

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
May 05, 2020

Jalama Beach Campground Expansion and Improvement Planning

Project No. 20-007-01
Project Manager: Fanny Yang

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$80,000 to the County of Santa Barbara to prepare design plans, technical studies, and a County permit pre-application package for the addition of campsites, relocation of campground support facilities, and improvements at Jalama Beach County Park located in Santa Barbara County.

LOCATION: Jalama Beach County Park, Santa Barbara County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Lower-cost Coastal Accommodations

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31411-31414 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed eighty-thousand dollars (\$80,000) to the County of Santa Barbara (“the grantee”) to prepare design plans, technical studies, and a County permit pre-application package for the addition of campsites, relocation of campground support facilities, and improvements at Jalama Beach County Park in Santa Barbara 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.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.

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 10 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding Lower-cost Coastal Accommodations.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
-

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$80,000 to the County of Santa Barbara (“County”) for preparation of design plans, technical studies, and a County permit pre-application package for the addition of 40-50 campsites, relocation of campground support facilities, and site improvements at Jalama Beach County Park (“Park”).

The Park currently has the only coastal campground along the Santa Barbara County coast north of Point Conception; the campground serves both Santa Barbara’s North County population of more than 200,000 residents and a much wider regional demand. Demand for the Park’s campground accommodations is extremely high, often requiring reservations six months in advance, with campers sometimes turned away during weekends and peak summer months. Visitation has continued to increase annually, with an estimated total of 246,054 visitors in 2017, a 41% increase since 2010. Occupancy at the Park remains high throughout the year. Across the campsites and cabins, occupancy averages about 72% year-round. This includes occupancy at sites that are not reservable online. In the summer months, occupancy can be as high as 94%.

The Park plays an important role in providing coastal experiences and access for disadvantaged communities from the nearby City of Lompoc, which is identified as a disadvantaged community by the California Department of Water Resources. Other communities that the Park serves include farmworkers and Spanish-and Mixtec-speaking populations from the nearby cities of Guadalupe and Santa Maria. County user data for Park visitation in 2018 shows that the Park serves the residents of Lompoc, Guadalupe and Santa Maria, although there is, on average, more usage of the Park by non-local, out of state, and out of country visitors than from nearby cities. Although there are four nearby state beach campgrounds in Santa Barbara County just south of Point Conception, these too are often at full capacity, typically requiring reservations up to six months in advance, and turning potential campers away during peak periods. Demand for coastal recreational access is expected to continue to increase due to growth in population, tourism, and the popularity of many coastal-dependent or related recreational activities.

There has been no substantial expansion or construction of new public campgrounds in the coastal zone of Santa Barbara County in more than 40 years. One private coastal campground recently completed along the Gaviota coast (across from El Capitan State Beach) provides

mostly higher-cost RV sites and only 26 tent sites. Development of new or expanded campgrounds in Santa Barbara County's coastal zone faces development challenges due to regulatory barriers, high land costs, sensitive species protection, and the high costs and extended timelines associated with processing permits in the coastal zone.

The proposed project will undertake preliminary planning to increase the capacity of the current campground at the Park by approximately 40 percent by reconfiguring the existing campground to free up space for the addition of 40 to 50 campsites. This will involve relocation of campground support facilities such as the onsite shop building, service and storage areas, and ranger residences onto 36 acres of adjacent land recently acquired by the County. For the proposed project, the County will conduct biological and cultural resource surveys and assess current and proposed utilities at the site. The County will contract with an experienced campground designer to produce preliminary campground design drawings and with an economist to evaluate the most economically feasible mix of tent, RVs, and cabin sites for the reconfiguration of campsites.

In addition to the campground expansion and reconfiguration, the preliminary planning and design task will include proposed improvements to the campground focused on enhancing site sustainability and resiliency. This includes consideration of a wastewater package treatment plant to replace the current septic system to enable water reuse for irrigation and toilet flushing. Installation of solar photovoltaic panels and water heating systems will reduce overall electricity demand from cabins and campground support facilities on site. Other envisioned site enhancements will address the Park's long-term resiliency to sea level rise and storm surges through the construction of a living shoreline.

