

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 05, 2020

WATSONVILLE SLOUGH FARMS WETLAND RESTORATION

Project No. 20-002-01

Project Manager: Tom Gandesbery

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$440,620 to the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County to restore 9.9 acres of wetland and upland habitat at Watsonville Slough Farms in Santa Cruz County, and adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCATION: Watsonville Sloughs, Watsonville, Santa Cruz County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Integrated Coastal and Marine Resource Protection

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Design](#)

Exhibit 3: [Photos](#)

Exhibit 4: [CEQA Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Project](#)

Exhibit 5: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31220 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed four hundred forty thousand six hundred twenty dollars (\$440,620) to the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (“the grantee”) to restore 9.9 acres of wetland and upland habitat at Watsonville Slough Farms in Santa Cruz 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 and Proposition 1 as the source of that funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the grantee has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the grantee to implement, operate, and maintain the 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 5.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding Integrated Coastal and Marine Resource Protection.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the “Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Project” adopted by the County of Santa Cruz on May 25, 2016 pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 4. The Conservancy finds that the proposed project as designed and mitigated avoids, reduces, or mitigates the potentially significant environmental effects to a less-than-significant level, and that there is no substantial evidence based on the record as a whole that the Project may have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 Cal. Code Regulations Section 15382.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize the disbursement of up to \$440,620 to the Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County (RCD) to restore 9.9 acres of wetland and upland habitat at Land Trust of Santa Cruz County’s Watsonville Slough Farms. The proposed project is the second and final phase of implementing the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Project to enhance ecosystem health and resiliency within the Watsonville Slough system.

Watsonville Slough in southern Santa Cruz County covers about 800 acres and is one of the largest remaining freshwater marshlands in the state’s coastal zone, providing a crucial resting place for many species of migrating birds and habitat for twenty-three threatened or

endangered species. At the same time, the Watsonville Sloughs ecosystem, with its rich soils, temperate climate, and abundant resources also supports significant agricultural production with high valued crops like strawberries grown on both the hillsides and bottomlands. The slough wetland complex has been modified significantly over the last 100 years as agriculture and urban uses have expanded resulting in wetland and grassland habitat conversion, excessive rates of erosion, and impaired surface water quality. In addition to the impacts created by urban and agricultural land uses, global climate change is likely to be the greatest conservation challenge to the region over the next century. Changing climatic conditions are predicted to dramatically impact local water resources by reducing stream flows and infiltration to groundwater basins and increasing flooding, sea level rise, saltwater intrusion and surface water temperature.

In response to these issues, the RCD is partnering with the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County (Land Trust) to restore 9.9 acres of Watsonville Slough Farms which was previously leveled and converted to agricultural production. The proposed project consists of earthmoving to restore topographic variation to the property followed by revegetation with native plants. Restoring topographic variation will support the re-establishment of important habitats including seasonal marsh, wet meadow, willow scrub, and native grassland. To create topographic variation, broad depressions will be graded to depths of up to five feet below existing grade, and the excavated material will be placed in broad deposits serving as topographic islands that support upland habitat. The RCD will revegetate the site from locally collected native seed from the site's existing native vegetation, the Pajaro River watershed, or the Monterey Bay bioregion. The proposed project will result in approximately 1.5 acres of seasonal marsh, 7.8 acres of wet meadow and willow scrub, and 0.6 acres of native grassland.

The proposed project includes post-construction monitoring and adaptive management to ensure proper hydroperiod, successful establishment of plant material, and to prohibit the colonization of invasive plant species, through weeding, mowing, and herbicide application. The monitoring and adaptive management will be undertaken by the Land Trust. Through the transformation of this farmland back to native wetland and upland habitats, the project will provide multiple benefits including restoring wetland function, improving water quality and flood control, enhancing regional biodiversity, and bolstering ecosystem resiliency to climatic and hydrologic changes by restoring topographic variability.

In addition, the project will provide an educational demonstration opportunity as the project is bordered by the Monterey Bay Sanctuary Trail and youth participating with Watsonville Wetlands Watch and the California Conservation Corps will assist in the project's planting and maintenance of native vegetation. This project is located within a "Disadvantaged Community", as designated by the Department of Water Resources, and is within one mile of a "Severely Disadvantaged Community" in the City of Watsonville. It will benefit the area's ecological health and resiliency.

