

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

June 18, 2020

**Clifford Kamph Memorial Park Expansion Feasibility Study**

Project No.20-015-01

Project Manager: Peter Jarausch

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$96,000 to the County of Del Norte to assess the feasibility of expanding camping opportunities and develop a park improvement plan for Clifford Kamph Memorial Park, the northern gateway to the California Coastal Trail, in Del Norte County.

**LOCATION:** Approximately 5 miles north of Smith River, unincorporated Del Norte County

**PROGRAM CATEGORY:** Public Access

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:**

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400-31410 and Sections 31411-31414 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed ninety-six thousand dollars (\$96,000) to the County of Del Norte (“the grantee”) to assess the feasibility of expanding camping opportunities and develop a park improvement plan for Clifford Kamph Memorial Park, the northern gateway to the California Coastal Trail, in Del Norte 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.”

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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 Chapters 9 and 10 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access and lower cost coastal accommodations respectively.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The proposed project serves greater than local needs.”

### **PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$96,000 to the County of Del Norte (“the County”) to develop a park improvement plan for Clifford Kamph Memorial Park (“Kamph Park”), the northern gateway to the California Coastal Trail, in Del Norte County (Exhibit 1). As part of the project, the County will assess the feasibility of expanding the park onto adjacent property, which would need to be purchased, to increase the number of campsites available for low cost overnight accommodation.

Kamph Park is the northernmost camping spot along the California Coastal Trail (CCT). Its location just a few miles south of the Oregon border and immediately adjacent to the beach makes the park the perfect jumping off point to begin the CCT trek. During the summer months the 9 existing campsites are often fully occupied, as the park attracts many visitors who are driving and cycling along the coast. Located on a coastal bluff directly adjacent to the beach, the park provides visitors easy access to a wild and less developed beach, which is no longer present in much of California.

The existing park infrastructure includes 9 tent camping sites, each with a picnic table and fire ring, a restroom facility with showers, a camp host site, a day use area, and parking lot and trails to the beach. Del Norte County maintains the park, but the amenities are reaching the end of their useful life. The restroom was constructed several decades ago and is considered “rustic” by today's standards. Trails to the beach are also often damaged during winter storms and annual repair costs could be reduced by redesigning the trails.

The number of park visitors has been increasing, which is a direct benefit to the local economy, but this has also put some stress on the park as the number of visitors regularly exceeds the park's current layout and design. During the summer months, the campground and day use area are full. The County is interested in increasing the number of campsites and park capacity, and the best way to accomplish this goal would be to acquire additional property to the south of the campground. The property to the south has been listed for sale, and the property owner has indicated his willingness to work with the County to negotiate a potential sale. The existing tent sites are already along the southern boundary of the property so it may be relatively easy to expand the camping in this direction. The tent sites would likely be able to remain in one

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contiguous area if the park were to be extended to the south and access to the bathroom and parking area may be able to remain the same.

The topography of the neighboring property is conducive to tent camping. It is a relatively flat coastal meadow which very gently slopes towards the bluff edge and dunes. This means that there is already ample flat area for pitching tents without the need for expensive earth moving. In fact, currently the campground hosts have to be vigilant to make sure that the visitors respect the park boundary and do not unintentionally place their tents on the private property to the south of the park.

The proposed project will include preliminary planning, design, and environmental and cultural studies both for the existing park and the proposed park addition. Planning and design will take two tracks. The first will consider how the park should look and function if the park is expanded to the south. The second will examine how to be reconfigure the park in its existing footprint if the County is unable to acquire the adjacent property. Within those two tracks site design will focus on camping, day use, and the shared parking lot and bathroom. For camping, the studies will examine how to best configure the tent camping area to increase capacity, provide some privacy, and provide new sites accessible to people with disabilities. The feasibility study will examine the physical and biological constraints of the neighboring property and will lay out a strategy for acquisition. If the analysis of the physical constraints determines there is a suitable location on the adjacent property for campsites, the feasibility study will include obtaining an appraisal for the property and initiating negotiations with the landowner.

For the day use area, the preparation of the park improvement plan will examine opportunities to increase visitor capacity and reconfigure the trail connection between the park and the beach. The trail needs to be reconfigured so that it does not wash out during winter storms and has a gentler grade. A gentler grade would benefit families with small children and could make it possible for visitors with a wider range of abilities to access the beach. Trail connections to the beach are always challenging because the sand moves during the winter, water erodes the trail surface, and driftwood piles up where the trail joins the beach. The plan preparation will also analyze the existing parking lot and bathrooms, which are shared by the day use and overnight visitors, and it will identify any necessary improvements.

Both the existing park and the neighboring property have sensitive cultural and biological resources that will need to be taken into consideration during site design. The property to the south has coastal meadows with some areas of wetland that need to be avoided. Much of the surrounding area is also actively used by the Tolowa, the Native American tribe with ancestral ties to the region, and the County will consult with the tribes during development of the study. The Tolowa use a seasonal fishing camp approximately a half mile south of the park.

### **Site Description:**

Clifford Kamph Memorial Park is approximately 2.25 acres, owned and operated by the County of Del Norte. It is situated on a bluff top between Highway 101 and the Pacific Ocean and has nine tent-camping sites, a day use area, restrooms, a small parking lot, and majestic views of and access to the Pacific Ocean. The park is located on a bluff top that is bordered on its eastern edge by Highway 101 and on the west with a series of low dunes and the beach. The

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day use and camping areas are located on the relatively flat bluff top with impressive views of the ocean. The bluff top within the park area has mowed grass and a small grove of Monterey Pine. The dunes have a combination of European grasses and native species. The property to the south of the park is made up of the same combination of flat bluff top, dune, and beach. The bluff top area has known wetland areas and amazing native wildflowers in the spring and early summer. There are almost no trees on the property and it offers impressive views of the ocean.

The expansive white sand beach is accessed via an aging trail and stairway that connect the park to the beach. The trail is partially paved and leads from the day use area down moderately steep grades through the dunes to the beach. The bottom section of the trail forks into a northern and southern connection to the beach. Kamph Park is California's northernmost ocean-front camping spot, located less than two miles from the Oregon border. It is the only public ocean-front campground north of Gold Bluffs Campground in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in Humboldt County. At full capacity the tents stand shoulder to shoulder, or tent peg to tent peg in order to accommodate coast-loving campers.

On the northern edge of the park there is a single-family home located behind a tall fence. To the south there is 25 acres of undeveloped private property which is made up of three parcels.

**Grantee Qualifications:** The County of Del Norte is well qualified to undertake this planning project. The County maintains its own parks system including this popular campground, several access points, and two boat ramps. In addition, the Conservancy has previously funded two Coastal Trail and access projects led by the County of Del Norte. The County now owns and manages the Point Saint George Property which was acquired with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board and the Conservancy. At Point Saint George the County installed a guardrail to prevent vehicles from damaging resources and installed important regulatory signage to deter looting of cultural sites. The Point Saint George property includes listed species, important cultural resources, as well as a trail to the beach, and has been maintained by the County for over 20 years. The Conservancy also helped fund the initial CCT improvements to Pebble Beach Drive through the Pebble Beach Del Norte Coastal Trail grant to the County of Del Norte. The Conservancy grant included improvements to the pull outs and interpretive signage. The County then secured additional funding to widen the road to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists who use Pebble Beach Drive as part of the CCT.

**Project History:** The County of Del Norte approached the Conservancy about the project in the spring of 2019. Staff conducted a site visit with County staff to view the area and learn more about the potential project. The County then worked with the neighboring landowner to discuss the project and gain their support for the potential park expansion. A pre-application to the Conservancy's Low Cost Overnight Accommodations program was submitted in August of 2019. The County was then invited to submit a full grant application which they did in April of 2020.

### PROJECT FINANCING

**Coastal Conservancy**

**\$96,000**

**Project Total**

**\$96,000**

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 Sections 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 for lower cost coastal accommodations. (Public Resources Code Section 80120 (b)).

Consistent with the purposes of this funding source, the proposed project consists of planning for the improvement of existing, and potential development of new, lower cost overnight accommodations on the coast in the form of campsites at Kamph Park. The project would be carried out in accordance with Chapters 9 and 10 of Division 21 regarding public access and lower cost coastal accommodations (see “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section below).

The County of Del Norte will also contribute the staff time to manage the project as an in-kind donation.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:**

**Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources:** The project will help protect public resources by reducing the amount of illegal camping in the nearby dunes.

**Standard No. 4, Privacy:** The project will maintain the large privacy fence along the northern edge of the park. This will help protect the privacy of the neighbors.

**Standard No. 5, Environmentally Sensitive Areas:** Designs for future improvements will avoid environmentally sensitive areas.

**Standard No. 8, Trails:** Any reconfiguration of the trail will be designed to meet the Conservancy’s accessway standards.

**Standard No. 12, Support Facilities:** Park expansion and facility updates will improve this important support facility for the CCT and Pacific Coast Bicycle Route.

**Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access:** The restroom, a trail support facility will be designed to be barrier free.

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

This project is undertaken pursuant to Chapters 9 (Sections 31400-31410) and 10 (Sections 31411-31414) of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code.

Section 31400 states the Legislature’s intent that the Conservancy play a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the coast. Section 31400.1 allows the Conservancy to award grants to a public agency for development of accessways to

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and along the coast that serve more than local public needs. Consistent with this section, the proposed project will plan new access facilities at Kamph Park, which draws both local visitors and those traveling the California Coast.

Section 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to assist public agencies in developing and implementing a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. The proposed grant to Del Norte County will further these goals by planning for improvements to the park and beach accessway.

As required by Section 31401, the Conservancy has adopted standards to guide agencies in developing public access to coastal resources. These are discussed relative to the proposed project in the "Consistency with Conservancy's Access Program Standards" section above.

Pursuant to Section 31400.2, the amount of funding provided by the Conservancy shall be determined by the total amount of funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects, and the application of factors prescribed by the Conservancy for the purpose of determining project eligibility and priority. The proposed contribution by the Conservancy was determined based on application of project selection criteria as discussed below and on consideration of other available resources.

The proposed project is consistent with the Del Norte County Local Coastal Program as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies below.

The proposed project is also consistent with Section 31412(a), which states that the Conservancy may award grants and undertake projects as part of its Lower Cost Coastal Accommodations Program (Explore the Coast Overnight) to facilitate improvement of existing, and the development of new, lower cost accommodations within one and one-half miles of the coast. The project will plan improvements to the existing campsites and assess the feasibility of developing new camping opportunities directly adjacent to the beach in Del Norte County.

Consistent with Section 31412(c)(1), the proposed project was selected through a collaborative effort with Del Norte County. Future development based on this project will serve nearby disadvantaged communities in Crescent City and greater Del Norte County.

Pursuant to Section 31413, the Conservancy's implementation of the Explore the Coast Overnight Program must be guided by a lower-cost accommodations assessment. The Conservancy completed the "Explore the Coast Overnight - An Assessment of Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations" (Assessment) on March 14, 2019. The Assessment noted that there are few places to camp on the beach in Del Norte county, and it identified Kamph Park as a potential project site.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will implement a plan to enhance opportunities to visit the coast for people with disabilities by redesigning the camping area and restrooms.

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Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design a coastal access point to enhance recreational opportunities and experiences of the natural coastline by redesigning the camping and day use areas to accommodate more people.

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will design and plan for the expansion of low cost overnight accommodations on the coast by planning and designing for increase in the number of tent camping sites at the park.

### **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:**

Completing the California Coastal Trail (2003)

The project will plan for improvements to an important support facility along the California Coastal Trail. It is the gateway to the CCT on the northern end of the State and is the first camping opportunity as hikers head south on the trail. An increase in capacity at the Park will allow more visitors to enjoy this section of the CCT.

California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report.

The project will consider the effects of climate change when selecting final plans for each site. Public Safety will also be factored into the design (Pg. 27, 5).

4. **Support of the public:** See "Exhibit 2: Project Letters"

5. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Del Norte County.

6. **Need:** The County of Del Norte does not have sufficient resources to undertake this project with the Conservancy's financial assistance.

7. **Greater-than-local interest:** There is a statewide need for additional low-cost overnight accommodations on the coast. The proposed project will analyze the feasibility of expanding camping opportunities at Kamph Park, an affordable county-operated facility, for both residents of Del Norte County and those travelling the California Coast.

8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The existing campground at Kamph Park is located on a bluff top at approximately elevation 20 feet, which is above the elevation expected to be impacted by projected sea level rise for 2050 and 2100. There is one existing trail which goes from the campground to beach which may see flooding increase over time. It is not possible to maintain beach access without this trail. This project will redesign the trail so that it will be more resilient to sea level rise by hardening the bottom section of the trail with concrete or rock. This will anchor the trail where the dune meets the beach and prevent the trail surface from washing away in winter storms.

#### **Additional Criteria**

9. **Readiness:** The County of Del Norte is prepared to undertake this project.
10. **Cooperation:** The County of Del Norte intends to work collaboratively with the Smith River Alliance (SRA), a local nonprofit organization, to develop the feasibility study. SRA brings extensive property acquisition and project management experience to the partnership.
11. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** The existing camping area at Kamph Park is not vulnerable to sea level rise. It is set back from the edge of the bluff as well as protected by the fore dunes. However, increased rates of coastal erosion due to more frequent and intense winter storms will have an effect on the trails and parking area. The current day use parking area is at the bluff edge and the trails go from the parking lot and camping area to the beach. The trails need to be redesigned to better withstand erosion from winter storms and the edge of the parking lot will recede slowly over time. The capacity of the parking area will not be significantly reduced. Currently the bathrooms and septic system are at the eastern portion of the park at a higher elevation and are not expected to be effected by increased rates of erosion.

#### **CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:**

The project is consistent with the Public Access component of the Del Norte County General Plan Coastal Element (1983).

Overall the Public Access Component encourages the County of Del Norte to provide additional coastal access to the public while simultaneously respecting private property rights and sensitive coastal resources. The project will increase public access and will be designed to maintain the neighbors private property rights. It will also designed to minimize impacts to resources.

The project will also specifically address the following policy goals-

Policy C1: The project will directly implement the County's goal to "work actively towards the attainment of maximum coastal access for the public where it is consistent with public safety..." The project will design and plan for capacity increases at Kamph Park and provide quality visitor experience. (Page 15)



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Policy C4: The project will also meet goal C4 of by designing the project to consider public safety, vandalism, and the projection of fragile coastal resources. (Page 15)

### **CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Sections 15262 and 15306, because it involves only feasibility studies, planning studies, basic data collection and research, none of which will impact any environmental resource(s) and all of which will be undertaken as part of a planning effort leading to possible future action that the Conservancy has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of this project.