The proposed campground expansion is being addressed in the Santa Barbara Countywide Recreation Master Plan ("Recreation Master Plan") and Program Environmental Impact Report ("Program EIR") currently being prepared by the County. As part of the proposed project, the County will prepare a complete pre-application packet for the County permit process. The packet will include preliminary design plans, a completed pre-application assessment form, technical studies, key findings and mitigation measures from the Program EIR, and other supporting materials. Following completion of the proposed project and using feedback received during the pre-application process, the County will proceed to full campground design, completion of any outstanding environmental analysis, and preparation of the final permit application.

The proposed project includes holding community pop-up events (e.g. tabling at festivals, sporting events, farmers markets, etc.) in the cities of Lompoc, Guadalupe, and Santa Maria to gather community input on campground designs and conducting camper surveys on campground facility needs, frequency of visits, preferred recreational activities, and other potential concerns. After the proposed project is complete, the County will focus on expanding programming at the park that would encourage visitation and overnight stays for local underserved communities by collaborating with nonprofit organizations or school districts.

Site Description: Jalama Beach County Park was built in 1943 when the land was donated to the County by Atlantic Richfield Oil Company. Since then it has been a popular destination for its isolated and pristine natural resources. The County owned park and campground are directly

adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, located at the terminus of rural Jalama Road, 14.5 miles from State Highway 1. The 59.5-acre Park lies within the valley of Jalama Creek and is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Vandenberg Air Force Base to the north, and The Nature Conservancy's Jack and Laura Dangermond Nature Preserve to the east and south. The Union Pacific Railroad runs along the eastern border of the existing Park.

The Park itself supports a wide range of recreation in a remote coastal area. Jalama Beach is a world-famous surfing location, with major swells drawing surfers from throughout the region, Southern California and beyond. Kiteboarding and windsurfing are also very popular given the often-windy location. Depending on the tide, visitors can enjoy walking along the beach, with opportunities for whale and bird watching, fishing, and other recreational coastal activities.

Developed on the valley floor adjacent to the creek, the main campground is located on the level valley bottom landward of coastal dunes, and the upper camping area is situated on three terraces overlooking the ocean. The current developed campground area is fronted by scenic sand dunes vegetated with a mix of native Southern Foredune and non-native vegetation. There is one formal coastal access way across the dunes and several informal access trails. The upper mesa where the proposed campground expansion will be is vegetated with southern coastal bluff scrub and coastal sage scrub.

The park campground provides 107 campsites with picnic tables and barbeque pits overlooking the ocean. Seventy-six sites are designated as tent campsites and 31 sites offer electrical hookups for RVs. There are also 7 cabins, each with an ocean view porch. Campground visitor amenities include five restrooms, one coin-operated hot shower building, and an RV dump station. Day-use amenities include parking spaces and picnic tables with raised fire boxes. Additional amenities for both overnight and day-use visitors include a basketball court, a children's playground, a beach volleyball area, horseshoe pits, and a general store/restaurant. Beach wheelchairs can be rented from the store.

Campground water supply is provided by an offsite water well located two miles north of Vandenberg Air Force Base and is piped via a gravity-fed system into two holding tanks at the campground. The two water tanks hold up to 110,000 gallons of potable water. Electricity is supplied by Southern California Edison. Onsite wastewater is disposed via septic tanks.

Grantee Qualifications: The County has dedicated grant administration staff and has managed hundreds of local, State, and Federal grants throughout the past decade. Given its history of receiving and implementing State grants, the County demonstrates strong fiscal viability to carry out the proposed project on a State grant and operating under a reimbursement basis. The County staff who will be managing the proposed project has eight years of experience in managing and supporting projects using State grants awarded to the County.

The County currently provides maintenance for the 7 cabins at the Park and road maintenance crews regularly repair Jalama Road; the County will continue to maintain and manage the site after completion of the additional campsites and relocation of campground support facilities.

