

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
October 17, 2019

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY TRAIL BLOCK GRANT NO. 6**

Project No. 19-016-01  
Project Manager: Brenda Buxton

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$1,400,000 to the Association of Bay Area Governments to fund design and implementation of projects to complete the San Francisco Bay Trail.

**LOCATION:** Various locations throughout the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program

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EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [San Francisco Bay Trail Map](#)  
Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)  
Exhibit 3: [Media](#)
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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one million four hundred thousand dollars (\$1,400,000) to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) (“the grantee”) to fund design and implementation of individual projects to complete the San Francisco Bay Trail. This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of Conservancy funds to any individual project grantee, ABAG shall submit for the review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy a work program, schedule, budget, and sign plan for the project.
2. Conservancy funds shall not be disbursed for any project unless the Conservancy has authorized ABAG to fund the project, which authorization may be by the Executive Officer if

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the Executive Officer determines that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

3. Projects proposed for funding pursuant to this authorization shall, to the extent feasible, provide for the Bay Trail to be:
  - a. designed to reduce expected risks from, and increase resiliency to, sea level rise,
  - b. designed and located to minimize costs to repair and relocate over the projected lifetime (typically 20 years) of the project, and
  - c. constructed using measures to avoid or minimize greenhouse gas emissions.”

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 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access to and around San Francisco Bay.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

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### PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$1,400,000 to the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) for purposes of funding the efforts of local governments, special districts and nonprofit organizations to complete the San Francisco Bay Trail (Bay Trail). (Exhibit 1.) The Bay Trail is a planned recreational and alternative/active transportation corridor that, when complete, will encircle San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with a continuous 500-mile network of bicycling and pedestrian trails. It will connect the shoreline of all nine Bay Area counties, link 47 cities, and cross the major toll bridges in the region. Celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the San Francisco Bay Trail Project (Bay Trail Project) has overseen the completion of approximately 355 miles of Bay Trail to date—over 70 percent of the Bay Trail’s ultimate alignment.

The proposed grant will provide funding for further steps toward the completion of this important regional trail, accessible to the densely populated urban areas of the nine Bay Area counties. Through this grant, over the next few years, thousands of Bay Area residents and visitors can expect to gain many miles of new Bay Trail and improved destination points along the trail.

The proposed grant will be managed by the Bay Trail Project, a nonprofit organization administered by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG). (In 2017, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) assumed staff functions for ABAG, and ABAG employees transitioned to MTC employees. See Grantee Qualifications.) The mission of the Bay Trail Project is to plan, promote and advocate implementation of the Bay Trail. By making a “block

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grant” to ABAG that will be managed by the Bay Trail Project, the Conservancy benefits from the knowledge and experience of Bay Trail Project staff, who will select the projects to be funded pursuant to the proposed grant (with input from others, including the Conservancy), administer the grants, and perform many of the project management duties. Conservancy staff will assist in the pre-project analysis activities and provide oversight. This level of cooperation will help ensure the efficient and effective use of these funds. The Conservancy has used this arrangement for the past twenty years to provide efficient allocation and management of nearly \$20.7 million in Bay Trail block grant funding. The Conservancy’s grants to the Bay Trail Project, matched by the funds of others, have resulted in 53 new miles of Bay Trail that are now heavily used, as well as planning and design for 142 trail miles.

Bay Trail Project staff and Conservancy staff will work together to decide on the best method of distributing the grant funds. In previous years, the Bay Trail Project has undertaken competitive grant rounds. In this process the seven-person Steering Committee (a subset of the Bay Trail Project Board which includes Conservancy staff) evaluates the project proposals according to established criteria and makes funding recommendations to the full Bay Trail Project Board. If approved, the Bay Trail Board then recommends the selected projects for Conservancy authorization, either by the Executive Officer for projects that are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or by the Conservancy for projects that are not exempt from CEQA. Once a project is approved for funding by the Bay Trail Project and the Conservancy, ABAG will enter into a grant agreement with the grantee and will require a work plan, budget, sign plan, and other conditions. The grant agreement, work plan, budget, and sign plan will be provided to the Conservancy for review and approval prior to disbursement of any funds under the block grant.

