

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 19, 2020

BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL: CALISTOGA TO BOTHE-NAPA STATE PARK CONSTRUCTION

Project No. 20-032-01
Project Manager: Virgilio Cuasay

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$125,000 to the Napa Valley Transportation Authority for the design and construction of 2.9 miles of Bay Area Ridge Trail/Napa Valley Vine Trail in Napa County, and adoption of findings under the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCATION: Adjacent to Highway 29, between Calistoga and Bothe-Napa State Park, and within the City of Calistoga, Napa County

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [Regional Trail Systems Map](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Site Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Photos](#)
- Exhibit 5: [Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Napa Valley Vine Trail: St. Helena to Calistoga Section](#)
- Exhibit 6: [Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan](#)
- Exhibit 7: [Letters of Support](#)

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 hundred twenty-five thousand dollars (\$125,000) to the Napa Valley Transportation Authority (“the grantee”) for the design and construction of 2.9 miles of Bay Area Ridge Trail/Napa Valley Vine Trail between Calistoga and Bothe-Napa State Park in Napa County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for review and approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy (Executive Officer) the following:

1. A detailed work program, including project schedule and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be employed on the project.
3. A plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals necessary 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 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding public access improvements to and around San Francisco Bay.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The Conservancy has independently reviewed and considered the “Napa Valley Vine Trail: St. Helena to Calistoga Section Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration” adopted by the Napa Valley Transportation Authority on August 19, 2020 pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act and attached to the accompanying staff recommendation as Exhibit 5. The Conservancy finds that the project, as mitigated, avoids, reduces or mitigates potential significant environmental effects and that there is no substantial evidence that the project will have a significant effect on the environment, as defined in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15382.”

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to \$125,000 to the Napa Valley Transportation Authority (NVTA) for final design and construction of 2.9 miles of trail between Bothe-Napa State Park and Calistoga, where the Bay Area Ridge Trail shares an alignment with the Napa Valley Vine Trail (see [Exhibits 1](#) and [2](#)).

The Northern Napa Valley region is a world-renowned tourist destination which draws a great deal of motorist activity. Due to a limited road network, roads are experiencing congestion from the demand. Studies show increased interest in alternative transportation methods, but with virtually no alternative means of north-south transit along the valley, opportunities for utilizing these methods have been scarce. The Vine Trail seeks to address this problem by creating an alternative, active transportation route for residents and tourists that connects to and overlaps

with the larger Ridge Trail network. In locations where the Vine Trail has completed trail sections, bike count data shows that the trail has drawn 350,000 unique users per year.

The proposed project is the completion of 2.9 miles of a larger 7.4-mile trail section of the Ridge/Vine Trails that spans from St. Helena to Calistoga ([Figure 2](#)). The proposed project will close gaps in the spine of both of these regional trail systems. The proposed project will also enable cyclists and pedestrians to experience safe passage into and out of the upper Napa Valley, as the two existing routes currently in use by those traveling through this stretch, Highway 29 and Silverado Trail, do not offer safe options due to their narrow design and high speed limits (55 MPH).

As shown in the Site Location Map ([Figure 3](#)), the proposed project will construct a trail from Calistoga to the entrance of Bothe-Napa State Park. The project consists of the following: completion of design work (90% completed as of July 2020) and construction of two paved (asphalt over aggregate), 10 foot-wide Class I trail segments with two-foot gravel shoulders adjacent to, but completely separated from, Highway 29 (similar to existing Vine Trail segments shown in [Exhibit 4](#)). See below for descriptions (described south to north, refer to Figure 3):

- A 2.4-mile segment from the north side of Bothe-Napa State Park (at Larkmead Lane) to Dunaweal Lane (Shown as Trail Segment #300.7 in [Figure 3](#)).
- A half-mile “Calistoga Fairway Path Extension” segment within Calistoga, which will run along Fairway Street from the foot of Washington Street to the Lincoln Street intersection (shown as Segment #300.9 in [Figure 3](#)).

There are two existing segments of trail within the project area, a 0.4-mile segment at the entrance to Bothe-Napa State Park, and an approximately one-mile segment between (linking) the two segments described above. These existing segments will be signed and dedicated as Ridge Trail along with the newly-constructed segments, resulting in a continuous new 4.3-mile section of Ridge/Vine Trail.

Site Description: This segment of Ridge/Vine Trail between Bothe-Napa State Park and Calistoga includes vineyards, meadows, oak forests, and creeks--areas that are considered among the most beautiful regions of the state. The County of Napa is in the process of obtaining easements (recording to be complete by the end of 2020) from private land owners to construct the trail on the project site. The proposed Ridge/Vine Trail trail segment will connect Calistoga with a State Park, popular visitor destinations, and the other communities of the Napa Valley. See trail maps in Exhibits [2](#) and [3](#) and photos of existing and proposed trail segments in [Exhibit 4](#).