Project History: In March 2019, the Conservancy officially released "Explore the Coast Overnight: An Assessment of Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations" ("Assessment"), which analyzed the supply and demand of lower-cost coastal accommodations in California and

opportunities for Californians to stay overnight at the coast. In the drafting of the assessment, the Conservancy reached out and collaborated with a number of landowners, non-governmental organizations, and public agencies to identify plausible lower-cost coastal accommodation options. Developing a conceptual design for expanding the existing facility at Jalama Beach County Park was identified as a potential project and included in a list of potential project ideas in the assessment.

In October 2019, the Conservancy announced the availability of \$4.95 million to support design, planning, permitting, and construction of lower-cost coastal accommodation projects. The County submitted a pre-proposal for the Jalama Beach Campground Expansion and Improvement Planning Project; after initial review of all other pre-proposals and consideration of funding availability, the Conservancy selected the County to submit a full proposal for the proposed project.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$80,000
County of Santa Barbara General Funds	\$10,000
Project Total	\$90,000

The expected source of funds for this project is an appropriation 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 Section 80000-80173). Chapter 9 of Proposition 68 (section 80120-80121) allocates funds to the Conservancy to enhance and protect coastal and ocean resources, and, in particular, to grant funds to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop lower-cost coastal accommodations (Public Resources Code Section 80120 (b)). The proposed project is an appropriate use of these funds because it will develop preliminary plans for an expansion of the Jalama Park campground, which offers lower-cost coastal accommodations in the form of tent sites, RV sites and cabins.

The County will provide in-kind services in the form of staff time to consult with Park rangers and other County maintenance staff, manage awarded grant funds, coordinate with stakeholders, and oversee implementation of the proposed project. The value of these services is estimated to be approximately \$25,000 over the course of the proposed project's implementation.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 10 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31411-31414, regarding the Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations Program ("LCCA Program"). Pursuant to Public Resource Code, Section 31412(a), the Conservancy may award grants and undertake projects as part of its LCCA Program (also referred to as the Explore the Coast Overnight Program) to facilitate improvement of existing, lower cost accommodations

within one and one-half miles of the coast. Consistent with this section, the proposed project will plan for the addition of 40 to 50 campsites at Jalama Beach County Park, which is located immediately adjacent to the beach.

Section 31412(a) specifies that in implementing the LCCA Program and undertaking projects or grants, the Conservancy shall be guided by an assessment. The Conservancy completed the Assessment in accordance with Section 31413 and released it on March 14, 2019. The proposed project will provide an increase of overnight options in Santa Barbara County, a location identified in the Assessment as having a low concentration of lower-cost coastal accommodations and a high occupancy rate for coastal accommodations.

Jalama Beach County Park currently provides 107 campsites at affordable rates of \$35-50 per site (not including reservation and extra vehicle fees). Consistent with Section 31412(b), the proposed project will plan for an additional 40-50 sites that will be subject to the same rates as the current campground. As part of the planning process, the County will engage with low- and middle-income families at pop-up tent events to increase awareness of the Park and camping opportunities, while receiving input on how to improve site facilities to best match currently unserved needs. In the future, as part of their long-term vision to address programmatic barriers for disadvantaged communities to access the Park campground, the County will work with schools and community-based nonprofit organizations with direct connections with disadvantaged communities to develop Park programs that will increase camping opportunities for the community.

Consistent with Section 31412(c)(1), the proposed project was selected through a collaborative effort with California Department of Park and Recreation, the California Coastal Commission, and local and regional public agencies. Consistent with Section 31412(c)(2), Conservancy staff engaged with the Santa Barbara County parks staff to ensure the project reflects and addresses community needs and interests.

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

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design an additional 40 to 50 campsites at Jalama Beach County Park, increasing units of lower-cost overnight accommodations along the coast.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project directly benefits disadvantaged communities from the City of Lompoc, Guadalupe, and Santa Maria by increasing coastal overnight camping opportunities.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project increases access for all Californians by reducing barriers such as cost of lodging by planning for the expansion of the LCCA sites.

