

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

October 17, 2019

Wavecrest and Pebble Beach Drive Access Planning

Project No. 19-028-01

Project Manager: Peter Jaraus

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$103,600 to the County of Del Norte to prepare plans, permit applications, and environmental review for the repair of an existing ramp to the beach at the Wavecrest Drive Coastal Access and for a new accessible pathway on Pebble Beach Drive in Del Norte County.

LOCATION: Del Norte County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [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 and three thousand six hundred dollars (\$103,600) to the County of Del Norte (“the grantee”) to prepare plans, permit applications, and environmental review for repairs to an existing ramp to the beach at the Wavecrest Drive Coastal Access and for a new accessible pathway on Pebble Beach Drive in Del Norte County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, schedule, and budget.
 2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
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3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
4. In addition, to the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development' and the requirements of all applicable federal and state laws governing barrier-free access for persons with disabilities into the Wavecrest and Pebble Beach Drive Access Planning 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 Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the creation of a system of public accessways.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The proposed project will serve more than local public needs."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$103,600 to the County of Del Norte to prepare plans, permit applications, and environmental review for repairs to the Wavecrest Drive Coastal Access and for a new accessway on Pebble Beach Drive (see Exhibit 1: Project Location). Wavecrest is a popular access point which was damaged by the 2011 Tsunami and the paved trail now ends 5 vertical feet above the beach. At Pebble Beach Drive the County of Del Norte proposes to build a ramp to the beach to improve visitor safety and provide access to this beach for all Californians.

The Wavecrest Drive Coastal Access is a vertical accessway from Wavecrest Drive to the ocean that was constructed in the mid-nineteen-nineties as a condition of approval of a subdivision. It was subsequently dedicated to the County of Del Norte. The 5' wide concrete pathway was damaged in the 2011 Tsunami and now hangs in the air above the beach. The pathway has continued to deteriorate and is unsafe and in a condition that limits public access to the beach and ocean. The original guardrail was also damaged and is missing many sections. (See Exhibit 2: Project Photos).

Wavecrest is used by visitors wanting access to the pristine beaches north of the Smith River as well as members of the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. The Tolowa use it for access to a culturally important fishing area located just to the south of the accessway. For beachgoers it is an important day use area. The nearest accessway to the north, Kamph Memorial Park, is often already at capacity because it provides overnight camping. Wavecrest accommodates those who would like to make day visits to the beach.

The proposed Pebble Beach Drive Coastal Accessway will be located adjacent to an existing public parking area on Pebble Beach Drive north of the City of Crescent City. The site is on a well-traveled scenic route along the California Coastal Trail that attracts many visitors. Currently there is no improved pedestrian access to the beach at this site because the existing parking area is surrounded by a steep bluff edge and riprap. Visitors frequently climb down an informal trail through the riprap to get to the beach. The County of Del Norte proposes to improve safety by replacing this informal trail with a path of travel that will accommodate all users. It would also be a significant improvement to coastal access as there are no accessible pathways to the beach along this stretch of coast from the City of Crescent City to Point Saint George.

The proposed authorization would enable the County of Del Norte to undertake the planning and design for both accessways. This will include:

1. Necessary technical studies and reports such as geotechnical reports, sea level rise analyses, and biological assessments.
2. Public outreach and direct consultation with local Native American tribes, including the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation and Elk Valley Rancheria.
3. Design plans and specifications.
4. Draft CEQA document.
5. Draft permit applications such as Coastal Development Permits.

Site Description: The Wavecrest Drive Coastal Access is located approximately two miles south of the Oregon border, just west of Highway 101. It is owned by the County of Del Norte and includes a parking lot for about twenty vehicles and a 500-foot long trail to the beach. The trail itself is approximately five feet wide and paved for its entire length. Currently the last twenty feet of the trail are missing as is much of the handrail on about half of the trail. The bottom portion of the trail was washed away by the Tsunami in 2011. Despite the missing section of trail the accessway remains popular.

The Pebble Beach Drive Coastal Access point is located just south of Point Saint George and the Del Norte County Airport and about one mile north of the City of Crescent City. The property is owned by the County of Del Norte. The access point is a paved overlook with spaces for about 21 vehicles, interpretive signage, and stunning views of off shore rocks and the Pacific Ocean. At low tide the area is a prime spot for kids to enjoy the tidepools. In 1995 the County reinforced the ocean facing slope with Rock Slope Protection (RSP) because of erosion. Immediately south of the parking area, where the ramp to the beach is proposed, the area is covered by willow and European grasses. Pebble Beach Drive is part of the CCT and has a widened shoulder for pedestrians as well as bike lanes connecting it to Crescent City.

Grantee Qualifications: The County of Del Norte is well qualified to undertake this planning project. They maintain their own parks system including a popular campground, several access points, and two boat ramps. In addition, the Conservancy has undertaken two Coastal Trail and

access projects with the County of Del Norte. The County now owns and manages the Point Saint George Property which was acquired with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Conservancy. At Point Saint George the County installed a guardrail to prevent vehicles from damaging the resources and installed important regulatory signage to deter looting of cultural sites. The property includes listed species, important cultural resources, as well as a trail to the beach, and has been maintained by the County for over 20 years. The Conservancy also helped fund the initial CCT improvements to Pebble Beach Drive through the *Pebble Beach Del Norte Coastal Trail* grant to the County of Del Norte. The Conservancy grant included improvements to the pull outs and interpretive signage. The County then secured additional funding to widen the road to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists who use Pebble Beach Drive as part of the CCT.

