

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 3, 2020

RUMRILL COMPLETE GREEN STREETS

Project No. 20-009-01
Project Manager: Avra Heller

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$1,000,000 for the Rumrill Complete Green Streets Project, which will reduce water pollution from stormwater runoff, encourage active transportation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide carbon storage along the Rumrill Boulevard corridor in the City of San Pablo, Contra Costa County.

LOCATION: Rumrill Boulevard, City of San Pablo, Contra Costa County (Exhibit 1)

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)
Exhibit 2: [Project Concept Illustrations](#)
Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31165 of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to City of San Pablo ("the grantee") for the Rumrill Complete Green Streets Project, which will reduce water pollution from stormwater runoff, encourage active transportation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and provide carbon storage along the Rumrill Boulevard corridor in the City of San Pablo, Contra Costa 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.”

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 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
 2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.”
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PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of \$1,000,000 to the City of San Pablo to implement the Rumrill Complete Green Streets project. This project includes installation of new green infrastructure features along the 1.67 miles of Rumrill Boulevard. The green infrastructure includes street trees, landscaping, bioswales, and green sidewalk improvements. The project also includes installation of improved traffic signage, lighting, and signaling and improvements to 1000 feet of Wildcat Creek trail which bisects Rumrill Boulevard. This project will improve safety and connectivity of access on Rumrill Boulevard to encourage and enhance pedestrian and bicycle use in the City of San Pablo.

Construction of the green infrastructure features will reduce water pollution from stormwater runoff, encourage active transportation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, store carbon, and reduce pollution and trash in the adjacent waterways. Rumrill Boulevard is a major street that crosses Wildcat Creek to connect the cities of San Pablo and Richmond (Exhibit 1). It is one of two continuous north-south corridors linking the two cities, Richmond BART station, Contra Costa College, and commercial areas. However, this street lacks appropriate pedestrian, bicycle, and stormwater infrastructure. The two wide lanes of traffic in each direction encourage speeding, creating unsafe conditions for both drivers and pedestrians; there were nearly 150 accidents in a recent 12-month period. In addition, the poor drainage causes localized flooding during storms, exacerbating the unsafe conditions. Poorly managed runoff flows directly into Wildcat Creek, decreasing the water quality of this regionally significant stream.

The project is located within a disadvantaged and a severely disadvantaged community. According to the California State Parks’ Community Tracker website, the median household income is \$40,024 and there are 187 households without a car – underscoring the need for safe pedestrian and bicycling opportunities. Despite limited resources, the City has embarked on an ambitious “complete streets” project along Rumrill Boulevard to create a safer and cleaner community in this long-underserved area. The project will improve 1.67 miles of roadway and create 1.67 miles of Cass IV bike lanes in both directions. Complete streets is a term for street improvements that seek to transform our car-focused cities by making transportation corridors work for all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, wheelchair-users, etc.) of all ages and abilities.

Furthermore, by incorporating landscaping features that clean runoff or provide cooling shade, these projects can increase the livability of communities and protect natural resources (Exhibit 2).

The City has demonstrated its commitment to these improvements by securing over \$15 million dollars in matching funds from state and federal sources. The majority of these sources are transit focused and will fund the road, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements. Funding from the Conservancy supports the whole project, but will focus on the green infrastructure elements that will create a greener, cleaner, cooler city by improving stormwater management, planting trees, and protecting the water resources of Wildcat Creek, as well as repair or replacement (when needed) of approximately 1,000 linear feet of Wildcat Creek Trail between Davis Park and Rumrill Boulevard.

The specific green infrastructure project elements include construction of bioretention facilities and modular suspended pavement systems (commonly known by the product name "Silva Cells") which treat known pollutants such as PCBs, mercury, and hydrocarbons, as well as capture trash, thus reducing the amount of litter and contaminants in local creeks and, ultimately, San Francisco Bay. In total, the project is expected to treat runoff from approximately nine acres of roadway and adjacent properties. The project includes planting 200 street trees to sequester carbon, reduce the urban heat island effect, create an inviting streetscape for active transportation (walking, jogging, biking), and reduce summer energy use in adjacent buildings.

After completion of the project, the City will monitor the project for traffic impacts and landscaping for success rates. This monitoring will be funded by the City of San Pablo through its general fund. Ongoing maintenance will be funded through the City's Lighting and Landscape District which is managed by the City's Maintenance Department. The City will replace any trees or other plants that do not survive.

Site Description: The project will be along the 1.67 mile Rumrill Boulevard, a city-owned right-of-way. The site is currently a four-lane road with inadequate stormwater infrastructure. Rumrill Blvd. performs a variety of roles in San Pablo and Richmond but, most importantly, this corridor is one of two continuous north-south roadways through the area that connects Central Richmond and the Richmond BART station to key commercial nodes and destinations in San Pablo, such as Contra Costa College. Of the existing street trees, 120 have been identified as dead, dying, or a safety hazard and will be removed. In addition, much of the street is not ADA-compliant. The current design and state of the infrastructure have created unsafe conditions which have led to a significant number of pedestrian accidents. The majority of the road drains directly into Wildcat Creek, however, some of the northern portion drains to San Pablo Creek. Wildcat Creek is an open creek with riparian cover that historically had a steelhead population and is regionally significant.