Site Description: Watsonville Slough Farms is a 486-acre farm property owned by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, which includes the 45-acre Bryant-Habert parcel. The property is located two miles from the coast among a complex of state and federal protected lands of Watsonville Slough. Watsonville Slough is a network of vibrant inland waterways that includes

six individual slough “arms” fed by the Pajaro Valley watershed and extends from the City of Watsonville to the mouth of the Pajaro River, ultimately draining to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The slough system is the largest and most significant wetland habitat between Pescadero Marsh in San Mateo County to the north and Elkhorn Slough in Monterey County to the south.

Historically, the Pajaro River meandered across this area and deposited fertile topsoil, which is why in later years, Watsonville Slough Farms was selected as a highly productive area for agricultural production. The Bryant-Habert parcel was leveled and used for row crop agriculture for 80 years but has lain fallow for the past decade. Existing conditions include historic agricultural fields that are in the process of reverting back to ruderal habitats and remnant landscape features from past farming practices such as dredged maintenance channels.

The property provides important suitable habitat for many species of the Watsonville Slough system, including California red-legged frog, marsh harrier, white-tailed kite, and bald eagle. Watsonville Slough supports 270 species of resident and migratory birds and 23 different native plants and animals that are state and federally listed as threatened, endangered, or species of special conservation concern.

Grantee Qualifications: The Resource Conservation District of Santa Cruz County has successfully undertaken numerous grant funded projects, including recent Coastal Conservancy-funded projects for fire prevention, groundwater recharge, agricultural climate resiliency, and lagoon restoration. The project team includes the RCD, Land Trust, Waterways Consulting Inc, Watsonville Wetlands Watch, and the Central Coast Wetlands group, who have collaborated on successful wetland restoration planning and implementation projects in the region. Since 2010, these entities have implemented over 40 acres of upland and wetland enhancement projects.

Project History: The Bryant-Habert parcel of Watsonville Slough Farms was used for row crop agriculture for more than 80 years, until 2007 when agricultural production was limited by rising water levels in drainage channels, and the land was no longer profitable for the landowners to farm. With funding from the Conservancy, the Bryant-Habert parcel was acquired in 2012 by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County and added to its existing 441-acre Watsonville Slough Farms property (which the Conservancy also assisted in funding acquisition of in several transactions from 2008-2011). The Bryant-Habert parcel was critical for linking previously fragmented habitats and conservation lands. In 2012, the RCD and the Land Trust completed the Watsonville Slough Farms Management Plan, which outlined projects to be implemented over the next decade. The RCD and Land Trust completed the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Design in 2014, with funding by the US Fish and Wildlife Service (administered by the Conservancy) for the 48 additional acres added to the Watsonville Slough Farms by the Bryant-Habert and Wait property acquisitions.

Phase 1 of the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Design was completed in 2016 with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board. The proposed project is the second and final phase of implementing the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Design. The project was identified as high priority by the Integrated Watershed Restoration Program (IWRP) Technical Advisory Committee, a collaborative planning effort funded through the Conservancy. The

project design and ecosystem resiliency strategies have been extensively vetted by a diverse advisory committee and designs used the Watsonville Slough Hydrologic Study, a hydrological model developed with funding from the Department of Water Resources to support future wetland project designs throughout Middle Watsonville Slough.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$440,620
Wildlife Conservation Board	\$144,775
Land Trust of Santa Cruz County	\$109,942
Project Total	\$695,337

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation from the Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014 (Proposition 1, Water Code § 79700, et seq.). Funds appropriated to the Conservancy derive from Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 79730) and may be used “for multi-benefit water quality, water supply, and watershed protection and restoration projects for the watersheds of the state” (Section 79731). The proposed project will achieve several purposes of Chapter 6 identified in Section 79732, including the following: “protect and restore aquatic, wetland, and migratory bird ecosystems” (Section 79732 (a)(4)); “protect and restore coastal watersheds, including, but not limited to, bays, marine estuaries, and nearshore ecosystems” (Section 79732 (a)(10)); “assist in the recovery of endangered, threatened, or migratory species by improving watershed health and coastal wetland restoration” (Section 79732 (a)(12)). Consistent with these purposes, the proposed project will restore wetland function and ecosystem processes on Watsonville Slough.

