

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 17, 2019

Crescent City Beachfront Master Plan

Project No. 19-029-01
Project Manager: Peter Jarausch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$90,000 to the City of Crescent City to prepare a Beachfront Park Master Plan to improve public access to the coast for residents and visitors of Crescent City.

LOCATION: Crescent City, Del Norte County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Urban Waterfront Restoration

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Photos and Detailed Site Map](#)

Exhibit 3: Project Letters (Will be provided at the Board Meeting)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31300 et seq. of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed ninety thousand dollars (\$90,000) to the City of Crescent City (“the grantee”) to prepare a Beachfront Park Master Plan to improve public access to the coast.

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.
 3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
 4. In addition, to the extent appropriate, the City of Crescent City shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy’s ‘Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location
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and Development’ and the requirements of all applicable federal and state laws governing barrier-free access for persons with disabilities into the Crescent City Beachfront Park Master Plan.”

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 7 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, 31300 et seq., regarding urban waterfront restoration.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends authorization of up to \$90,000 to the City of Crescent City to develop a master plan for its beachfront park. Beachfront Park is the City’s largest open space area, spans the City’s most prominent section of waterfront, and contains an existing half mile section of the California Coastal Trail (see Exhibits 1 and 2). The City would like to improve the park to better accommodate the needs of residents and visitors to the City. The proposed authorization would allow the City to work with a consulting firm to prepare the Beachfront Master Plan, which will include:

1. Outreach to, and input from, a broad range of citizens in Crescent City;
2. A new master design plan that can be adopted by the City Council; and
3. Cost estimates for the highest priority projects identified in the plan.

Development of a Beachfront Master Plan will help the City decide how to make the best use of the park and connect the downtown to its waterfront. Currently the City has received suggestions from a number of community partners for new amenities at the park, including additional trails, more beach access, a bike park, and a dog park. There is not sufficient space or resources to implement all the ideas being proposed. While City staff are appreciative of the ideas and input put forth to date, they would like to broaden their outreach and make a systematic effort to reach parts of the community that traditionally have not had a say in these decisions. To this end, the City is proposing to use a process called ‘empathy outreach’ which involves more one-on-one listening sessions and engagement with community members in locations they are comfortable. This is a step away from holding public meetings which are either sparsely attended, or only attended by those with sufficient time and resources to do so. This form of direct outreach should help the City better understand the community’s priorities for the park, and directly incorporate those priorities into the new Master Plan.

The California Coastal Trail (CCT) runs through Beachfront Park connecting it both to the Crescent City Harbor as well as Battery Point Lighthouse. This is a great amenity for tourists who can stay at one of the many hotels near the Crescent City Harbor and explore the City's waterfront until they reach the popular lighthouse. As part of the planning process the City will review the existing route through the park and develop a proposal for how to improve the one small gap in the trail behind Endert Municipal Pool. As part of this planning effort, the City will also develop a plan to formalize the CCT from Battery Point Lighthouse along the western edge of the City to Pebble Beach Drive. Improving the CCT through this area would connect the western side of town with a safe walking and bicycling route to Beachfront Park.

Site Description: Crescent City is located in Del Norte County, near the Oregon border, and the Crescent City harbor is California's northernmost harbor. Crescent City is the northern gateway to California's famous redwoods. Visitors from all over the world stay in local hotels and frequent local businesses on their way to explore Redwood National and State Parks and stunning sections of California's coastline.

Beachfront Park is an approximately 35-acre waterfront park located between the Crescent City Harbor and downtown Crescent City (See Exhibit 2). An approximately half-mile long signed section of the California Coastal Trail passes through this area. The park is Crescent City's most prominent park with a public pool, cultural center, children's playground, and picnic area with fire pits at the southern end of the beach. It fronts onto the outer section of Crescent City Harbor, directly between the City-owned RV park on the east end and Battery Point Lighthouse to the west. As the only incorporated city in Del Norte County many county residents rely on the recreational facilities provided by the City.

Grantee Qualifications: The City of Crescent City is well qualified to move forward with this project and has successfully completed a number of projects in cooperation with the Conservancy. Most recently, in 2014, the Conservancy awarded a grant for the Crescent City Beachfront Park Coastal Access Project. That funding was used to construct a stairway to the beach at the eastern edge of the park and an accessible trail to the beach at the western edge of the park. Both of those new access points to the beach are heavily used. In 2005, the Conservancy awarded the City a grant for the Crescent City Coastal Trail: Harbor North Segment. With that funding the City constructed a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Elk Creek as well as trailhead amenities. The bridge is an important link between downtown Crescent City and the Crescent City Harbor to the south. The Conservancy has also worked extensively with the Crescent City Harbor District to construct visitor improvements to the Harbor and a new section of Coastal Trail.