Grantee Qualifications: The City of San Pablo's Public Works Department staff of planners and engineers designed the project and will manage the construction. The City has experience completing a similar public works project on San Pablo Avenue.

Project History: In December 2016, the Conservancy’s San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program held a Proposition 1 grant round specifically focused on green infrastructure in order to solicit projects that would meet the Proposition 1’s clean water, habitat enhancement, and climate resiliency goals. As part of that solicitation, the City of San Pablo applied for funding to restore and enhance 2,200 linear feet of Wildcat Creek. In September 2017, the Conservancy awarded \$1.3 million to the City for the Wildcat Creek project. The project proposed in this recommendation also uses green infrastructure to meet the Proposition 1 goals and will help protect the water resource enhanced with the previous grant.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$1,000,000
Caltrans- Active Transportation Program (ATP)	\$4,310,000
EPA San Francisco Bay Improvement Fund	\$714,227
California Natural Resources Agency- GGRF	\$3,999,540
Contra Costa Measure J Pedestrian Bike Transportation Fund	\$1,000,000
Caltrans SB-1 Local Partnership	\$3,200,000
Contra Costa Transit Authority (CCTA)	\$85,000
Caltrans- Alternative Compliance	\$2,000,000
Tesoro- Alternative Compliance	\$362,464
City of San Pablo	\$1,747,619
Project Total	\$18,418,850

The expected sources of funding for the Conservancy’s \$1,000,000 authorization are the fiscal year 2019/2020 appropriations to the Conservancy from the “Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014” (Proposition 1, Division 26.7 of the Water Code, Sections 79700 et seq.) and California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (“Proposition 68,” Public Resources Code Sections 80000, et seq.).

Under Proposition 1, 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). Section 79732(a) identifies the specific purposes of Chapter 6, of which the following pertain to this project: “Implement watershed adaptation projects in order to reduce the impacts of climate change on California’s communities and ecosystems” (subsection (a)(2)); “Protect and restore urban watershed health to improve watershed storage capacity . . . protection of life and property, stormwater resource management and greenhouse gas reduction (subsection (a)(9)); and reduce pollution or contamination of rivers and streams, and

protect or restore natural system functions that contribute to water supply, water quality, or flood management (subsection (a)(11)).

As required by Proposition 1, the proposed project provides multiple benefits and will help achieve the above-referenced Chapter 6 purposes. By installing the proposed bioswales, Silva Cells, as well as landscaping and street trees, the project will help absorb and treat approximately two million gallons annually. Planting 200 street trees will reduce the urban heat island effect. The trees are also expected to reduce 983.53 metric tons of greenhouse gases (based on carbon sequestered from the trees and the reduction in car usage from the bike and pedestrian facilities per the Air Resources Board's carbon calculator). This project will make the street and sidewalk more resilient, safe, and inviting for active transportation such as walking and bicycling.

The proposed project was selected through the competitive grant process under the Conservancy's Proposition 1 Grant Program Guidelines adopted in June 2015. The proposed project meets each of the evaluation criteria in the Proposition 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.

Regarding Proposition 68, the Conservancy funds for this project will come from Chapter 9 of Proposition 68, which allocates funds for projects that enhance and protect coast and ocean resources, including projects that are consistent with the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. (Pub. Res. Code Section 80120(d)). The project is consistent with the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program as described in "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" and will protect San Francisco Bay by improving water quality in Wildcat Creek. This project is further consistent with Proposition 68 because it will leverage funds from other sources. In addition, this project is consistent with Chapter 10 of Proposition 68 which allocates funds for climate resiliency (Pub. Res. Code Section 80133(b)).

The proposed project is also consistent with the Proposition 68 funding guidelines which require that at least 15% of the total funds available under Chapter 9 be used for projects that serve severely disadvantaged communities (SDACs), defined as a community with a median household income less than 60 percent of the statewide average. (Pub. Res. Code Sections 80002(n) and 80008(a)(2)). As stated in the Conservancy's Proposition 68 Guidelines, the Conservancy interprets "serving" an SDAC to mean the project is located within an SDAC, located within a mile of an SDAC, or provides other benefits to an SDAC. This project, as mentioned in the Project Summary, is either in or within less than a mile of a SDAC.

The City of San Pablo has succeeded in securing significant matching funds for the project. The City will contribute \$1,747,619 mainly in general funds. The remaining \$15,671,231 in other funding as described in the table above, comes from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Natural Resources Agency Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, Caltrans' ATP and SB-1 funding programs, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Contra Costa County Transit Authority, and funding from the Regional Water Quality Control Board's Alternative Compliance Funding. All of these funds have been secured except for \$2 million in additional Alternative Compliance Funding from Caltrans. The City is expecting an MOU with Caltrans to be executed in October of this year.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resource Code Sections 31160-31165, which states that the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area to help achieve the goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The proposed project is located in Contra Costa County, one of the nine San Francisco Bay Area counties. As described below, the goals of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program are achieved by this proposed project.

