

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
June 18, 2020

City of Santa Ana Triangle Park

Project No. 20-013-01
Project Manager: Greg Gauthier

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$544,000 to the City of Santa Ana for final design and restoration of the Santa Ana River Parkway Triangle Park along the Santa Ana River Trail in the City of Santa Ana, Orange County.

LOCATION: Santa Ana River Trail, City of Santa Ana, Orange County.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Santa Ana River Parkway Program

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Design Concept and Project Site Photos](#)
- Exhibit 3: [CEQA Notice of Exemption](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31170 to 31174 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed five hundred forty-four thousand dollars (\$544,000) to the City of Santa Ana (“City”) to complete final design and restoration of the City of Santa Ana Triangle Park located along the Santa Ana River Trail at 17th Street in the City of Santa Ana, Orange County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the City 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.

4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
5. Evidence that the City has entered into agreements sufficient to enable the City 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 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program and funding for public access to, enjoyment of, and enhancement of the recreational and educational experience on program lands in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources and economic resources in the Santa Ana River area and its tributaries.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$544,000 to the City of Santa Ana (City) to complete final design and restoration of Triangle Park within the Santa Ana River Parkway. The proposed project will complete final design and engineering and restoration of the park. Restoration will include renovation of the viewing deck area, improved ADA accessibility, restoration of riparian landscaping, and installation of seating benches, trail and interpretive signage, and fencing. The City has already completed conceptual design and preliminary construction plans and is ready to proceed with the proposed project upon approval of funding.

The purpose of the project is to restore the 0.7-acre Triangle Park as a bicycle rest stop and riparian viewing area along the Santa Ana River Trail (the Trail). It is located at the junction between the Orange County Bicycle Trail and the Santa Ana River Trail (Exhibit 1). Due to previous homeless encampments along the Santa Ana River, the Triangle Park site has been vandalized and needs extensive restoration. The County of Orange has worked with encampment residents over the past year to secure alternative housing solutions, and the City of Santa Ana is providing additional assistance by directing homeless individuals and families to health organizations and housing assistance. With the encampment issues resolved, Triangle Park needs restoration and improvement as a rest stop, access point to nearby parks and open spaces, and as a wayfinding station for use by pedestrians and bicyclists on the Santa Ana River Trail and Orange County Bicycle Trail.

Triangle Park has the potential to be a popular bike rest area and a valuable community asset. The site will include restored riparian vegetation and shade trees, river rock boulders, a comfortable rest area, and a restored river viewing deck with improved ADA accessibility. Interpretive and directional signage will provide visitors with their location on the Trail and other location and amenity information such as: distances to Trail landmarks, milestones,

points of interest, adjacent trail connections, and locations of nearby parks and facilities. From the Triangle Park it is an approximately 12-mile bicycle ride or hike to the mouth of the Santa Ana River and Huntington State Beach, where the Santa Ana River Trail meets the California Coastal Trail.

Site Description: The Trail is approximately 28 miles long in Orange County. Five miles of the Trail runs parallel to the Santa Ana River through the City and provides bicycling and hiking connections to six parks within the City.

The site provides access to Riverview Park and a rest stop for hikers and bicyclists along the Trail and the Orange County Bicycle Trail. The property is owned by the Orange County Flood Control District. The City leases the Triangle Park property from the District. The lease was signed in September of 2012 for an initial ten year period and can be renewed annually for up to fifty years.

Grantee Qualifications: The City Recreation and Community Services Agency has received and managed more than 50 million dollars in grant funding to construct new parks and renovate existing parks and recreation facilities. The agency works closely with the City's Public Works Department to ensure that projects are completed in a timely manner and on budget. The City's senior management analyst, administrative services manager, and senior accounting staff monitor project progress and expenditures, and manage project cash flow. Further, the City's competitive contractor selection and bid process ensures that they hire qualified contractors and require performance bonds to ensure that projects are completed on schedule and per plan specifications.

Project History: The City completed the Santa Ana River Vision Plan in 2006. Funded by The Wildlands Conservancy, the plan included a vision and goals for the Santa Ana River within the City. The plan further included an opportunities and constraints analysis to develop a list of potential project sites and opportunities for improving the recreational and aesthetic values of the river, preserving and enhancing natural habitats, and land acquisitions while maintaining flood protection and public safety.

The City's plan was incorporated into the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan which was completed and approved by the Coastal Conservancy in May 2018.

Having completed conceptual design and initial engineering plans for restoration of the project site, and filed a categorical exemption under CEQA, the City is ready to proceed with final design and restoration upon approval of funding.

PROJECT FINANCING

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Coastal Conservancy | \$544,000 |
| Project Total | \$544,000 |

The anticipated source of Conservancy funding for this project is a FY 2018/2019 appropriation from the General Fund specifically to the Conservancy for projects consistent with the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program. The Budget Act of 2018, Senate Bill No. 840, Chapter 29,

Section 3760-101-0001 (e) states that \$5 million shall be available for the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program. The project is consistent with the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program as discussed below.

