

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
October 17, 2019

**PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREA GRANT PROGRAM
ROUND 2**

Project Manager: Brenda Buxton

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Recommend to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission that sixteen resource protection and public access projects be included in the Priority Conservation Area Grant Program.

LOCATION: Counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Priority Conservation Area Grant Program Call for Proposals](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

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

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby recommends to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission that the following projects (in geographic order) and recommended grant amounts totaling \$7,397,000 be included in the Priority Conservation Area Grant Program:

1. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) to the City of Richmond to construct a 1.25-mile, Class 1 segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail connecting Point Molate Beach Park to the Winehaven Historic District in Contra Costa County.
2. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) to East Bay Regional Park District to construct a 1.25-mile, Class 1 segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail connecting the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge to Point Molate Beach Park in Contra Costa County.
3. Nine hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$950,000) to the John Muir Land Trust for construction of trails, bridges, overlooks and other public access amenities as part of the Pacheco Marsh (Lower Walnut Creek) Restoration Project in Contra Costa County.

4. Four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) to the City of Livermore to complete an existing 1.4-mile gap in the Arroyo Road Trail in Alameda County.
5. Three hundred twenty-one thousand dollars (\$321,000) to Alameda County to prepare preliminary engineering and a programmatic environmental impact report for the Niles Canyon Trail Project which will include a project-level analysis for Phase 1 (the 1.8 miles from Niles to Palomares Road) in Alameda County.
6. Two hundred fifty-one thousand dollars (\$251,000) to the City of Albany to implement the Albany Hill Access Improvements Project, which will complete a new 480-foot trail to the summit, improve existing trails, provide access amenities such as log seating, bike racks, and a foot bridge over El Cerrito Creek, provide ADA parking, and remove non-native trees to improve butterfly habitat in Alameda County.
7. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) to the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority to acquire the Tilton Ranch in Santa Clara County.
8. Four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) to the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority to prepare final designs, obtain permits, and construct trailhead facilities including bike and vehicle parking, a restroom, an interpretive/educational station, signage, overlooks and other amenities serving the 6.8-mile trail network on the Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve in Santa Clara County.
9. Three hundred seventy-nine thousand dollars (\$379,000) to Point Blue Conservation Science to restore a three-quarter linear mile of stream habitat and provide hands-on environmental education opportunities to over 1,000 students and community members in the Pajaro River watershed in Santa Clara County.
10. Two hundred twenty-three thousand dollars (\$223,000) to the City of San Jose to advance two trail planning and design projects as follows: \$140,000 for the Singleton Road Crossing 65% design plans and \$83,000 for a master plan of a 1.4-mile former railway route now called the Five Wounds Trail in Santa Clara County.
11. Five hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$520,000) to the City of Menlo Park to improve the existing San Francisco Bay Trail segment to separate it from the entrance road, reconstruct the park entrance to improve visibility as well as make the park more resilient to sea level rise, and improve the stormwater runoff water quality at Bedwell Bayfront Park in San Mateo County.
12. Two hundred ninety-eight thousand (\$298,000) to the City of Half Moon Bay to construct a restroom, parking, and other amenities to serve the Coastal Trail and Surfer's Beach in San Mateo County.
13. One hundred fifty-one thousand dollars (\$151,000) to Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to refine the alignment, to evaluate potential parking areas and the Highway 1 crossing, and to conduct stakeholder outreach for eventual construction of the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area Project in San Mateo County.

14. Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy for the community engagement element of the National Park Service's Rancho Corral de Tierra Ranch Unit Plan in San Mateo County.
15. One hundred ninety-four thousand dollars (\$194,000) to the City of San Francisco to prepare a concept plan and preliminary designs for improved pedestrian and bike connections to McLaren Park in San Francisco County.
16. One hundred ten thousand dollars (\$110,000) to the City of South San Francisco to conduct the Colma Creek Adaptation Study which will assess the feasibility of creek restoration, sea-level rise adaptation, flood management, and improved public access along the creek and to the Bay and Bay Trail."