Project History: The County of Del Norte initially approached the Conservancy with the goal of receiving funding assistance to evaluate their existing coastal access points and develop plans for improvements. Subsequently the County undertook that analysis on its own and prioritized projects. Through that analysis, the Wavecrest and Pebble Beach Drive projects were identified as the highest priority access projects to move forward with at this time, as they have the highest levels of public use.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$103,600
Project Total	\$103,600

The proposed source of Conservancy funds for this authorization is an appropriation to the Conservancy from Proposition 12, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000. (Public Resources Code sections 5096.310, et seq.) These funds are available for projects that enhance real property in coastal areas, including projects that develop public access north of the Gualala River. Public Resources Code § 5096.352(c)(2). The proposed project will facilitate development of a new coastal access point and repair of an existing one north of the Gualala River. It is consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, as discussed in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s enabling legislation” section of this report, below. The proposed authorization is thus consistent with Proposition 12.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 (Sections 31400-31409) of the Public Resources Code, as follows:

Pursuant to sections 31400.1 and 31400.2, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of the initial development of public accessways by any public agency or non-profit organization for public access purposes to and along the coast that serve greater than local needs. Consistent

with this authority, the proposed project provides funds to the County of Del Norte to design improvements at Wavecrest and Pebble Beach Drive. The proposed ramps will improve beach access for the residents and tourists who come to this region for its scenic beauty.

Pursuant to Section 31400.2, the amount of funding provided by the Conservancy shall be determined by the total amount of funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects, and the application of factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of determining project eligibility and priority. The proposed contribution by the Conservancy was determined based on application of project selection criteria as discussed below and on consideration of other available resources.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources: The new ramps will provide a safer pathway to the beach by eliminating the need to climb down a rock revetment, or around the end of a broken pathway. They will also reduce damage to the surrounding vegetation by focusing users on the path.

Standard No. 2, Correct Hazards: The new ramp at Pebble Beach Drive will reduce hazards to visitors who are currently climbing down an unmaintained path. The repaired trail at Wavecrest will correct the trail hazard caused by the 2011 tsunami and coastal erosion.

Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access: At Pebble Beach Drive the pathway will be designed to be wheelchair accessible.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#)

GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design a new coastal access facility, and improve an existing one, both of which will enhance the public's use and enjoyment of the coast.

The project is also consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** as it benefits disadvantaged communities.

**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:**

Completing the California Coastal Trail (2003)

The North Pebble Beach Drive Coastal Access is part of the Point St. George headland acquisition referenced in Recommendation for Action – Del Norte County Item 4 (Pg.42). While not specifically the target of the recommendation which is directed toward the northern headland area and need for multi-use trails, the project does support the Coastal Trail by providing coastal access within this area. The Wavecrest Drive Coastal Access also supports use of the Coastal Trail.

California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report.

The project will consider the effects of climate change when selecting final plans for each site. Public Safety will also be factored into the design (Pg. 27, 5).

4. **Support of the public:** see "Exhibit 3: Project Letters".

5. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Del Norte County.

6. **Need:** Without the Conservancy's participation the County of Del Norte will be unable to improve ADA access to the beach, a goal of the Conservancy, due to lack of funds. Del Norte County is a rural California community with unemployment above the statewide average and a significant portion of the population earning less than the California median income.

7. **Greater-than-local interest:** Del Norte County receives hundreds of thousands of visitors every year who come to enjoy the area's stunning natural coastline and visit Redwood National and State Parks. This project will be one of the few locations at which visitors with a range of abilities will be able to safely experience the coastline.

8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed access ramps will go from the current high tide line up to parking lots at 8+ feet in elevation. Both parking areas will remain more than 7 feet above the statewide projected sea level rise of 16 inches by 2050. The access ramps will be designed to withstand more frequent storms and will be anchored firmly in the beach. Unlike much of California, sea level in Del Norte County currently has an annual decrease of 0.65mm a year (average for 1930's to present). This is due to an annual seismic uplift that is greater than sea level rise in the region. This seismic uplift will somewhat mitigate the predicted sea level rise and allow the public to continue to enjoy the beach.

9. **Readiness:** The County of Del Norte is ready to undertake this project.

10. Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise: Should there be an increase in storm event frequency of severity as a result of climate change, the area can anticipate heavy wind and wave action. The public access improvements in the proposed projects will be engineered to withstand these types of impacts.

11. Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions: The proposed project will cause little increase in GHG emissions as this is a planning and design project. The construction will cause a short-term increase in GHG emissions due to construction and a minor long-term increase from an anticipated increase in number of vehicles traveling to the access points.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The project is consistent with the Public Access component of the Del Norte County General Plan Coastal Element (1983).

Overall the Public Access Component encourages the County of Del Norte to provide additional coastal access to the public while simultaneously respecting private property rights and sensitive coastal resources. The project will increase public access and both sites are located on public property, therefore respecting private property rights. Both sites will be designed to minimize impacts to resources.

The project will also specifically address the following policy goals-

Policy C1: The project will directly implement the County's goal to "work actively towards the attainment of maximum coastal access for the public where it is consistent with public safety..." Repair of one pathway and design of a new one will meet this policy goal. (Page 15)

Policy C4: The project will also meet goal C4 of by designing the project to consider public safety, vandalism, and the projection of fragile coastal resources. (Page 15)

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Sections 15262 and 15306, because it involves only feasibility studies, planning studies, basic data collection and research, none of which will impact any environmental resource(s) and all of which will be undertaken as part of a study leading to possible future action that the Conservancy has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of this project.