As required by Proposition 1, the proposed project provides multiple benefits. The project will enable the improvement of water quality and flood control, enhancement of habitat for threatened and endangered species, and bolstering of ecosystem resilience to climate change.

Section 79707(b) requires agencies to prioritize “projects that leverage private, federal, or local funding or produce the greatest public benefit”. As shown above, this project leverages both state and local funding with matching funds from the Wildlife Conservation Board and Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.

The project was reviewed and subsequently recommended for funding through a competitive grant process under the Conservancy’s Proposition 1 Grant Program Guidelines adopted in June 2015 (“Prop 1 Guidelines”) (See Water Code § 79706(a)). The proposed project meets each of the evaluation criteria in the Prop 1 Guidelines as described in further detail in this “Project Financing” section, the “Project Summary” section and in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines” section of this report.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed authorization is consistent with the purposes and objectives of Chapter 5.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding improving and protecting coastal and marine water quality and habitats (Section 31220). Section 31220(a) authorizes the Conservancy to provide grants for coastal watershed and coastal water quality protection projects, if the projects meet one or more of the objectives detailed in Section 31220(b). The Section 31220(b)(2) and (6) objectives are, respectively, restoration of fish and wildlife habitat within a coastal watershed and restoration of coastal wetland, riparian, and watershed lands draining to sensitive coastal or marine areas. The proposed project will meet these two objectives by restoring 9.9 acres of wetland and upland habitat within the coastal Watsonville Slough system that drains to the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

As required by Section 31220(a), the Conservancy has consulted with the State Water Resources Control Board to ensure consistency with Section 30915 of Chapter 3 of Division 20.4 of the Public Resources Code regarding the Clean Beaches Program. As required by Section 31220(c), the project is consistent with an Integrated Watershed Management Program. See "Consistency with Local Watershed Management Plan" section, below. Also as required by Section 31220(c), the project includes a monitoring and evaluation component for the restoration.

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

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will enhance 9.9 acres of coastal wetland and upland habitat at Watsonville Slough.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective G** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will enhance wetland functions along Watsonville Slough which will help improve water quality in the slough.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan the proposed project prioritizes funding for a project that is in a disadvantaged community or directly benefits 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:**
 - **California Water Action Plan (CWAP):** The project advances goals to provide assistance to disadvantaged communities, support multi-benefit projects, restore coastal watersheds to restore ecological health, natural system connectivity, and help defend against sea level rise by restoring topographic variation.
 - **California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report:** The project implements the goals to achieve a clean environment and healthy and resilient natural systems through the enhancement of 9.9 acres of degraded habitat at Watsonville Slough.
 - **Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk:** The project implements key strategies identified in the plan including prioritizing projects that produce multiple benefits and promote sustainable stewardship of California’s resources.
 - **CA Wildlife Action Plan:** The project supports this plan by restoring key habitat for species of state concern and species vulnerable to climate change including the California red legged frog and 22 other threatened or endangered species of Watsonville Slough.
 - **State and Federal Species Recovery Plans: California Red Legged Frog Recovery Plan (USFWS, 2002):** The project supports the plan’s recommendation that conservation efforts be focused on watersheds that currently support California red legged frog populations and corridors that provide dispersal opportunities. The project is also consistent with the implementation guidelines for recovery actions, including maintaining adequate water regimes and eliminate or control non-native species and predators.
4. **Support of the public:** The project is supported by the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, Santa Cruz County Supervisor Greg Caput, and State Assemblymember Mark Stone. The Integrated Watershed Restoration Program Technical Advisory Committee and technical experts provided review and input on design of the proposed projects, which includes members from United States Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Watsonville Wetlands Watch, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, County of Santa Cruz Public Works Department, City of Watsonville, California Coastal Commission, Central Coastal Wetlands Group, and local farmers.
5. **Location:** The proposed project is located within the coastal zone of unincorporated Santa Cruz County.
6. **Need:** Per the conditions of acquisition funding for Watsonville Slough Farms from the Coastal Conservancy to Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, seventy five percent of the farm lease revenue must be reinvested in the property and surrounding areas for the purposes of habitat restoration, sustainable agriculture, and public access. Currently, the revenue is approximately \$400,000 per year and has supported emergency well repair, barn

refurbishment, irrigation infrastructure, and ecological restoration. This funding alone is insufficient to implement the projects outlined in the Watsonville Slough Farms Management Plan (2012) and the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Design, thus the Resource Conservation District is requesting Conservancy support for the final phase of restoration of the Bryant-Habert parcel.