**Site Description:** The projects will be located along the Bay Trail spine (primary) alignment, as well as spur (leading to access points along the shoreline) and connector trails (leading to regional destinations located inland of the shoreline, such as the Ridge Trail.)

**Grantee Qualifications:** ABAG is a joint powers authority made up of most of the cities, towns, and counties in the Bay Area. ABAG provides regional planning and local government services. The Bay Trail Project is a nonprofit organization, administered by ABAG, dedicated to completing the San Francisco Bay Trail. The Bay Trail Project board of directors is made up of representatives from government agencies around San Francisco Bay, including the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), the Conservancy, and members of trail advocacy groups. In 2017, ABAG and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), which serves as the transportation planning, financing, and coordinating agency for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, entered into a Contract for Services under which MTC assumed staff functions for ABAG, and ABAG employees became MTC employees. The consolidated MTC staff serves both the MTC and ABAG governing boards. The Bay Trail Project staff have not changed through this process, and current staff are familiar with both the Conservancy’s grant processes as well as the Bay Trail’s projects and priorities. However, because ABAG still officially exists as an organization, and the Bay Trail is an ABAG program, the grantee for this grant remains ABAG.

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**Project History:** Pursuant to state law, ABAG prepared and adopted the San Francisco Bay Trail Plan in July 1989, setting forth a proposed alignment for the Bay Trail. Since then, the Conservancy has authorized five Bay Trail block grants to ABAG: \$2,500,000 in September 1999 (funding from the General Fund), \$7,387,500 in December 2000 (funding from the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Fund, “Proposition 12”), \$3,800,000 million in September 2004 (funding from the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks and Coastal Protection Act, “Proposition 40”), \$3,000,000 in September 2007, with a \$3,000,000 augmentation in December 2008 (funding from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, “Proposition 84”), and \$1,000,000 in May 2014 (funding from Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 “Proposition 84”).

Several projects funded through this successful Conservancy/ABAG/Bay Trail Project partnership under Block Grant 5 (2014-2018) are highlighted below:

\$50,000 provided to East Bay Regional Park District to construct an approximately 0.5-mile segment of the Bay Trail spine between Pinole Shores and Bayfront Park in the City of Pinole in Contra Costa County. This Bay Trail is an ADA-accessible, Class I trail that closed a critical gap between Pinole Shores and Bayfront Park. The trail includes a bicycle/pedestrian bridge that takes trail users from a high blufftop, over the active Union Pacific railroad, and descends to Bayfront Park. This \$7 million project created a continuous Bay Trail from Pinole to Rodeo and addressed a long-standing barrier created by the railroad tracks.

\$200,000 provided to Sonoma Land Trust funded the construction of a 2.5-mile segment of Bay Trail associated with the Sears Point Wetland Restoration Project in Sonoma County. These 2.5 miles of levee-top trail connect directly to the 1.6 miles of existing Bay Trail at Sonoma Baylands, increasing the accessibility of this Conservancy-funded wetland restoration project.

\$100,000 provided to East Bay Regional Park District to construct a 0.8-mile segment of the Bay Trail along the shoreline cliff behind Golden Gate Fields, creating a safe bicycle and pedestrian access between Gilman Street in Berkeley and Buchanan Street in Albany. The \$3 million project completes the last gap in the east bay shoreline between Richmond and Emeryville and connects all sections of McLaughlin Eastshore State Park.

### PROJECT FINANCING

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$1,400,000</b>
<b>Other Sources*</b>	<b>\$6,000,000</b>
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$7,000,000</b>

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The anticipated source of funds is fiscal years 2018/19 and 2019/20 appropriations to the Conservancy from the “California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018” (Prop 68, Public Resources Code Division 45, Chapters 1-13, Sections 80000-80173), in particular Chapter 9, which allocates funds for projects that enhance and protect coast and ocean resources including projects that are consistent with the purposes of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program at Division 21 of the Public Resources Code. (Pub. Res. Code sections 80120(d)). As defined by Proposition 68, the term “protection” includes actions that will improve access to public open-space areas and actions to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property and natural, cultural, and historic resources. (Section 80002(l)). The Bay Trail is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program and will improve public access to, and enjoyment of, San Francisco Bay.