Grantee Qualifications: The NVTAA is a Joint Powers Authority formed in 1998 that serves as the Congestion Management Agency for the cities of American Canyon, Calistoga, Napa, St. Helena, the town of Yountville, and the County of Napa. It is responsible for allocating state and federal funds to countywide projects that address traffic congestion. It also acts as the county’s transportation planning agency which operates their public transportation system along with street and highway maintenance. Among their projects is the Napa Valley Vine Trail (See trail map in [Exhibit 3](#) and photos in [Exhibit 4](#)), which will span 47 miles and serve as the primary walking and biking trail for the entire county upon completion. With linkages to the Bay Trail

and Ridge Trail, the Vine Trail is a key piece of infrastructure that provides connectivity to and from one of California’s most travelled regions.

Project History: The vision for the Bay Area Ridge Trail is a 550-mile multi-use (serving hikers, mountain bicyclists and equestrians), continuous trail that rings San Francisco Bay high on the ridgeline. Under the leadership of the Conservancy and the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (BARTC), and supported by a diverse group of project participants, the Ridge Trail creates an interconnected system of open space and trails that provides recreational opportunities and scenic views to the public. Begun almost 30 years ago, over 380 miles of trail are now dedicated and/or open to the public in all nine Bay Area counties. In Napa County, BARTC’s goals are advanced through partnership with the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition (NVVTC), a grassroots nonprofit group with broad support from civic and community groups, who advocate for completion of the Napa Valley Vine Trail. Coordinated planning between both BARTC and NVVTC organizations facilitate construction of overlapping sections of the Ridge and Vine Trails. This authorization will further the Conservancy's statutory and strategic goals of improving access around San Francisco Bay, and is consistent with previous Conservancy authorizations to negotiate and acquire trail easements, prepare trail construction plans and designs, and construct and open trail segments to the public.

The 7.4-mile segment of the Vine Trail running from St. Helena to Calistoga (See the North Bay Trail Loops Map in [Exhibit 2](#)) has been an on-going project since 2011. This 2.9-mile section of that larger segment enjoys co-location with the Ridge Trail, and the two trail entities have been working on funding, design, and construction.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$125,000
Active Transportation Program Grant (Caltrans)	\$2,580,000
Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition (\$848k secured)	\$1,240,000
Transportation Development Act (Caltrans)	\$940,810
One Bay Area (Metropolitan Transportation Commission)	\$711,000
County of Napa	\$292,758
City of Calistoga	\$124,904
City of St Helena	\$124,482
Transportation Fund for Clean Air (Bay Area Air Quality Mgt Dist)	\$84,380
Project Total	\$6,223,334

The expected source of Conservancy funding is the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (“Proposition 68,” Public Resources Code Sections 80000, et seq.). Chapter 9 of Proposition 68 makes funds available 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

proposed project is consistent with said program as described in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section, below.

Other project funds come from a mix of state and regional grant programs, the County of Napa, the Cities of Calistoga and St Helena, and the major fundraising effort from the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition.

NVTA and Vine Trail staff have committed hundreds of hours of pro-bono work to this project and are expected to continue donating time during the remaining phases (final design, permitting, and construction).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Pursuant to Section 31162(a) of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may award grants in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that will help to improve public access to, within, and around the ridgetops, consistent with the rights of private property owners, and without having a significant adverse impact on agricultural operations and environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife. Consistent with Section 31162(a), the proposed project will complete design and construction of a total of 2.9 miles of regional trail that will complete a shared 4.3 mile gap in the Ridge Trail and Vine Trail alignments. Consistent with Section 31162(d), construction of the proposed trail segment will also provide safe access to open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational purposes by connecting the town of Calistoga with the Bothe-Napa State Park.

Consistent with Section 31163(c), the proposed project is a priority for funding because it: (1) is supported by an adopted local or regional plan, specifically the Bay Area Ridge Trail June 2020 Gap Analysis and Action Plan; (2) is multijurisdictional/serves a regional constituency, as it is completing a gap in one of the two regional trail systems that connect all nine Bay Area counties; (3) can be implemented in a timely way, as construction is anticipated to be completed by October, 2022; (4) provides opportunities for benefits, in this case, safe public access, that could be lost if the project is not quickly implemented; and (5) includes matching funds from a variety of sources including state and regional grant programs, the County of Napa, the Cities of Calistoga and St Helena, and the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition.

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

Consistent with **Goal 13, Objective G** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will construct 2.9 miles of the Ridge Trail.

Consistent with **Goal 13, Objective I** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will facilitate trail links between Ridge Trail Segments and the Napa Valley Vine Trail.

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 will construct a segment of the regional Bay Area Ridge Trail, which helps implement the following state plans:
 - **California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report** (Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, November 2015): Goal 2, “Build Sustainable Regions that Support Healthy, Livable Communities,” specific strategy to “support and invest in active transportation projects, such as walking and biking infrastructure.”
 - **California Recreational Trails Plan & Progress Report** (California State Parks, Phase I, June 2002, 2011): The Bay Area Ridge Trail is identified in the plan as a state trail corridor and meets the goal to “promote adequate design, construction, relocation, and maintenance of trails in order to optimize public access and resource conservation”.
4. **Support of the public:** Completion of the Ridge Trail is a regionally-supported project spearheaded by BARTC in cooperation with other trail advocacy groups such as the NVVTC (See pages 1 and 2 of [Exhibit 7](#)). Furthermore, Congressman Mike Thompson, State Assemblyman Bill Dodd, Napa County Supervisor Diane Dillon, Napa County Regional Park & Open Space District, the City of Calistoga, the City of St. Helena, and Live Healthy Napa County all support the larger St. Helena to Calistoga trail section which this project is a part of (See pages 3-12 of [Exhibit 7](#)).
5. **Location:** The proposed project is located between Calistoga and St. Helena (See Ridge Trail Partner Grant Map in [Exhibit 3](#)) in Napa County, which lies entirely within the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.
6. **Need:** The NVTAs has raised funds but needs additional funding from the Conservancy to leverage those funds and complete design and construction of the trail.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The proposed project will serve the residents of and many visitors to Napa County, as the Ridge Trail and Vine Trail I, are region-wide recreational resources that connects multiple habitats, landscapes, and jurisdictions.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project is part of the Ridge Trail and Vine Trail, ridgeline and inland trail systems, respectively, and thus is not directly impacted by sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

9. **Resolution of more than one issue:** Developing trails help address health issues by providing an opportunity for walking, running, or biking which can help increase activity levels. By providing access to multi-use trails, cyclists and pedestrians can avoid potential

hazards through exposure to automobile traffic. Finally, a robust trail network can revitalize communities and have economic benefits with trail-oriented development.

10. **Readiness:** The NVRTA is ready to begin final design and construction as soon as funds are awarded.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** Completion of the Ridge Trail is a specific objective of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan and completion of the project will help advance this goal by creating 2.9 miles of new trail.
12. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** Short-term GHG emissions will occur from the implementation of the proposed project during the construction phase. However, providing safe pedestrian and bicycle paths will encourage the use of non-motorized travel, reducing car trips and their associated greenhouse gas emissions.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

Staff has independently evaluated the [Final Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Napa Valley Vine Trail: St. Helena to Calistoga Section](#) (MND) and the project's [Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program \(MMRP\)](#), both adopted by Napa Valley Transportation Authority on August 19, 2020 (see Exhibits 5 and 6 respectively), 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 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 14 Cal. Code Regs. §15382.

The proposed project is a component of the larger project evaluated in the MND. The [MND](#) identified potentially significant impacts of the larger project in the areas of aesthetics, agriculture and forestry resources, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, noise, and tribal cultural resources. Mitigation measures have been adopted to assure that these potential impacts will be eliminated or reduced to less than significant levels, as summarized below:

1. **Aesthetics:** Temporary construction activities may cause a decline in the visual quality of the affected areas due to the presence of construction equipment and materials. In order to address these impacts, construction equipment and materials will be stored in a staging area out of the view of residents and visitors. The proposed project may also require vegetation and tree removal due to construction activities. Revegetation and tree replacement, using a climate-appropriate seed mix along and locally approved tree species, will be done for mitigation purposes.
2. **Agriculture and Forestry Resources:** The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program has designated the land within the project boundaries to be Important Farmland. Construction activities may result in the removal of vines and will be coordinated with property owners. Implementing Mitigation Measure (MM) AG-1 will ensure that impacts

will be less than significant by making sure a sufficient amount of agricultural land is maintained within the County.

- 3. Biological Resources:** An analysis of the 99.7 acre biological study area revealed a project impact area of 21.4 acres, which includes 11.7 acres of permanent features to be constructed and 9.7 acres of areas to be temporarily disturbed. One special status (legally protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act and/or the California Endangered Species Act) plant species may have potential indirect impacts while seven special status animal species may have both direct and indirect impacts.

The special status plant species affected by this proposed project may be indirectly impacted by fluid leaks from construction vehicles. Implementing best practices detailed in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) as required in MM BIO-9 will reduce the impacts to the habitat containing this plant. Additional mitigation measures detailed in MM BIO-1 regarding seasonal work windows will reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Six of the seven special status animal species occupy riparian habitats and three of those six species occupy both terrestrial and riparian systems. Impacts related to construction activity may have indirect impacts on all these species. Existing canopy cover over riparian areas provide much needed shade, making impacts minimal. Furthermore, implementation of MM BIO-9 and MM BIO-10 (wildlife exclusion fencing) will reduce impacts to less than significant levels. One last special status animal, a bird species, may be indirectly impacted through increased noise levels from a change in construction activity and pedestrian volume. Construction will be temporary and implementation of MM BIO-1, MM BIO-2 (worker training), MM BIO-11 (nesting surveys), and MM-BIO 12 (bat protection measures) will reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Changes in traffic volume, dust, and degradation of water quality from an increase of pervious surfaces may indirectly impact sensitive natural communities, including seasonal vernal pool wetlands, valley oak woodland and riparian areas, and federal and state waters/wetlands. Mitigation features built into the project design will avoid impacts to seasonal vernal pool wetlands. Implementing the Stormwater Pollution and Prevention Plan will result in no degradation to water quality. Implementation of worker training and avoidance measures identified in MM BIO-1 through MM BIO-4 will reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

Woodland and riparian habitats in the project area provide nesting and foraging opportunities for a variety of species. Through a combination of strategic avoidance of these areas during construction along with implementation of MM BIO-1 and BIO-12, any potential impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level.

47 trees were identified for removal across the entire tree survey area, with locations scattered across 6.4 miles of the larger trail segment that encompasses the overall St. Helena to Calistoga trail project. Tree removal will be conducted according to local

policies and ordinances of the County of Napa, the City of St. Helena, and the City of Calistoga. The permits required for tree removal ensure replacement of trees at a specific ratio to compensate for those lost during construction. Furthermore, implementation of MM BIO-6 will dictate replanting at specific ratios, which will reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level.

4. **Cultural Resources:** A site survey and inventory of the Area of Potential Effect (APE) revealed four newly identified archaeological sites and eleven previously recorded. Construction activities, including excavation and grading, will create the potential to adversely affect the archaeological sites within the APE. Construction on fill and avoiding excavation in areas with known archaeological resources will mitigate the potential negative impacts. Employing MM CUL-1 through CUL-3 will protect any archaeological resources found during construction, and reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level by establishing appropriate protocols if such resources are found.

Pioneer Cemetery is located in an area adjacent to the proposed trail alignment. No impacts to the cemetery are expected. If previously unknown human remains are found during construction activities, MM CUL-3 will ensure that California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 are observed.

5. **Geology and Soils:** The potential of unearthing paleontological resources during construction activities is not expected as any geological deposits containing such resources exist at a depth much lower than excavation will occur. However, the chance of encountering such resources still exists. In such a case, implementing MM GEO-1 which establishes protocols for paleontological resources will reduce impacts to a less than significant level.
6. **Hazards and Hazardous Materials:** A site assessment of the project alignment determined that soils in the project area are likely contaminated with aerially deposited lead (ADL) from vehicular activity. Work in the area will require proper managing of soil and groundwater in order to limit potential exposure to hazardous materials. Implementing MM HAZ-1 will establish criteria for detecting and handling such soils which will reduce the likelihood of negative health impacts.

Typical leakage of gasoline, diesel, motor oil, lubricants, solvents, and adhesives associated with the construction vehicles and materials may occur over the duration of the project. Development of a SWPPP (MM BIO-9) will reduce the potential for hazardous material leakage to a less than significant level.

Four schools exist within one-quarter mile of the proposed project. Since soil at the project site potentially contains ADLs, construction activities may disturb the soil thereby exposing schools to hazardous materials. Implementing MM HAZ-1 will reduce the potential impacts associated with that risk.

7. **Noise:** The potential for disturbance to those with sensitivities to noise exists through the presence of construction activities. Construction activities will not be concentrated at a

single point throughout the duration of the project. Such activities will also be limited to daylight hours and equipment would be muffled. Complying with local noise ordinances along with the implementation of MM NOI-1 will reduce noise impacts to a less than significant level.

8. **Tribal Cultural Resources:** A study of the proposed project site determined that ground disturbing activities from construction may unintentionally affect tribal cultural resources, including human remains, funerary objects, items or artifacts, sites, features, places, and landscapes or objects with cultural value. In accordance with PRC Section 21080.3.1(b), NVTa notified California Native American tribal representatives identified by the California Native American Heritage Commission in order to create a dialogue for how to proceed. Responses were received from two of the five tribes and, through a cooperative process, five mitigation measures were formulated in order to reduce the potential impacts. Implementation of MM TCR-1 through MM TCR-5 regarding worker training and tribal notification and monitoring will mitigate potential impacts to a less than significant level.

Staff has independently reviewed the [MND](#) and recommends that the Conservancy find that there is no substantial evidence that this project will result in a significant adverse effect on the environment as defined in 14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15382. Staff will file a Notice of Determination upon approval of the project.