Project History: In 2012, the City of Crescent City completed the initial Beachfront Park Master Plan which was funded by a Community Development Block Grant. That master plan was the synthesis of public and stakeholder input and provides a guide to improving Beachfront Park. The 2012 Plan is a conceptual drawing with amenities designed to benefit both residents and visitors. Several of the amenities were constructed including the Conservancy-funded stairway and ramp to the beach. City staff approached the Conservancy about updating their Beachfront

Master Plan in spring of 2019 because there were competing visions in the City for additional park improvements. City staff recognize the need for a thorough outreach and planning effort to update the plan and ensure that the City moves forward with the correct changes to the park.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$90,000
California Endowment	\$10,000
Project Total	100,000

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, for projects north of the Gualala River. Public Resources Code Section 5096.352(c)(2). These funds are available for Conservancy projects that restore, enhance and develop public use facilities in coastal areas, including waterfronts and public accessways. Public Resources Code Section 5096.352(c). The project will facilitate development of public facilities in a coastal waterfront area by planning the development of a prominent beachfront park in Crescent City, which is 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. Additional funding for public outreach will be provided to the City of Crescent City by the California Endowment.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 7 of Division 21 (Sections 31300 - 31316) of the Public Resources Code.

Consistent with section 31301, the City seeks to develop its waterfront park in an environmentally sound fashion to restore it as a vital economic and cultural component of the community. The Master Plan will ensure continued beach access and improvements to the CCT for the residents and tourists who come to this region for its scenic beauty. Pursuant to sections 31307 and 31111, the Conservancy may fund plans and award grants for planning and for restoration of urban coastal waterfront areas.

Pursuant to Section 31308, the amount of funding provided by the Conservancy shall be determined by the total amount of funding available for urban waterfront projects, the fiscal resources of the applicant, and the urgency of the project relative to other eligible urban waterfront projects. 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 and the contributions to the project by the City.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources: The Beachfront Park Master Plan will not introduce new hazards to the area and will provide clear guidance to the public on how to evacuate in case of a tsunami.

Standard No. 12, Support Facilities: The City of Crescent City's Beachfront Park Master Plan will address support facilities for beach access including picnic areas and restrooms.

Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access: Improvements to Beachfront Park will be designed to be barrier free.

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 facilities such as play spaces and picnic areas to enable people to enjoy the natural and cultural resources on the coast.

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design two new coastal trail segments.

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will develop a waterfront revitalization plan to increase accessibility, encourage economic revitalization, and enhance cultural resources in a manner that will be resilient to climate change.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will benefit a disadvantaged community.

**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 proposed project meets the goals for Completing the California Coastal Trail (2003) as it will provide plans for a section of the CCT and related support facilities.

The proposed project meets Goal PC-2.6 from Safeguarding California (2018) in that it supports public access along waterways, lake, and rivers. (Page 216) It also meets goal PC-3.2 by involving communities and stakeholders from the onset of urban park planning through robust outreach, feedback and consultation.

4. **Support of the public:** see Exhibit 3: Project Letters (Provided at the Board Meeting).
5. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone of Crescent City.
6. **Need:** Conservancy funding is needed to fully develop the Park Master Plan. The City of Crescent City would not be able to undertake the project without support from the Conservancy.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** Crescent City 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. The proposed Master Plan will guide improvements for all visitors to Crescent City and allow them to safely enjoy Beachfront Park and nearby Battery Point Lighthouse.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Beachfront Park is located at a minimum elevation of 8 feet. This is well above the projected sea level rise in 2050 or 2100. Any improvements that are designed to connect directly to the beach will be designed to take rising sea levels into account.

Unlike much of California, sea level in Crescent City 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.

Additional Criteria

9. **Conflict resolution:** A thorough outreach process will help alleviate conflict between groups in the community who have different views on what improvements should be made to Beachfront Park.
10. **Readiness:** The City of Crescent City is prepared to undertake the project. Cal Endowment funds towards the planning process have been secured.
11. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Beachfront Park is unlikely to be damaged by the increasing frequency or severity of storms. It also functions as a buffer zone between Crescent City Harbor and the historic district of Crescent City.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed project meets the following goals of the City of Crescent City Local Coastal Program 2011:

Goal 5.D.7 A continuous trail system shall be developed throughout the City which will become a segment of the California Coastal Trail system. The project will be an important step towards identifying and finalizing the route through Crescent City. (Page 74)

Goal 5.D.10 The design of improvements will consider public safety, the potential for vandalism, and the protection of fragile coastal resources. (Page 74).

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.