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 serves to promote and implement the goals from the Conservancy's "Explore the Coast Overnight: An Assessment of Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations" (2019) as follows:
 - Goal 1 - Improving existing and developing new lower-cost coastal accommodations within 1.5 miles of the California coast and/or within the coastal zone. The proposed project will prepare plans to create an additional 40 to 50 campsites at Jalama Beach County Park.
 - Goal 2 - Ensure that new coastal accommodation projects supported by the Explore the Coast Overnight Program are affordable and available for all Californians, in particular, low and middle-income individuals and families. The campsite additions will increase lower-cost coastal overnight opportunities for low-income communities in Santa Barbara County.
 - Goal 3 - Ensure that lower-cost coastal accommodations will be affordable and available to nongovernmental organizations and public entities that support programs for young or under-resourced populations. As part of the proposed project's outreach efforts, the County will be working with community nonprofits and school districts to expand programming that would increase opportunities for underserved communities to stay overnight or visit the Park campground.
 - Goal 6 - Maintain and increase stock of lower-cost coastal accommodations on coastal public lands. The proposed project will add additional campsites to a public park owned by the County.
4. **Support of the public:** The proposed project is supported by the City of Lompoc, the Santa Barbara County Trails Council, and other community organizations. See project letters in Exhibit 3.
5. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone of Santa Barbara County.
6. **Need:** Without Conservancy funding, the County does not have sufficient resources to undertake the project at this time. With no additions of campsites to accommodate the increase in usage at the Park, fewer people will be able to access the coast each year, further preventing underserved communities from coastal opportunities.

7. **Greater-than-local interest:** Jalama Beach County Park is the only coastal campground in Santa Barbara County north of Point Conception. The increase in campground capacity would serve both regional and statewide visitors.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Most of the proposed project site is threatened by coastal storm flooding and dune erosion. Sea level rise modeling indicates that storm surges could pose a threat to the dunes and potentially to some of the campsites located closest to the ocean by 2050 and 2100. Storm-induced flooding could damage the campground while coastal erosion would threaten the beach and dunes. Under high sea level rise projections, the beach and dunes are projected to be subjected to both erosion and inundation by 2100, with the majority of the campsites periodically damaged by flooding after large coastal storms.

To address these risks and prevent dune erosions, preliminary designs will consider enhancing and expanding the existing dune line by constructing a living shoreline to reduce vulnerability and improve resiliency. This could include dune creation and expansion, revegetation, and use of buried cobbles to improve resiliency. Low-lying campsites may also be raised to reduce risk of both fluvial and coastal flooding, as well as to minimize potential cultural resource impacts. Further adaptive management approaches will be considered and evaluated throughout the proposed project's planning process.

Additional Criteria

9. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
10. **Readiness:** The County is ready to start and complete the project in a timely manner.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
12. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** The Park itself is situated within a high wildfire hazard area with much of the campground located in a low-lying valley bottom that is potentially vulnerable to flooding. Changes in wildfire frequency or severity, increased variability in rainfall, or prolonged droughts associated with climate change may increase vulnerability of the site. The preliminary campground design will evaluate climate change vulnerabilities and identify mitigation measures; fire buffers, raised campsites, water conservation and recycling will all be considered to improve campground resiliency.
13. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The proposed planning and design project will not result in any significant production of greenhouse gas emissions as it involves only planning and design activities. To reduce future greenhouse gas emissions in relation to campground activities and operations, conceptual designs of the proposed campground expansion will consider incorporating photovoltaic solar panels on cabins and restrooms and the inclusion of carbon sequestration methods such as using recycled irrigation water and enhancing both riparian woodland and dune habitats throughout the Park.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to the Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15262, in that the proposed project is the preparation of design drawings, technical studies, and pre-permit application package and it would only involve planning studies and feasibility analyses for future actions that have not yet been approved, adopted or funded. The planning and permitting portion of the project is also categorically exempt under Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection and resource evaluation activities. Environmental factors will be considered in the studies undertaken pursuant to this authorization.

Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption.