned numerous events along the state's coastline and in Sacramento highlighting the trail and the need for greater public support to get it completed. Today CCTA is focused on building the CCTA membership and developing its services.

Site Description: Covering roughly 1,200 of coastline, the CCT is planned to extend from Oregon to Mexico, and includes the network of trails and support facilities that connect visitors from inland areas to the coast. The CCT is a "braided" system of trails that offers a variety of routes to and along the coast for hikers, bicyclists and, along some segments, equestrians. The CCT extends along sandy beaches, bluffs, piers, waterfronts, promenades and includes the necessary support facilities such as parking lots and restrooms to accommodate visitors. Wherever feasible, the CCT also serves those with disabilities.

Project History: Coastwalk launched efforts to develop the CCTA with Conservancy funding in October 2012. In early 2013, Coastwalk secured a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service (NPS) to assist in researching other trail associations and to work with Coastwalk and the Conservancy to develop a framework for the association's structure, purpose and mission. Between 2013 and 2015 CCTA staff made annual presentations at the coastal caucus of the Association of Counties and the League of Cities to recruit new members and followed up with city and county staff and elected officials to obtain their financial commitment. Since 2010 CCTA staff has presented on panel sessions at the annual statewide Trails and Greenways Conference hosted by State Parks. In 2013, CCTA obtained grant funding from the Coastal Commission to develop a web-based mapping tool that will be launched at the inaugural CCTA conference in May. For the past two years, CCTA has helped the Conservancy manage the CCT signing program and the development of the Conservancy's Explore the Coast mobile website tool. In the spring of 2015, CCTA took a leadership role in the creation of a Caltrans-led Coastal Trail working group that includes Conservancy and Coastal Commission staff.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$105,000
CCTA	<u>\$300,000</u>
Project Total	\$405,000

The proposed source of Conservancy funding is an appropriation to the Conservancy from the Coastal Access Account. Funds deposited to the Coastal Access Account may be used for grants to public agencies and private non-profit entities for development, maintenance and operation of new or existing facilities that provide public access to shoreline of the ocean. (See Public

Resources Code § 30620.2). Consistent with the purposes for which this fund source was established, the CCTA will use these funds to help agencies and non-profit organizations develop, maintain, operate and promote public use of the CCT.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

This project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31410), regarding public access and enjoyment of coastal resources, and development of the CCT. Section 31400 states the Legislature’s intent that the Conservancy play a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the coast. The intent of the proposed project is to continue development and improve long-term management of the CCT. Section 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to assist nonprofit organizations working to establish a system of public coastal accessways.

Public Resources Code Section 31409 also authorizes the Conservancy to award grants and provide assistance to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to establish and expand those inland trail systems that may be linked to the CCT. The activities that would be supported through the recommended grant to the CCTA are all directly related to the development and operation of the CCT.

Public Resources Code Section 31408(a) states that the Conservancy “shall, in consultation with the Department of Parks and Recreation, the California Coastal Commission, and the Department of Transportation, coordinate the development of the California Coastal Trail.” The proposed authorization will assist the CCTA coordinate with state and local agencies and community organizations in the development of the CCT.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective A**, the proposed project will serve to implement projects to promote awareness and use of the California Coastal Trail, including web-based technologies.

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:** The legislature's desire to see the CCT constructed is evidenced by the statutes cited in the section discussing the trail in the context of the Conservancy's enabling legislation. In addition, by developing public access and Coastal Trail facilities the project serves to promote and implement state Coastal Act policies as follows:
 - **Coastal Act (1976), Public Resources Code Section 30210** on public access and recreation calls for "maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse," and Section 30214 calls for public access and recreation "tak[ing] into account the need to regulate the time, place, and manner of public access depending on the facts and circumstances in each case...". The proposed project will serve to implement these policies.
 - **Coastal Act (1976), Public Resources Code Section 30240** on environmentally sensitive habitat areas states that "environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas," and "development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas." The proposed project will serve to implement these policies.
4. **Support of the public:** The project has broad support of the public, public agencies and elected officials as demonstrated by the letters attached as Exhibit 2.
5. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone statewide.
6. **Need:** The CCTA is an important partner for the development and management of the CCT. Conservancy funding, along with funding from other state and local partners, is needed to continue the CCTA's valuable work towards developing and managing the CCT.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** Establishing a statewide trail association to assist with the maintenance, operation, and promotion of the CCT will serve trail users and managers throughout the state, including the millions of visitors from throughout the country and world who visit the California coast each year.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The establishment of the trail association does not directly raise issues related to sea level rise vulnerability. The association will educate its members on the importance of addressing this issue in their trail planning, design and location.

Additional Criteria

9. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** Creation of a continuous California Coastal Trail has been a major goal from the outset of the state's Coastal Management Program. In 2001, Assembly Concurrent Resolution 20 declared the CCT an official state trail and urged the Conservancy to work cooperatively with other agencies to complete it. Senate Bill 908 (Chapter 446, Statutes of 2001) amended the Public Resources Code to add Sections 31408-31409 directing the Conservancy to coordinate the planning and development of the CCT in

consultation with the Coastal Commission and State Parks. The Coastal Commission and State Parks will be invited to join the trail association. See also “Project History” section.

10. **Cooperation:** Establishing a new statewide trail association promoting the stewardship and completion of the trail will require the cooperation of federal, state and local agencies, nonprofit groups and community leaders and volunteers.

CONSISTENCY WITH COASTAL ACT POLICIES:

Policies encouraging the development of public access facilities, including the Coastal Trail, are among the most prominent features of the California Coastal Act, Division 20 of the Public Resources Code Sections 30000-30900. Section 30001.5(c) that the “basic goals of the state for the coastal zone” include the need to “maximize public access to and along the coast ...” Public Resources Code Section 30210 requires that “... maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people...”. Public Resources Code Section 30530 expresses the intent of the Legislature that a program to maximize public access to and along the coastline be prepared and implemented “consistent with the provisions of Chapter 9 of Division 21” including the mandates for Conservancy action to create the Coastal Trail. These policies would be implemented through continued development of the CCTA.

Similarly, the Coastal Act includes several references to the need to increase public knowledge of access opportunities and to involve community organizations in such efforts. Public Resources Code Section 30214(c) directs the Coastal Commission and other public agencies to “... encourage the utilization of innovative access management techniques including, but not limited to, agreements with private organizations which would minimize management costs and encourage the use of volunteer programs.” Public Resources Code Section 30012 includes the Legislative finding that “an educated and informed citizenry ... is necessary to protect California’s finite natural resources [and] ... through education, individuals can be made aware of and encouraged to accept their share of responsibility for protecting and improving the natural environment.” These purposes would be implemented through continued development of the CCTA.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project actions are categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15262, as this would involve only planning studies and feasibility analyses for possible future actions which the Conservancy has not yet reviewed or evaluated. Actions under the authorization are also categorically exempt under Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection and resource evaluation activities from further CEQA review. The proposed actions involve planning necessary to create new trail segments and provide the public with tools to access existing trail segments.

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