

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

December 6, 2018

EEL RIVER ESTUARY AND CENTERVILLE SLOUGH ENHANCEMENT PROJECT: AUGMENTATION

Project No. 12-018-05

Project Manager: Michael Bowen

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$950,000 received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and \$930,000 received from the Ocean Protection Council to augment the Conservancy's February 2, 2017 and March 22, 2018 authorizations to The Wildlands Conservancy for the Eel River Estuary and Centerville Slough Enhancement Project.

LOCATION: Eel River Estuary Preserve and Centerville Slough, tributary to the Salt River, near Ferndale, Humboldt County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Eel River Estuary and Centerville Slough Enhancement Project Staff Recommendations dated February 2, 2017 and March 22, 2018.](#)

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 authorizes the disbursement of an additional one million dollars (\$950,000) received from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and an additional nine hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$930,000) received from the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) to The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) for the Eel River Estuary and Centerville Slough Enhancement Project in Ferndale, Humboldt County.

This authorization is subject to all of the conditions imposed upon TWC through the February 2, 2017 and March 22, 2018 Conservancy authorizations for this project attached as Exhibit 2 to this staff recommendation as well as the condition that TWC will assist the Conservancy in complying with the terms and conditions of the USFWS and OPC grant agreements.”

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 project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding coastal resource enhancement.
 3. The Wildlands Conservancy 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 the Conservancy augment the existing grant to The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) for implementation of the Eel River Estuary and Centerville Slough Enhancement Project (project) by authorizing the disbursement of up to \$950,000 provided to the Conservancy through a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service North American Wetlands Conservation Act (USFWS-NAWCA) grant, and \$930,000 provided to the Conservancy by the Ocean Protection Council’s Proposition 1 Program. The total amount of this grant augmentation is \$1,880,000. The Conservancy previously authorized disbursement of \$950,000 from USFWS National Coastal Wetlands Conservation (NCWC) program funds to TWC at its February 2, 2017 meeting, and subsequently authorized disbursement of \$1,511,462 in Coastal Conservancy funds to TWC at its March 22, 2018 meeting to implement the project. After augmentation, the total amount of the Coastal Conservancy’s authorization will be \$4,341,462. The grant augmentation is needed to provide full funding for the proposed budget, currently estimated to cost approximately \$9 million. TWC has received a substantial grant from the Wildlife Conservation Board to complete the project. If authorized, this additional funding will be used to augment the project budget sufficiently to complete the project consistent with those purposes identified in the various grants.

The project is fully described in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2). No changes have been made to the project since the Conservancy initially authorized funding.

Site Description: The project area remains as described in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

Project History: The project history remains as described in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

PROJECT FINANCING

February 2, 2017 Authorization

Coastal Conservancy (USFWS-NCWC grant)	\$950,000
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March 22, 2018 Authorization

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,511,462
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Total Prior Authorization	\$2,461,462
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December 6, 2018 Authorization

Coastal Conservancy (USFWS-NAWCA)	\$950,000
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Coastal Conservancy (Ocean Protection Council)	\$930,000
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<i>Conservancy Project Total</i>	<i>\$4,341,462</i>
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Other Funding Sources

Wildlife Conservation Board	\$4,800,000
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Project Total	\$9,141,462
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The anticipated source of funding augmentation for this project is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetlands Conservation Act funding, and the Ocean Protection Council's Proposition 1 Grant Program, respectively. A portion of the Ocean Protection Council's grant (\$20,000 of the total \$950,000 award) will fund SCC staff costs. In addition, the Wildlife Conservation Board awarded a sizeable grant to TWC for project implementation. The project team has now assembled sufficient funding for implementation. In the event of cost overruns, TWC is in negotiations with the Natural Resources Conservation Service over the sale of a wetlands easement, and seeks to close the sale of that easement by Spring 2019. If successful, that funding will serve as a backup of resources to ensure timely project implementation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Section 31220), as described in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation attached as Exhibit 2 and remains consistent with the purposes of this Chapter.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S 2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN
GOALS & OBJECTIVES:**

The project remains consistent with strategic plan objectives 2(A), 2(D), 5(B), 5(C), 6(B), 6(D), 6(E), 6(G), and 7(B) as described in the March 22, 2018 staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:**

The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy project selection criteria and guidelines, as described in the February 2, 2017 and March 22, 2018 staff recommendations (Exhibit 2).

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

As discussed in the February 2, 2017 staff recommendation, the proposed project is consistent with the County of Humboldt Local Coastal Program (LCP) Eel River Area Plan (ERAP), certified by the Coastal Commission in 1982 and last updated in 1995. The ERAP outlines numerous policies pertaining to the preservation and restoration of sensitive coastal habitat, but it also includes strong provisions in support of agriculture. The Project is consistent with these policies in that it will restore coastal habitat and enhance agriculture. Further, all of these LCP policies influenced the preparation of the Project's final designs which address agricultural preservation and habitat restoration.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The February 2, 2017 and March 22, 2018 staff recommendations (Exhibit 2) discuss CEQA compliance. No changes have been made to the project since the March 22, 2018 Conservancy authorization. No further action under CEQA is necessary.