The proposed project is consistent with the funding guidelines for expenditure of Proposition 68 adopted by the Conservancy on December 6, 2018 (Guidelines). (See Pub. Res. Code section 80010). As described in the Guidelines, Proposition 68 requires that at least 15% of the total funds available under Chapter 9 be used for projects that serve severely disadvantaged communities (SDACs), defined as a community with a median household income less than 60 percent of the statewide average. (Sections 80002(n) and 80008(a)(2)). As stated in the Guidelines, the Conservancy interprets “serving” an SDAC to mean the project is located within an SDAC, located within a mile of an SDAC, or provides other benefits to an SDAC. For this project, it is expected that approximately \$955,000 will be used to support planning and construction of Bay Trail sites that will be within, or within a mile of, SDACs, which will assist the Conservancy in meeting the funding goal.

\*Expected match funding will come on a project-by-project basis. The Bay Trail Project anticipates matching Conservancy funds at a 4:1 ratio. With previous projects, matching funds were provided by cities, counties, special districts (e.g. Park recreation open space districts and ports), federal and local transportation funds, and other state and federal sources. This project is consistent with Proposition 68 which states that priority must be given to projects that leverage private, federal, or local funding.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The proposed authorization is consistent with Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31160-31165 regarding San Francisco Bay Area projects.

The proposed authorization is consistent with Section 31162(a) because it will help achieve the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program goal of improving public access to and around the bay through completion of the Bay Trail, a regional trail system. The Conservancy will work with the Bay Trail Project to ensure that all individual projects funded with the proposed grant will not have a significant adverse effect on agricultural operations, environmentally sensitive areas, or wildlife. Funding projects to complete the Bay Trail is consistent with many locally and regionally adopted Master Plans and General Plans, as nine counties and 47 cities have officially adopted the Bay Trail alignment in local plans or passed resolutions in support of the Bay Trail concept.

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Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conservancy has cooperated with nonprofit land trusts and other organizations in identifying and adopting long-term resource and outdoor recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Goals for the San Francisco Bay Trail are outlined in ABAG's San Francisco Bay Trail Plan (July 1989).

The proposed project is consistent with Section 31163(c), for the following reasons:

1. The proposed project is supported by adopted local and regional plans. The Bay Trail is specifically recognized in the California Recreational Trail Plan, in the San Francisco Bay Area's Plan Bay Area 2040 as a Priority Conservation Area, by the East Bay Regional Park District's Master Plan, by all nine Bay Area County General or Master Trail Plans, in all relevant regional park and open space district plans, and in many other local plans and policies.
2. The proposed project is multi-jurisdictional and serves a regional constituency by contributing toward the completion of a continuous shoreline trail through the nine counties surrounding San Francisco Bay.
3. The proposed project can be implemented in a timely manner because the proposed project supports Bay Trail's continuing efforts, which are ready to proceed and would build on the previously funded planning efforts (See Project History, above).
4. The proposed project provides benefits that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented, as there is current momentum built from the work supported by the previous Conservancy grants.
5. The proposed project leverages matching funds from several sources, both public and private. (See Project Financing, above).

### **CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S [2018-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN](#) GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVE(S):**

Consistent with **Goal 13, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will plan segments of the San Francisco Bay Trail. Consistent with **Goal 13, Objective E**, the proposed project will construct segments of the San Francisco Bay Trail. Specific metrics will be determined on a project-by-project basis.

