

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
November 19, 2020

Jalama Beach Coastal Access Planning

Project No. 20-030-01
Project Manager: Rachel Couch

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$100,000 to the County of Santa Barbara to prepare feasibility and technical studies, design plans, and a County permit pre-application package for a new coastal trail, coastal access parking, and beach accessway at Jalama Beach County Park.

LOCATION: Jalama Beach County Park, Santa Barbara County.

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Public Access

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Figures and Photos](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [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 of the Public Resources Code:

“The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes the disbursement of an amount not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) to the County of Santa Barbara (“the grantee”) to prepare feasibility and technical studies, design plans, and a County permit pre-application package for a new coastal trail, coastal access parking spaces and accessway improvements at Jalama Beach County Park, in northern Santa Barbara 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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In addition, to the extent appropriate, the City of Santa Barbara shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's 'Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development'."

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 public access.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends disbursement of up to \$100,000 to the County of Santa Barbara ("County") to prepare feasibility and technical studies, design plans, and a County permit pre-application package for a new coastal trail, coastal access parking spaces, and accessway improvements at Jalama Beach County Park, in northern Santa Barbara County.

Jalama Beach County Park (Jalama Park) is an isolated public park located amidst rural ranch lands more than 60 miles northwest of the City of Santa Barbara and 20 miles southwest of Lompoc (Exhibit 1). Jalama Park is the only coastal campground along the sixty miles of coastline between Point Conception and the County's northern border, and one of only four public coastal access points in northern Santa Barbara County, an area with almost 200,000 residents. The County recently accepted 36 acres of land south and east of the existing park from an adjacent landowner. The expanded park lands include more than three-quarters of a mile of ocean front blufftop land along both sides of Jalama Beach Road leading to the park entrance. The proposed project will address the need to expand public access and improve visitor safety while connecting the new and existing park areas.

Currently, the park provides approximately 110 day-use coastal access parking spaces. The parking lot typically fills to capacity early in the day during peak periods, which include the summer season, most weekends and during times of major surf swells in fall, winter and spring. This results in long lines of cars waiting for extended periods of time for parking to become available, and in the past, parking along narrow Jalama Road, which is now illegal. Within the project area is an existing informal beach access point comprised of a steep eroded canyon known as "the Crack". Historically, during periods of high surf, surfers trespassed across formerly private lands to descend down the Crack on a steep, hazardous trail to access Tarantulas, a popular surf break just downcoast of the park.

The proposed project will undertake technical studies and develop design plans for several access features on the new property. These include a formalized beach accessway at the southeast end of the property to provide safer, less impactful access to Tarantulas,

approximately 50 new coastal access parking spaces proximate to the proposed bluff-to-beach coastal accessway (as feasible), and a blufftop trail connecting the existing Jalama Park facilities to the new beach accessway. The additional parking spaces are intended to help meet peak demands and could be accommodated through use of road shoulder spaces and a small parking lot, minimizing disturbance of natural habitats.

Technical studies including geotechnical, biological, archaeological studies and topographic surveys will be completed to identify and mitigate potential impacts to coastal resources as well as review of the feasibility of alternative beach access locations. The technical studies will also include an estimation of bluff retreat within a minimum 20-year life span of the proposed improvements. The steep and highly eroded nature of the Crack canyon presents challenges for constructing and maintaining formal public access; options involve differing levels of design, construction, and subsequent maintenance effort. Key considerations include compatibility with the park's natural resources and rural character; meeting the goals of substantially enhancing coastal access while minimizing impacts; and available funding. Once the project feasibility, environmental compliance, design, and pre-permitting are complete, the County anticipates requesting additional funding for the construction of the coastal improvements.

Site Description: Jalama Park was built in 1943 when the land was donated to the County by Atlantic Richfield Oil Company. Since then it has been a popular destination for its isolated location and pristine natural resources. The County-owned park and campground are directly adjacent to the Pacific Ocean, located at the terminus of rural Jalama Road, 14.5 miles from State Highway 1. The 59.5-acre park lies within the valley of Jalama Creek and is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west, Vandenberg Air Force Base to the north, and The Nature Conservancy's Jack and Laura Dangermond Nature Preserve to the east and south. The Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) runs along the eastern border of the existing park.

The park itself supports a wide range of recreation in a remote coastal area. Jalama Beach is a world-famous surfing location, with major swells drawing surfers from throughout the region, Southern California and beyond. Kiteboarding and windsurfing are also very popular given the often-windy location. Depending on the tide, visitors can enjoy walking along the beach, with opportunities for whale and bird watching, fishing, and other recreational coastal activities.