7. **Greater-than-local interest:** Wetlands in California, like the Watsonville Slough system, provide tremendous benefits to the community and the State, including treatment of runoff, carbon storage, habitat for sensitive species, protection from flood and sea level rise, as well as economic benefits from tourism and recreation. Given that California has lost over 90 percent of its wetlands to development and land use changes, conserving and restoring the wetlands that remain is crucial.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Watsonville Sloughs Hydrology Study (2014) indicates that even moderate increases in sea level can generally have a significant effect on Watsonville Slough system; however, the project location would be largely protected from major inflows of saline water due to the limited culvert capacity at an existing railroad crossing downstream and the expected increases in freshwater flushing from stormwater runoff rates. Therefore, whole-scale conversion of the hydrologic regime of the project site from fresh to saline would not be expected, elevating the importance of restoring the site to be maintained as a freshwater wetland ecosystem given the predicted impacts to the rest of the slough system.

Additional Criteria

9. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The Watsonville Slough Farms was acquired for dual purpose of protecting and enhancing freshwater coastal wetlands and preserving agricultural lands. Wetland restoration was identified as a priority on this portion of the property while the remainder of the property continues to support 250 acres of row crops.
10. **Readiness:** If project funding is secured, the RCD intends to construct the project in the 2020 dry season.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Project History" above.
12. **Cooperation:** This project is made possible through the partnership of the RCD who is implementing the project; the Land Trust who is the landowner, funder, and responsible for monitoring and maintenance; and Watsonville Wetlands Watch, a nonprofit which will be assisting with native planting and maintenance.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN/STATE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN:

Projects authorized pursuant to Chapter 5.5 of Public Resources Code Division 21 (Section 31220) must be consistent with an Integrated Watershed Management Program, local watershed management plans, or water quality control plans adopted by the state and regional water boards. This project is consistent with the Pajaro Integrated Regional Water

Management Plan (IRWM, 2014), achieving the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Goal to preserve the environmental health and wellbeing of the Pajaro River watershed through restoration and enhancement of natural resources of streams, watersheds, wetlands, and Monterey Bay. The proposed project will restore and enhance 9.9 acres of wetland and upland habitats on property located at the center of the lower Pajaro River watershed. The proposed project will also advance the flood management and water quality protection objectives of the Pajaro Integrated Regional Water Management Plan, as wetlands provide additional benefits of absorbing floodwaters for flood attenuation, and filtering pollutants which protect and improve water quality.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

Staff has independently evaluated the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Project (Exhibit 4) approved by the County of Santa Cruz on May 25, 2016. The proposed project is the second phase of the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration Project (BHWERP).

The MND evaluates the impacts of the BHWERP as described in the Bryant-Habert/Wait Ecological Restoration 60% Design Report. The 60% design report plans for restoration of approximately 28 acres, with 20 acres being disturbed by the restoration activities. The disturbance includes 11,350 cubic yards of earthmoving. The project design anticipated constructing the project in phases and using adaptive management to refine future phases based on knowledge gained from prior phases. The first phase of the BHWERP was implemented by the RCD with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board. Following completion of Phase 1, the RCD implemented the adaptive management approach to the BHWERP and modified the layout of the second phase design of the project. The Phase 2 design reduces the disturbed area and modifies the relative acreages and locations of seasonal wetland, wet meadow, and grassland habitats (See Exhibit 2). These changes reduce the earthmoving in Phase 2 of the project from an estimated 8,550 cubic yards to 4,500 cubic yards. The modified layout does not change the proposed project's potential environmental effects or increase the severity of any of the environmental effects identified in the MND. Accordingly, no additional CEQA documentation is necessary.

The MND determined that the BHWERP could have significant effects on the following types of resources: Air Quality, Biological Resources, and Cultural Resources. The potentially significant impacts of the BHWERP and associated mitigation measures that the RCD will implement to avoid, minimize or mitigate those impacts to a less than significant level are summarized below.