### **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.

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2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** The Bay Trail is specifically recognized in the California Recreational Trail Plan, as well as numerous regional and local plans including the San Francisco Bay Area’s Plan Bay Area 2040 as a Priority Conservation Area, all nine Bay Area County General or Master Trail Plans, all relevant regional park and open space district plans, and dozens of local plans and policies.
4. **Support of the public:** Past block grants from the Conservancy to ABAG for management by the Bay Trail Project have been very successful, with many local governments and special districts benefiting from the program and 53 miles of trail constructed and 148 miles planned, benefiting large numbers of people in the Bay Area. Project letters are attached in Exhibit 2.
5. **Location:** The Bay Trail is located exclusively in the nine counties that make up the San Francisco Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, and Sonoma), and is thus entirely within the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
6. **Need:** Completion of the Bay Trail is not likely to occur absent Conservancy participation.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The San Francisco Bay Trail is a regional trail network that will be approximately 500 miles in length when completed. This authorization will help further the completion of the trail, of which approximately 355 miles have been completed to date.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Planning projects receiving Conservancy grant funds will assess project vulnerability to sea level rise and, to the extent feasible, reduce expected risks and increase resiliency to sea level rise. Construction projects will be designed and located to minimize costs to repair or relocate over the projected lifetime (typically 20 years) of the project.

### Additional Criteria

11. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
14. **Readiness:** Bay Trail Project staff, having managed five previous block grants, is ready to begin allocation of these funds in early 2020.
17. **Cooperation:** The Bay Trail Project will continue to work with regional and local jurisdictions, special districts, nonprofit organizations, landowners, and the public to design and implement projects to complete the Bay Trail. To date, over 55 organizations have received grants from the Bay Trail Project, including cities, counties, special districts, and nonprofit organizations.
19. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The Bay Trail facilitates the use of non-motorized transportation around the region and in some areas the trail functions as a bicycle commute corridor. Thus, providing funding that can be used to complete the Bay Trail will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the Bay Trail Project will require that project design and construction methods include measures to avoid or

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minimize greenhouse gas emissions to the extent feasible and consistent with the project objectives.

### **CONSISTENCY WITH SAN FRANCISCO BAY PLAN:**

The proposed project is consistent with the applicable policies contained in Part IV, Development of the Bay and Shoreline: Findings and Policies, of the San Francisco Bay Plan (Bay Plan) adopted by BCDC in 1969, as amended.

Promoting public access opportunities along the bay shoreline is consistent with the Bay Plan Public Access Policies. Public Access Policy No. 9 states that access to and along the waterfront should be provided by walkways, trails, or other appropriate means and connect to the nearest public thoroughfare where convenient parking or public transportation may be available. It also states that diverse and interesting public access experiences should be provided which would encourage users to remain in the designated access areas to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects on wildlife and their habitat. The proposed authorization to provide funding for projects that help complete the Bay Trail is consistent with this policy.

Public Access Policy No. 11 states that federal, state, regional and local jurisdictions, special districts and BCDC should cooperate to provide appropriately sited, designed and managed public access, especially to link the entire series of shoreline parks, regional trail systems (such as the San Francisco Bay Trail) and existing public access areas to the extent feasible without additional Bay filling and without significant adverse effects on Bay natural resources. The proposed authorization to provide funding for projects that help complete the Bay Trail is consistent with this policy. The proposed authorization will enable the Bay Trail Project to work with regional and local jurisdictions and special districts, and eligible nonprofits to close gaps between existing public access areas to help complete the Bay Trail.

### **CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The proposed authorization grants funds to ABAG for future grants by ABAG to other entities for planning and implementation projects that will help complete the Bay Trail. As described above, the Bay Trail Project will work to identify projects for potential funding, and the project selection process will include the Conservancy, which will carry out CEQA review before authorizing funding of any project. In light of this process, at the time of this authorization, the Conservancy does not know which projects will be recommended for funding, no particular projects are authorized for funding, and there is not sufficient information to provide meaningful environmental review of projects. Further, the proposed authorization does not foreclose alternatives or mitigation measures for any particular project. Therefore, considering the balancing described in the CEQA Guidelines at California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15004, it is appropriate to undertake CEQA compliance at the time projects are selected rather than at the time of this authorization. All specific projects proposed for funding by ABAG pursuant to this grant require Conservancy review; the Conservancy will comply with CEQA prior to deciding whether to authorize use of the grant funds for any specific project.



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