Access to the park is via Jalama Road from State Route 1, which turns into Jalama Beach Road at the "at grade" crossing of the UPRR line located approximately 3,000 feet south of the park's entrance gate. Jalama Beach Road parallels the shoreline for this roughly 3,000-foot reach across formerly private lands and is setback 50 to 200 feet from the coastal bluff. The bluff top between the road and bluff face is generally level or gently sloping, is vegetated with coastal bluff scrub and is punctuated by three small shallow eroded drainages that extend from the bluff face almost to the western edge of the road. The informal coastal access at the Crack is located 200 feet southwest of the Jalama Beach Road-UPRR crossing and is approximately 100 feet above the beach and up to 200 feet wide between Jalama Beach Road and the bluff face. The Crack extends for approximately 470 feet from the railroad line down to the beach.

Grantee Qualifications: The County has dedicated grant administration staff and has managed hundreds of local, State, and Federal grants over the past decade. The County has planned and built numerous coastal accessway projects, including a raised platform pathway at Arroyo Burro

County Beach Park and three bluffside stairways in Isla Vista since 2006. The County staff who will be managing the proposed project has eight years of experience in managing and supporting projects using State grants awarded to the County.

Project History:

In 2017, Santa Barbara County contacted the Conservancy to inquire about using Violation Remediation Account funds to plan for a coastal access improvement project. The project was identified as a priority in order to expand coastal access and the California Coastal Trail in one of only four public coastal access areas in northern Santa Barbara County. In 2019, the County accepted 36 acres of land south and east of the existing park through a land donation from the owners of the neighboring 24,000-acre Dangermond Preserve (formerly known as Bixby and Cojo-Jalama Ranch).

The project is related to the Conservancy’s recently awarded (May 2020) Jalama Beach County Park Low Cost Affordable Accommodations planning grant to the County for expansion of the 25-acre camping park onto the non-coastal bluff portion of the 36-acres of land acquired in 2019.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$100,000
Santa Barbara County Trails Council	\$20,000
Santa Barbara County	\$5,000
Project Total	\$125,000

The anticipated source of Conservancy funds is an appropriation from the Violation Remediation Account (VRA). The Coastal Act established the VRA within the State Coastal Conservancy Fund to hold deposits of funds originating from administrative orders, settlements and judicial actions arising from Coastal Act violations. (See Public Resources Code section 30823.) Funds in the VRA must be spent for carrying out the provisions of the Coastal Act. In some situations, specific use of the VRA funds is determined by the enforcement documents. To the degree not specified in the enforcement documents, use of the VRA funds must be consistent with a 2012 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Coastal Conservancy and the Coastal Commission. The MOU specifies that to the extent possible VRA funds shall be expended on projects located in close proximity to the geographic location of the violation at issue. In addition, Coastal Commission staff must approve use of any VRA funds over \$5,000. While not required in the MOU, Coastal Commission staff generally prefer that VRA funds be used to provide benefits to the types of coastal resources harmed in the violation.

In 2017, the Coastal Commission entered into a settlement agreement for a total of \$500,000 for a Coastal Act permit violation on property adjacent to Jalama Park (Consent Cease and Desist Order No. CCC-17-CD-03 and Consent Restoration Order No. CCC-17-RO-01). This violation involved numerous impacts to coastal habitats and landforms. The Conservancy,

County, and Commission staff have agreed that coastal access improvements at Jalama Park are a priority for use of the funds.

The Santa Barbara County Trails Council will contribute \$20,000 toward the cost of completing environmental compliance for the project. The County will contribute \$5,000 in park funds for the project. In addition, the County Parks Department will contribute an estimated \$10,000 in-kind for staff management of the project and permit application submissions.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 9 of the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the California Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31410), regarding public access and enjoyment of coastal resources. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy will “have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline.”

In order to carry out that mandate, the Conservancy is authorized by Section 31400.1 to provide grants to public entities or non-profits organizations to develop, operate and manage lands for access to and along the coast. Section 31400.1 restricts the Conservancy to providing grants to local agencies only for accessways that serve more than local needs. Jalama Park gets approximately 250,000 visitors each year from throughout the region, the Central Valley, and beyond and thus serves greater than local needs.

Section 31400.2 authorizes the Conservancy to provide up to the total cost of the initial development of a public accessway by any public agency, and the amount of funding provided by the Conservancy shall be determined by the total amount of funding available for coastal public accessway projects, the fiscal resources of the applicant, the urgency of the project relative to other eligible projects, and the application of factors prescribed by the Conservancy. Consistent with this section, the proposed amount of the Conservancy contribution was determined based on the total amount of funding available to the Conservancy for public access projects, the matching funds provided by the County (see Project Financing), and the Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria (See Consistency with Conservancy’s Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines). The proposed authorization would leverage matching funds totaling 20% of the costs for this project.

The proposed project is also consistent with Section 31400.3, under which the Conservancy is authorized to provide funds “required to aid public agencies and nonprofit organizations in establishing a system of public coastal accessways, and related functions necessary to meet the objectives of this division.” These funds will be used for the preliminary engineering/design, environmental analysis, and pre-permitting applications for the proposed trail and access improvements.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ACCESS PROGRAM STANDARDS:

Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources: The proposed project will be designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms, will be subordinate to the setting’s

character, will prevent unwarranted hazards to the land and public safety, and will protect environmentally sensitive habitats.

Standard No. 2, Correct Hazards: The proposed project will be designed to correct unsafe conditions such as those that exist in the erosion gully known as the Crack along the coastal bluff edge.

Standard No. 5, Environmentally Sensitive Areas: The proposed project will be designed to ensure that adverse effects on natural resources are avoided.

Standard No. 9, Scenic Overlooks: The entire length of the trail will be designed to take advantage of the area's scenic views.

Standard No. 12, Support Facilities: Designs for the project will consider the placement of support facilities such as parking spaces, overlooks, benches and trash receptacles, as appropriate.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective C** the proposed project will design new coastal recreational facilities, including a blufftop trail, an accessway from the blufftop to the beach, and additional coastal access parking facilities.

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:** By funding plans for the Jalama Coastal Trail and Accessway improvements, the proposed project will implement the following state plans and policies:
 - **Coastal Act (1976), Public Resources Code Section 30210** on public access and recreation calls for "maximum access, which shall be conspicuously posted, and recreational opportunities shall be provided for all the people consistent with public safety needs and the need to protect public rights, rights of private property owners, and natural resource areas from overuse". **Section 30214** calls for public access and recreation that "takes into account the need to regulate the time, place, and manner of public access depending on the facts and circumstances in each case..."

4. **Support of the public:** The project is supported by State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, State Assemblymember Monique Limon, County Supervisor Joan Hartmann, County Riding and Hiking Trails Advisory Committee, and local non-profit organizations including SB County Action Network and the Santa Barbara County Trails Council. (Exhibit 3: Project Letters)
5. **Location:** “The proposed project would be located within the coastal zone of Santa Barbara County.”
6. **Need:** The County is only able to contribute a small amount of cash and in-kind support for the planning phase of the project at this time. Without additional funding, the County will not be able to complete this phase of the project.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The project will increase public coastal recreation opportunities and coastal access at Jalama Park, currently one of only four public coastal access points along more than 60 miles of Northern Santa Barbara County (North County) shoreline, and one of only four coastal access points in the entire North County, an area with almost 200,000 residents.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The proposed project is located on a 100-foot tall blufftop and according to the County’s Coastal Resilience Project Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment is not projected to be vulnerable to inundation from sea level rise before 2050. However, sea level rise is likely to lead to increased bluff erosion and bluff retreat. The proposed technical studies will estimate the rate of bluff retreat to inform a design with a minimum useful life for the blufftop trail and parking lot of at least 20 years. The feasibility studies will evaluate options for the beach accessway that will minimize the impacts of anticipated bluff erosion and retreat.

Additional Criteria:

9. **Urgency:** The project is needed to address the need for expanded coastal access, improved safety of access facilities, and a chronic shortage of parking spaces at the park.
10. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
11. **Readiness:** The County is ready to move forward with the project.
12. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** “See “Project History” above.”
13. **Cooperation:** The project will involve close cooperation with the Santa Barbara County Trails Council and Coastal Commission staff.
14. **Vulnerability from climate change impacts other than sea level rise:** The proposed project’s vulnerability from climate change impacts such as increased flow and potentially increased erosion in the small drainages along the path of the bluff trail will be evaluated as part of the feasibility studies for the project. The access amenities will be designed to accommodate this anticipated increase in erosion along the drainages.
15. **Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions:** The project will be designed to minimize use of materials in order to have less impact on the landscape and on natural resources. Local contractors and materials will be used whenever possible, minimizing vehicle miles traveled

for the project, thereby minimizing greenhouse gas emissions. The design plan will likely include rustic design elements such as unpaved trail surfaces and parking spaces and low-tech timber stairway accessway improvements using materials that require less fossil fuel derived energy to manufacture and construct, thereby minimizing emissions.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15262, as it involves only feasibility and planning studies for future actions which have not yet been approved, adopted, or funded. As required by Section 15262, planning for this project will include consideration of environmental factors.

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