

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

June 18, 2020

Sunset Circle Coastal Trail Construction

Project No.20-016-01

Project Manager: Peter Jarausch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$150,000 to the City of Crescent City to construct a new section of the California Coastal Trail connecting the Crescent City Harbor with Crescent City’s Beachfront Park in Del Norte County, and adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCATION: Crescent City, Del Norte County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Letters](#)

Exhibit 3: [CEQA Initial Study/Negative Declaration](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31400 et seq. of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to the City of Crescent City (“the grantee”) to construct a new section of the California Coastal Trail connecting the Crescent City Harbor to Crescent City’s Beachfront Park 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 and Proposition 12 as the source of that funding.

4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. To the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development' into 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 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding a system of public accessways.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the Initial Study/Negative Declaration for the Sunset Circle Multi-Use Trail Project adopted by the City of Crescent City on September 17, 2017 pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 3. The Conservancy finds that the proposed project as designed avoids any potentially significant environmental effects 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.
4. The proposed project serves greater than local needs."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$150,000 to the City of Crescent City to construct a section of the California Coastal Trail. The new trail segment will link existing completed trails in the Crescent City Harbor and Beachfront Park in the City of Crescent City. This approximately 1,400-foot-long section of paved multi-use trail will be at least 8-foot wide with two-foot compacted shoulders on each side.

This project will close an important gap in the local trail network and connect a string of attractions along the entire Crescent City waterfront (see Exhibit 1). This includes Beachfront Park, the City's RV Park, Crescent City Harbor, and the Battery Point Lighthouse. These are the primary local attractions in Crescent City and increasing visitor use will benefit both the Harbor's and City's economic development plans. Visitors will be able to park their cars and explore the entire waterfront by foot and bicycle.

The project will also close a gap in the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route (PCBR). The PCBR guides cyclists from Canada to Mexico along the Pacific coast. It follows scenic roads with less traffic when possible and uses multi-use trails if they are available. This project will give cyclists a safer and more scenic route than riding on the shoulder of Highway 101.

The City of Crescent City will manage construction of the project, which will be constructed by a private contractor. The project consists of construction of approximately 1,400 feet of ADA-compliant, paved, multi-use trail between 8 and 10 feet wide depending on the right of way available. In some sections the trail is limited to 8 feet in width to avoid having to purchase additional property. The project includes construction of trail amenities, including directional signage and lighting. There is an existing public restroom at the northern end available to trail users. When the project is completed, there will be a contiguous 1.25-mile ADA trail from Beachfront Park to the southern end of Crescent City Harbor.

In the near future, the majority of the City's hotels will be connected to the coastal trail with a safe pedestrian crossing of Highway 101. While some hotels are located west of the highway, many hotels are located on the east side of 101 and currently there is no easy and safe way to get across the busy road to the Harbor. Caltrans has completed 90% design plans and has a source of funding for construction. Once completed the crossing will bring visitors safely to the Harbor where they can then explore both the Harbor and the Crescent City waterfront by using the California Coastal Trail (CCT). The project and the Highway 101 crossing together will increase safety for pedestrians and make it more enjoyable to explore the area.

Site Description:

Crescent City is located in Del Norte County, near the Oregon border, and the Crescent City harbor is California's northernmost harbor. Crescent City is the northern gateway to California's famous redwoods. Visitors from all over the world stay in local hotels and frequent local businesses on their way to explore Redwood National and State Parks and stunning sections of California's coastline.

The project is located on the southern edge of Crescent City. The area is largely flat and flanked by hotels and businesses on the eastern side and undeveloped property to the west. The vegetation is largely made up of landscaped areas and annual European grasses.

The proposed trail connects, at its southern end, to an existing section of multi-use trail managed by the Crescent City Harbor District. From there it will follow the western edge of Sunset Circle, a local road, until it reaches the City of Crescent City's RV Park. There it will connect to a multi-use trail managed by the City of Crescent City which continues north over Elk Creek and into Beachfront Park.

The property needed for the trail is owned by the City of Crescent City. During the design phase of the project it became clear that the City would need to purchase additional right of way for the optimal trail alignment. The City negotiated with private landowners and concluded the private property acquisitions in spring of 2020. The City also purchased a necessary section of right of way along Sunset Circle from the County of Del Norte. While the street is entirely within the City limits, a section of right of way was owned by the County. The County, which is in support of the project, sold their interest in Sunset Circle to the City for \$1.

The project is located within the Tsunami Hazard Zone in Crescent City. Crescent City has been disproportionately impacted by Tsunami over the last one hundred years. This is because of the bathymetry of the area immediately off the coast of Crescent City which funnels wave energy towards the shore. The City of Crescent City, Harbor District and County of Del Norte have all

posted evacuation route signs throughout the waterfront, as well as warning sirens. However, the proposed project is largely hardscape which should not be significantly damaged by the rapid flooding during a Tsunami.

Grantee Qualifications:

The City of Crescent City is well-qualified to move forward with this project and has successfully completed a number of projects in cooperation with the Conservancy. In 2014, the Conservancy awarded a grant for the Crescent City Beachfront Park Coastal Access Project. That funding was used to construct a stairway to the beach at the eastern edge of the park and an accessible trail to the beach at the western edge of the park. Both of those new access points to the beach are heavily used. In 2005, the Conservancy awarded the City a grant for the Crescent City Coastal Trail: Harbor North Segment. With that funding the City constructed a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Elk Creek as well as trailhead amenities. The bridge is an important link between downtown Crescent City and the Crescent City Harbor to the south. Most recently, the Conservancy awarded a grant to the City to update its Beachfront Park Master Plan, which includes plans to extend coastal trail connections on its western edge. That work is ongoing. The Conservancy has also worked extensively with the Crescent City Harbor District to construct coastal trail and visitor improvements in the harbor.

Project History: The proposed project was identified in the Del Norte County Active Transportation Plan as a priority project for Crescent City and the CCT. The City of Crescent City and the Del Norte Local Transportation Commission (DNLTC) began developing this project in 2016. The DNLTC authorized initial funding for the design, environmental compliance, and permitting phase. Del Norte County and the City also engaged in extended negotiations about how best to transfer the County's orphaned section of right of way along Sunset Circle to the City. In 2017 the City of Crescent City received an ATP Grant from the California Transportation Commission to complete design, permitting, and construction.

Once the design and permitting phase was completed the City focused its efforts on the acquisition of right of way and preparing for construction. The City approached Conservancy staff in spring of 2020 with a request to close the funding shortfall for the project and enable the project to proceed. The shortfall is due to an increase in the construction costs since the project received its initial funding.

The Conservancy has been actively involved in funding the planning and construction of sections of CCT in the area. In 2005, the Conservancy awarded the City a grant for the Crescent City Coastal Trail: Harbor North Segment. With that funding the City constructed a bicycle/pedestrian bridge over Elk Creek as well as trailhead amenities. The bridge is an important link between downtown Crescent City and the proposed project. Most recently, in 2019 the Conservancy awarded a grant to the City for the Beachfront Park Master Plan update, which will include plans to extend the coastal trail from Beachfront Park to the northwest corner of Crescent City to connect with the Pebble Beach segment of coastal trail.

The Crescent City Harbor District has simultaneously been working on developing coastal trail through the harbor. In 2012, the Conservancy awarded the Crescent City Harbor District a grant for the Crescent City Harbor Promenade and Coastal Trail Construction Phase I, enabling the

District to construct a multi-use path through just over half of its property. The District subsequently constructed the remainder of the CCT through the Harbor with other grant funds.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$150,000
California Active Transportation Program	\$640,000
Del Norte County Local Transportation Commission	\$242,283
Project Total	\$882,283

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds for this project is an appropriation from Proposition 12, the Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000. (Public Resources Code Sections 5096.300 et seq.). These funds are available for Conservancy projects that restore, enhance and develop public use facilities in coastal areas, including waterfronts and public accessways. Consistent with Public Resources Code Section 5096.352(c) the project will construct a new facility for public access along the coast. It is consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, as discussed in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s enabling legislation” section of this report, below. The proposed authorization is thus consistent with Proposition 12.

The City of Crescent City has already secured funding from both the California Active Transportation Program (ATP) and the Del Norte County Local Transportation Commission. The ATP Grant was awarded in 2017. These funds are specifically to be used to increase non-motorized transportation. The project will accomplish this by building a new facility which improves both safety and comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The City of Crescent City is also providing approximately \$10,000 in kind services while managing the project and approximately \$35,000 for new streetlights in the area.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of Division 21 (Sections 31400-31409) of the Public Resources Code, as follows:

Pursuant to sections 31400.1 and 31400.2, the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of the initial development of public accessways by any public agency or non-profit organization for public access purposes to and along the coast that serve greater than local needs. Consistent with these sections, the proposed authorization is to provide funds to the City to construct a public accessway connecting the Crescent City Harbor to the City’s Beachfront Park. The proposed trail will improve access to the coast for the residents and tourists who come to this region for its scenic beauty.

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 and the contributions to the project by the City.

The proposed project is consistent with the City of Crescent City Local Coastal Program as described in the Consistency with Local Coastal Program Policies below.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources: The project will not introduce new hazards to the area and will provide clear guidance to the public on how to evacuate in case of a tsunami.

Standard No. 8, Trails: The project has been designed to meet the Conservancy's trail standards.

Standard No. 10, Coastal Bikeways: The project will close an existing gap in a non-motorized alternate to a Coastal Bikeway, the Pacific Coast Bicycle Route.

Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access: The project will construct a new section of accessible trail and connect two other sections providing increased barrier-free access.

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

Consistent with **Goal 1, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will construct more than a half a mile of new California Coastal Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will construct a trail which will enhance access along the coast for people with disabilities.

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 meets the goals in Completing the California Coastal Trail, State Coastal Conservancy (2003) as it will construct a section of the CCT and related support facilities.

The proposed project meets Goal PC-2.6 from Safeguarding California Plan: 2018 Update, California Natural Resources Agency (2018) in that it supports public access along waterways, lake, and rivers (Page 216). It also meets goal PC- 3.2 because it is the outcome of consultation with the community and stakeholders.

4. **Support of the public:** See “Project Letters”.
5. **Location:** The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Crescent City.
6. **Need:** The City has raised significant funds for the project, but as construction costs have risen, the project cannot proceed without support from the Conservancy.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The project will construct a section of the CCT, a statewide priority. It will also serve the many Californians who visit Del Norte County to experience the beaches and the redwoods.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** Sunset Circle is located at a minimum elevation of 8 feet. This is well above the projected sea level rise in 2050 and 2100. The trail has been designed to withstand occasional flooding as it is in a Tsunami Hazard Zone.

Additional Criteria

9. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
10. **Readiness:** The City of Crescent City is ready to undertake the project during the summer of 2020. All other funding has been secured. The Coastal Commission issued a permit waiver on March 11, 2020.
11. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** With an increase in storm intensity and frequency there is a chance that the project area could be inundated by flooding from Elk Creek. Elk Creek is immediately to the north of the project area and flows into Crescent City Harbor. The project consists largely of hardscape which is unlikely to be damaged by intermittent flooding. The main impact would be temporary closure of the trail until the water subsides.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The proposed project meets the following goals of the City of Crescent City Local Coastal Program 2011:

Goal 5.D.7 A continuous trail system shall be developed throughout the City which will become a segment of the California Coastal Trail system. The project will be an important step towards identifying and finalizing the route through Crescent City. (Page 74)

Goal 5.D.10 The design of improvements will consider public safety, the potential for vandalism, and the protection of fragile coastal resources. (Page 74).

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The City of Crescent City adopted the Negative Declaration for the Sunset Circle Multi-Use Trail Project (ND) and approved the project on September 22, 2017. The ND indicates that there are no resource areas that would be significantly impacted by the project or for which mitigation measures would be needed to avoid impacts. Staff has evaluated the ND and 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 avoids any potentially significant environmental effects and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment as that term is defined by 14 Cal. Code Regs. §15382.

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