Air Quality

Although emissions from construction activities represent temporary impacts, air quality impacts can nevertheless be acute during construction periods, resulting in significant localized impacts to air quality. Implementation of the following Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Best Available Control Technology (BACT) in addition to a limit on the amount of area actively graded per day to 2.2 acres will ensure that emissions of diesel articulate matter (DPM) and

fugitive dust from BHWERP excavation and grading meets Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District's standards and impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level.

AQ-1 Contracted Diesel Control Measures: Ultralow sulfur diesel fuel will be used in all diesel-powered equipment, which minimizes sulfur dioxide and particulate matter. Additional BMPs and BACT will include regular tuning of construction equipment, use of electrically powered generators or pumps, limits to vehicle idling, and use of diesel emission control systems and alternative fuel equipment to the extent reasonably and economically feasible.

AQ-2 Diesel Particulate Matter Emissions Control Measures: The BHWERP will implement measures to reduce particulate matter emissions from diesel exhaust including using grid power instead of diesel generators where possible, limit to idling of diesel-fueled commercial vehicles, regular tune-ups, and using low-sulfur fuels.

AQ-3 Dust Control Measures: The BHWERP will implement controls at the construction and staging sites to reduce dust, including watering all active construction areas at least twice daily as necessary, covering all trucks hauling loose materials, sweep paved roads daily, and stabilize soil on unpaved roads, staging areas, and storage piles.

Biological Resources

Overall, the BHWERP is expected to improve ecological functions and values of natural communities within the study area through restoration. Without mitigation measures, potential effects of the BHWERP include loss of remnant agricultural habitat, increased sedimentation and turbidity, disturbance during construction to special status birds and western pond turtle, and disturbance to California Red-legged frog and Dusky-footed Woodrat and both their habitats. With implementation of the mitigation measures below, the impact of the BHWERP on biological resources is considered less than significant.

BIO-1: Conduct Preconstruction Surveys and Implement Minimization and Avoidance Measures for Nesting Bird Species.

BIO-2: Conduct Preconstruction Survey for Western Pond Turtle and Install Wildlife Exclusion Fencing.

BIO-3: Implement Best Management Practices to minimize stormwater runoff, erosion, and potential water quality impacts associated with construction activities including BMPS related to erosion control, stockpiling materials, spill prevention and response, equipment and vehicle maintenance and cleaning, refueling, on-site hazardous materials management, fire prevention, and work site housekeeping.

BIO-4: Compliance with USFWS Biological Opinion for the proposed BHWERP by implementing conservation protective measures for the California red-legged frog as well as additional best management practices and avoidance measures such as seasonal avoidance, Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area fencing, and wildlife exclusion fencing.

BIO-5: Protective Measures for Amphibians and other wildlife during the application of Herbicides.

BIO-6 Implement Dusky-footed Woodrat Protective Measures including pre-construction surveys, avoiding nests when possible, or having a qualified biologist disassemble nests that cannot be avoided.

BIO-7: Protection of Desirable Vegetation Areas to the extent feasible.

Cultural Resources

No archaeological or historic resources are known to exist within the Project area and due to the fact that the entire native ground surface within the Project site has been substantially altered as a result of farming and has been subject to routine flooding, it is unlikely that previously unrecorded archaeological deposits would be discovered during construction of the Project. However, as there is a possibility of resources or unidentified (e.g., buried) human remains being found during any construction involving earth disturbance, the following mitigation measures will be taken:

CUL-1: All ground disturbing activity in the BHWERP area shall be monitored by a qualified archaeologist and if archaeological resources are uncovered during construction, all further site excavation shall cease and desist and comply with the County Code procedures.

CUL-2: If at any time human remains are discovered during the BHWERP , site excavation shall immediately cease and desist, and the sheriff-coroner and Planning Director will be notified. If the coroner determines that the remains are not of recent origin, a full archeological report shall be prepared, and representatives of the local Native California Indian group shall be contacted. Disturbance shall not resume until the significance of the archeological resource is determined and appropriate mitigations to preserve the resource on the site are established.

Conservancy staff concurs that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment. Staff therefore recommends that the Conservancy find that the project as mitigated avoids, reduces or mitigates the possible significant environmental effects to a level of less-than-significant and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by Title 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15382. Upon approval of funding for the proposed project, staff will file a Notice of Determination.