Section 31162(b) authorizes the Conservancy to “protect, restore, and enhance natural habitats and connecting corridors, watersheds, scenic areas, and other open-space resources of regional importance.” This project will enhance the watershed of Wildcat Creek by improving stormwater management to reduce pollution and trash reaching the creek.

Section 31162(d) authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to “promote, assist, and enhance projects that provide open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational and educational purposes.” This project will create more active transportation, friendly streetscape, and create an urban tree canopy along Rumrill Boulevard that connects with the Wildcat Creek Trail.

Section 31163(c) mandates that the Conservancy use specific criteria to develop priority projects within the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program. The project meets the selection criteria under 31163(c), in that it: 1) is supported by adopted local or regional plans, including Contra Costa County Bike Pedestrian Plan, San Pablo Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Wildcat Creek Action Plan; 2) serves a regional constituency in protecting the waters of a creek of regional significance; 3) can be implemented in a timely way because the partners have the necessary expertise, the project is exempt from CEQA requirements, and the basic design plans scoped and ready for the implementation phase; 4) provides opportunities or benefits that could be lost if the project is not implemented quickly, in that the project has a significant amount of grant funding that needs to meet specific construction timelines; and 5) includes matching funds from federal, state and local agencies.

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

Consistent with Goal 12, Objective F of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will improve water quality in Wildcat Creek by collecting, treating, and infiltrating stormwater runoff.

Consistent with Goal 13, Objective I, the project will construct 1.67 miles of bike lanes and sidewalks that will improve the community's connection with the Wildcat Creek Trail.

Consistent with Goal 16, Objective A, the proposed project will directly benefit a severely disadvantaged community with improved active transportation opportunities, connection to Wildcat Creek Trail, cleaner water, trees, and landscaping.

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 is consistent with, and supports the goals and intended outcomes of the following state and local plans:

California Water Action Plan -- The project will support the goals to: "encourage state focus on projects with multiple benefits" since it improves water quality, increases safety, encourages active transportation, and increases climate resiliency; "provide assistance to disadvantaged communities" since it is located entirely within a disadvantaged community; "support distributed groundwater storage" by installing green infrastructure that encourages groundwater infiltration; and "encourage flood projects that plan for climate change and achieve multiple benefits" by reducing localized flooding, increasing carbon storage, and reducing the urban heat island effect.

California @ 50 Million: The project promotes the Build a Resilient and Sustainable Water System Goal by building resilience into natural systems through the use of green infrastructure.

CA Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: this project will help to meet the goal of Support Investment in Cost-Effective Green Infrastructure to Reduce Flood Risk and Stormwater Runoff and to Maximize Associated Co-Benefits. The project will demonstrate this in a highly urbanized area within a limited space.

CA Climate Adaptation Strategy/Safeguarding California: Reducing Climate Risk Plan - The project is aligned with the overall goal of Safeguarding California—to reduce impacts and prepare for climate risks. The Health Implementation Plan of the Safeguarding California Plan specifically identifies urban greening as a strategy to reduce the impacts of extreme heat events and heat islands.
4. **Support of the public:** The project has the support of State Senator Nancy Skinner, Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, Wildcat-San Pablo Creeks Watershed Council, American Rivers, Contra Costa Clean Water Program, Earth Team, The Watershed Project, Bike East Bay, and the San Francisco Bay Estuary Partnership (See project letters in Exhibit 3).

5. **Location:** The project is located in one of the Bay Area's nine counties: Contra Costa. It will benefit Wildcat Creek by reducing pollution and trash flowing into the creek and ultimately San Francisco Bay.
6. **Need:** Without Conservancy funding the City will have to cut some of the project elements, particularly the green infrastructure elements that could not be covered by other funding sources.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** This project is on a regionally important roadway that connects two cities and will protect the water of a regionally significant stream.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The project is not expected to be impacted by sea level rise since it is 1.3 miles from the Bay.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** The project needs to start construction in 2020 due to requirements of the other grant funding conditions and immediately needs the Conservancy funding to ensure that the green infrastructure elements remain in the project.
10. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
11. **Innovation:** The City will be using a new urban tree and stormwater management system called Silva Cells. The Silva Cells will provide large volumes of uncompacted high-quality soil while maximizing the usable space above ground. This allows the trees to grow without affecting sidewalks and road structure and allows space for additional stormwater infiltration and treatment.
12. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** "See "Project History" above."
13. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** Wildcat Creek is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change which could increase short duration rainfall intensities and exacerbate the stormwater flooding along Wildcat Creek. This project will help reduce these localized flooding impacts and slow urban runoff discharges into the creek. In addition, this project will help reduce the urban heat island effect which will become even more critical as temperatures increase.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301 of 14 Cal. Code Regs. because this project involves improvements to existing streets and sidewalks without creating additional automobile lanes and involves negligible or no expansion of existing use. Upon approval of the project, Conservancy staff will file a Notice of Exemption.