The initial planning and environmental review phase of the proposed project was fully funded by the City of Santa Ana.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31170 to 31174 regarding the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program and funding for recreational opportunities and trails within the Santa Ana River region. All citations in this section are to the Public Resources Code unless otherwise stated.

The Santa Ana River region includes lands within one-half-mile on either side of the Santa Ana River or its tributaries (Section 31172(c)). The proposed project is located on the Santa Ana River in the City of Santa Ana.

Section 31173 states that the Conservancy may undertake projects and award grants to public agencies to help achieve the goals of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program, including recreational opportunities and trails, and wildlife habitat and species restoration, enhancement, and protection (Section 31173(a)).

It further states that the Conservancy may undertake projects for public access to, enjoyment of, and enhancement of recreational and educational experience on program lands in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources and economic resources in the area (Section 31173(b)).

Section 31174(b) requires the Conservancy to prepare the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan (Plan), which was approved by the Conservancy in May 2018. The Plan identifies and prioritizes low-impact recreational and open-space needs, including additional or upgraded facilities and parks within the Santa Ana River watershed. This project is identified as a priority project in the Plan as the project will provide a needed upgrade to facilities within the Plan area. Further, the project is consistent with the Plan, as discussed below in the Consistency with Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines section.

Section 31174(c) requires the Conservancy to "give priority to river-related projects that create expanded opportunities for recreation, greening, aesthetic improvement, and wildlife habitat along the corridor of the river and in parts of the river channel that can be improved without infringing on water quality, water supply, and necessary flood control".

The proposed project will help achieve the goals of the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program by providing recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat restoration on the Trail. The project is a priority because it has river-related features such as the view deck, will expand opportunities for recreation and provide greening, aesthetic improvements, and wildlife habitat along the Santa Ana River without infringing on water quality, water supply, and necessary flood control. The property on which the project is located is owned by the Orange County Flood Control District but is out of the floodplain, adjacent to the top of the flood control levee.

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

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will complete final planning for a public access area within the Santa Ana River Parkway.

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will construct public access facilities within the Santa Ana River Parkway.

Consistent with **Goal 10, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will enhance natural habitats and open space in the Santa Ana River watershed by restoring native riparian vegetation along the Santa Ana River.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will benefit disadvantaged communities by providing recreational and educational opportunities for disadvantaged community members visiting the Santa Ana River Trail in the City of Santa Ana.

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 project supports and is consistent with the Santa Ana River Parkway & Open Space Plan (Coastal Conservancy, May 2018): The proposed project supports Goals 1 and 2 of the Habitat and Wildlife Goals of the Plan regarding protection, restoration and enhancement of high-quality habitat areas for multiple benefits. The project further supports Goals 2 through 7, and Goal 10, of the Education, Recreation and Access Goals of the Plan regarding connections between the river corridor and surrounding communities, river-related outdoor activities, opportunities to experience and learn about the natural environment and the river's resources, open space access, and protection of open space for future education, recreation and access opportunities. Finally, the project is listed as a priority project within the Plan.
4. **Support of the public:** The project is supported by the Active Living in Santa Ana Initiative, Concord Neighborhood Association, Earth Resource Foundation, Edna Park Neighborhood Association, Riverview Neighborhood Association, Riverview West Neighborhood Association, Windsor Village Neighborhood Association, and the Wildlands Conservancy.

5. **Location:** The proposed project is in the City of Santa Ana, County of Orange. The site is situated along the Santa Ana River Trail within the Santa Ana River Parkway which is defined as lands within one-half-mile of the Santa Ana River and its tributaries. The Triangle Park property is at the junction of the Orange County Bicycle Trail and the Santa Ana River Trail.
6. **Need:** The proposed project has completed preliminary design, engineering, and environmental review. Funding is needed for the construction phase and will not happen without Conservancy funding.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway is a local, regional, and state resource. The proposed project is on the Trail within the Parkway adjacent to the Santa Ana River mainstem. The Triangle Park rest stop and viewing area will serve as an amenity and attraction for trail and parkway visitors.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project is located inland, beyond projected sea level rise scenarios for the years 2050 and 2100 as determined by the Ocean Protection Council's Sea-Level Rise Guidance.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** The project site has been vandalized and will continue to deteriorate creating potentially hazardous conditions for Trail and Parkway visitors unless restored in the very near future.
10. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
11. **Readiness:** Preliminary design and engineering for the proposed project is completed and the City of Santa Ana is ready to proceed immediately with the final design and restoration phase.
12. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** See "Consistency with Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan" and "Consistency with Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines: 3) Promotion and Implementation of State Plans and Policies" sections above.
13. **Cooperation:** See "Project History" section above.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

All components of the proposed project are categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines at Title 14 California Code of Regulations. Section 15301 exempts operation, repair, maintenance, and minor alteration of existing public facilities involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use, including alterations to existing sidewalks, bicycle lanes or trails; and the restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety.

The proposed project will replace existing deteriorated and damaged amenities by restoring and improving an existing public pocket park, without expanding its use.

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