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:

The proposed authorization is consistent with Section Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Conservancy's authority to address the potential impacts of climate change and the resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Conservancy staff requests that the Conservancy recommend sixteen projects (see Exhibit 1 for locations) for inclusion in the Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Grant Program, a program of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). If MTC accepts the Conservancy's recommendation, MTC and the Conservancy will consider authorizing grants for these projects in accordance with their respective grant processes. This recommendation to MTC does not commit the Conservancy to funding any of these projects, but it indicates that at a future date, the Conservancy will consider funding several of these projects. The basis for recommending these 16 projects for inclusion in the PCA Grant Program is that each project will help further the goals of San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

The purpose of the recommended projects is to acquire, enhance, or improve open space areas identified as PCAs in Plan Bay Area 2040. PCAs are areas through-out the Bay Area that provide agricultural, natural resource, scenic, recreational, public health and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions. PCAs were identified through a public planning effort that involved many Bay Area agencies, including the Conservancy. Plan Bay Area 2040 is the integrated long-range transportation and land-use plan for the San Francisco Bay Area. Administration of the PCA Grant Program in the North Bay counties (Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties) is via their respective Congestion Management agencies. This staff recommendation focuses on the remaining Bay Area Counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara Counties), for which the PCA Grant Program is anticipated to be jointly funded by both the

Conservancy and the MTC. The Conservancy is working with MTC to implement this program because it furthers the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program statutory goals of addressing the Bay Area's resource and recreational goals in a coordinated, comprehensive, and effective way.

The PCA Grant Program was initiated by MTC in 2013 to provide funding to cities, counties, park districts, utility districts, and other agencies and non-profits to acquire, enhance, or improve designated PCAs. MTC has sought to take advantage of the Conservancy's expertise in funding projects that enhance or improve open space resources by requesting that the Conservancy recommend projects for inclusion in the program. In 2014, the Conservancy recommended 13 resource protection and public access projects for inclusion in the PCA Grant Program. MTC subsequently provided \$4,500,000 in federal transportation funds for these projects and the Conservancy provided \$2,450,000 in state bond funds.

For this phase of the program, MTC has made \$8,200,000 million available and Conservancy staff has agreed to recommend that the Conservancy disburse up to \$1,800,000 million, contingent upon the Conservancy's future authorization of funding for individual projects. A call for proposals to be funded through the PCA grant program (Exhibit 2) was widely distributed on January 7, 2019, followed by two February public workshops for potential applicants. Letters of interest were due on February 25th and a total of 37 project ideas were submitted requesting over \$19 million in grant funding. Conservancy and MTC staff reviewed the letters and invited full proposals for 26 projects that most closely met the guidelines in the call for proposal. Twenty full proposals were received requesting approximately \$9.8 million in funds; five applicants decided not to submit full proposals for various reasons, and one applicant combined its two proposals. Conservancy, MTC, and ABAG staff reviewed the full proposals and recommend 16 projects (originally 17 but the two San Jose trail planning projects have been combined) for inclusion in the grant program, for a total of nearly \$7.4 million in potential grant funding. Three projects were determined to not meet the eligibility requirements. Conservancy and MTC staff anticipate having an additional grant round for the balance of the funds from this second grant round. A map of the local of all sixteen recommended projects is attached as Exhibit 1.

In addition, based upon available funding, Conservancy priorities, and project management needs, Conservancy staff and MTC staff have tentatively divided the projects between MTC and the Conservancy for future funding consideration. Thirteen projects would be considered for funding solely with MTC's local revenues or federal transportation dollars and three projects would be considered for funding solely with the Conservancy's state bond dollars. All sixteen projects should be viewed as a package, however, implementing the goals of the Conservancy and MTC, with a mix of public access and trail improvements (with a strong focus on the Bay Trail and Ridge Trail), open space protection, and natural resource enhancement.

The 13 projects that MTC would consider for funding are below. If these projects are included in the PCA Grant Program, MTC will review and possibly approve grants for the projects. MTC staff will work with grantees to ensure the projects meet the requirements of the federal and state transportation funds.

1. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) to East Bay Regional Park District to construct a 1.25-mile, Class 1 segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail connecting the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge to Point Molate Beach Park in Contra Costa County.
2. Nine hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$950,000) to the John Muir Land Trust for construction of trails, bridges, overlooks and other public access amenities as part of the Pacheco Marsh (Lower Walnut Creek) Restoration Project in Contra Costa County.
3. Four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) to the City of Livermore to complete an existing 1.4-mile gap in the Arroyo Road Trail in Alameda County.
4. Three hundred twenty-one dollars (\$321,000) to Alameda County to prepare preliminary engineering and a programmatic environmental impact report for the Niles Canyon Trail Project which will include a project-level analysis for Phase 1 (the 1.8 miles from Niles to Palomares Road) in Alameda County.
5. Two hundred fifty-one thousand ninety dollars (\$251,000) to the City of Albany to implement the Albany Hill Access Improvements Project, which will complete a new 480-foot trail to the summit, improve existing trails, provide access amenities such as log seating, bike racks, and a foot bridge over El Cerrito Creek, provide ADA parking, and remove non-native trees to improve butterfly habitat in Alameda County.
6. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) to the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority to acquire the Tilton Ranch in Santa Clara County.
7. Four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) to the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority to prepare final design, obtain permits, and construct trailhead facilities including bike and vehicle parking, a restroom, an interpretive/educational station, signage, overlooks and other amenities serving the 6.8 mile trail network on the Coyote Ridge Open Space Preserve in Santa Clara County.
8. Three hundred seventy-nine three hundred ninety-four dollars (\$379,000) to Point Blue Conservation Science to restore three-quarter linear mile of stream habitat and provide hands-on environmental education opportunities to over 1,000 students and community members in the Pajaro River watershed in Santa Clara County.
9. Five hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$520,000) to the City of Menlo Park to improve the existing San Francisco Bay Trail segment to separate it from the entrance road, reconstruct the park entrance to improve visibility as well as make the park more resilient to sea level rise, and improve the stormwater runoff water quality at Bedwell Bayfront Park in San Mateo County.
10. Two hundred ninety-eight thousand (\$298,000) to the City of Half Moon Bay to construct a restroom, parking, and other amenities to serve the Coastal Trail and Surfer's Beach in San Mateo County.
11. Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy for the community engagement element of the National Park Service's Rancho Corral de Tierra Ranch Unit Plan in San Mateo County.

12. One hundred ninety-four thousand dollars (\$194,000) to the City of San Francisco to prepare a concept plan and designs for improved pedestrian and bike connections to McLaren Park in San Francisco County.
13. One hundred ten thousand dollars (\$110,000) to the City of South San Francisco to conduct the Colma Creek Adaptation Study which will assess the feasibility of creek restoration, sea-level rise adaptation, flood management, and improved public access along the creek and to the Bay and Bay Trail in San Mateo County.

MTC and Conservancy staff identified three projects that best met the Conservancy’s selection criteria and strategic plan objectives and would be the most suitable for direct Conservancy funding. The three projects listed below will be presented to the Conservancy for future funding authorization in staff recommendations that will describe the projects in greater detail; describe consistency with enabling legislation, strategic plan objectives, and project selection criteria; and include CEQA findings.

1. One million dollars (\$1,000,000) to the City of Richmond to construct a 1.25-mile, Class 1 segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail connecting Point Molate Beach Park to the Winehaven Historic District in Contra Costa County.
2. One hundred forty thousand dollars (\$140,000) to Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District to refine the alignment, to evaluate potential parking areas and the Highway 1 crossing, and to conduct stakeholder outreach for eventual construction of the Purisima-to-the-Sea Trail and Parking Area Project in San Mateo County.
3. Two hundred twenty-three thousand dollars (\$223,000) to the City of San Jose to advance two trail planning and design projects as follows: \$140,000 for the Singleton Road Crossing 65% design plans and \$83,000 for a master plan of a 1.4-mile former railway route now called the Five Wounds Trail in Santa Clara County.

Conservancy staff will provide this resolution, if approved, to the MTC for consideration in November 2019. If the recommended projects are included within the PCA Grant Program, MTC will likely commence its grant processes in November 2019, and MTC could potentially provide funds to grantees in December 2019 and early 2020. Conservancy staff anticipates that it will present funding recommendations for PCA Grant Program projects to the Conservancy starting in December 2019 and early 2020.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,374,000
Metropolitan Transportation Commission	\$6,023,000
Grantee Matching Funds	\$14,794,000
Project Total	\$22,191,000

The anticipated sources of Conservancy funding for PCA Grant Program projects (to be authorized in subsequent Conservancy actions) are FY17 and FY19 appropriations of “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006” (Proposition 84); and FY18 and FY19 appropriations to the Conservancy from the “California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018” (Proposition 68, Public Resources Code Division 45, Chapters 1-13, Sections 80000-80173).

Proposition 84 funds are available for San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program projects consistent with Public Resources Code, Division 21, Chapter 4.5. Participation in the PCA Grant Program leverages Conservancy funding and enables the Conservancy to “address the resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay area...in a coordinated, comprehensive, and effective way” (Section 31160).

Proposition 68 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)). Thus, Proposition 68 can be used for proposed trail projects that are consistent with the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program and that will improve public access to, and enjoyment of, San Francisco Bay.

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 funding guidelines for expenditure of Proposition 68 adopted by the Conservancy on December 6, 2018 (“Guidelines;” See Pub. Res. Code section 80010), 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. Upon detailed project review, it is anticipated that some of the proposed projects may serve an SDAC.

MTC’s funding totals \$6,023,000 million for 13 projects and is derived from local revenues provided through MTC’s regional exchange program. In addition, federal transportation funding may be provided to qualified projects. PCA projects receiving federal transportation funds will work with Caltrans’ Local Assistance Program to access and meet the requirements of those funds. MTC will work with PCA project sponsors to determine the appropriate source of funding.

MTC and the Conservancy required a 2:1 minimum match requirement for PCA grant program funds, with any non-PCA funding being an eligible source of match, including Conservancy funds provided outside of this PCA grant program. For any project using federal funds, there is also a requirement that at least 11.47 percent of total project costs be funded by non-federal sources. Both of these minimum match requirements have been met by the grantees and have resulted

in a highly leveraged grant program, with a total of nearly \$15 million in matching funds applied to the sixteen projects funded by the Conservancy and MTC.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The recommended projects for the PCA Grant Round 2 will help achieve the Conservancy’s goals for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area as set forth in Sections 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code for the following reasons:

The majority of the PCA projects are primarily either planning or implementation projects that will create or enhance public access, such as through the San Francisco Bay Trail or Bay Area Ridge Trail. These projects will help achieve two of the Conservancy’s goals under Section 31162. These two goals are to improve public access to, within, and around the bay, coast, ridgetops, and urban open spaces, consistent with the rights of private property owners, and without having a significant adverse impact on agricultural operations and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife; and to promote, assist, and enhance projects that provide open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes. The proposed public access planning or construction projects are located entirely within the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area and are consistent with the rights of private property owners because the improvements are on publicly owned lands. The projects will improve public access to and around the bay and several will provide access to open space and natural areas. Thus, the public access projects will directly accomplish the two goals or, in the case of planning projects, makes significant progress in the planning and design stage that proceeds construction.

Another project, the Pajaro River watershed project will restore riparian habitat as part of a hands-on environmental education program. This will help achieve the Section 31162 goal to protect, restore, and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance. In addition, two of the public access projects will incorporate habitat improvements into the project. The Coyote Creek Singleton Crossing project will not only improve access by designing a stream crossing removal – it will take out a barrier for migrating anadromous fish in Coyote Creek. The Albany Hill public access improvements will also include selective removal of non-native trees to expand and improve monarch butterfly habitat.

The acquisition of Tilton Ranch will accomplish several of the goals identified in Section 31162. The acquisition will preserve the habitat and wildlife corridors in the highly threatened Coyote Valley and eventually create a new park that is accessible to adjacent urban populations.

The Colma Creek planning project is also consistent with Section 31162 goals. This project seeks to assess the feasibility of restoring or improving habitat and public access along Colma Creek in South San Francisco in order to enhance the open space resources for the community and to enable the creek corridor to better withstand the impacts of sea-level rise and climate change.

Finally, the proposed projects are appropriate for prioritization under the selection criteria set forth in Section 31163(c) for the following reasons:

- (1) All of the proposed projects are supported by adopted local and regional plans. In the grant application, each project was required to identify local plans and policies in order to be eligible.
- (2) The proposed projects serve regional constituencies by enhancing Priority Conservation Areas, which are resources of regional significance in the nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area.
- (3) The proposed projects can be implemented in a timely manner. Applicants have demonstrated that their projects can be commenced immediately after funding and can be completed within three years.
- (4) The proposed projects provide benefits that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented.
- (5) The proposed projects leverage matching fund since the applicants met the 2:1 matching requirement.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed resolution recommends projects for inclusion in a grant program. The recommendation does not commit the Conservancy or MTC to fund any project and does not foreclose alternatives or mitigation measures for any particular project. CEQA review will occur before MTC or the Conservancy authorizes funding 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 of a decision to fund a project rather than at the time of this recommendation.