

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
January 21, 2021

PRIORITY CONSERVATION AREAS: SINGLETON CROSSING TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

Project No. 20-020-01
Project Manager: Shalini Kannan

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$140,000 to the City of San José for habitat restoration and re-construction of the Coyote Creek Trail Singleton Road Crossing in Santa Clara County.

LOCATION: City of San José, Santa Clara County (see Exhibit 1)

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
Exhibit 2: [Project Maps & Photos](#)
Exhibit 3: [Project Support Letters](#)
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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 a grant of an amount not to exceed one hundred forty thousand dollars (\$140,000) to City of San José (“the grantee”) to restore fish habitat and re-construct the existing creek crossing on the Coyote Creek Trail where Singleton Road crosses Coyote Creek, part of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, which is a Priority Conservation Area in Santa Clara County.

Prior to commencement of the project, the grantee shall submit for the review and written approval of the Executive Officer of the Conservancy 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 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 that provides for grants to improve public access and restore and enhance natural habitats in the nine-county areas around the San Francisco Bay Area.
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 \$140,000 to the City of San José to remove fish barriers, restore fish habitat, and construct a bridge at the Singleton Road crossing of Coyote Creek (the project). Singleton Road is part of the Coyote Creek Trail, which is a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail (Ridge Trail). The Ridge Trail is designated by the Association of Bay Area Governments as a Priority Conservation Area.

The 30-mile Coyote Creek Trail is a regional trail within the City of San José’s growing trail network that serves both recreational and commuter users. Along Singleton Road, which no longer carries vehicular traffic, the trail crosses from the east to the west bank of Coyote Creek via an in-channel crossing constructed upon two culverts. Due to water flow, the base of the creek channel has lowered since its construction and the culverts now act as spillways. Seasonal low water elevation and the darkness of the culverts contribute to significant and documented reductions in fish migration. At the same time, during heavier creek flows which happen every few years, water overtops the crossing in a shallow yet very fast-moving sheet making for an unsafe pedestrian and cyclist crossing (See Exhibit 2). Thus, the crossing is subject to seasonal closure during high water events. This project will solve an unsafe trail crossing and remove a barrier to fish passage where Singleton Road crosses Coyote Creek (known as the Singleton Crossing).

The proposed project entails construction of an 18-foot-wide bridge using a pair of salvaged flatcar bridges placed side by side. The project will remove the existing pipe culverts and remove existing asphalt paving and concrete fill all the way down to natural materials, and regrade the creek channel. Migratory fish species will benefit from a clear passageway, and the public will benefit from increased access to the trail and a safer crossing during seasonal rain events. Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) reports that removing this barrier will have a significant positive impact on anadromous fish, extending the fish migration range by nine miles upstream.

At its October 17, 2019 meeting, the Conservancy recommended 16 proposed projects, which included planning of a larger scale three-span bridge at the Singleton Crossing for inclusion in the 2019 Priority Conservation Area (PCA) Grant Program. Singleton Crossing was combined with the Five Wounds Trail into a single recommendation for San Jose area trail projects in that authorization. The Singleton Crossing project proposed at that time would have required an additional \$1.2 million for planning and \$6.5 million for construction as well as additional years to raise such a significant amount. With impending fines from NOAA fisheries and risk of further habitat destruction from the derelict culvert structure, the City of San Jose decided to pursue a smaller-scale solution to address the fish passage barrier and trail crossing in a timely manner – the project proposed for funding here. Funding for the other recommended trail project, the Five Wounds Trail, was authorized by the Conservancy in June 2020.

The PCA grant program is devised by Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) which is collaboratively funded by MTC and the Conservancy. PCAs are areas through-out the Bay Area that have been identified in Plan Bay Area 2040 as a priority for conservation and restoration due to their agricultural, natural resource, scenic, recreational, public health and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions. (Plan Bay Area 2040 is the regional 20-year planning document for the Bay Area prepared by MTC and the Association of Bay Area Governments).

Site Description: Singleton Crossing is located between Capitol Expressway and Yerba Buena Road. People can reach this section of trail via Tuers Road or Singleton Road, and it is used both as a pedestrian/bike route and as access road (for maintenance only) across the adjacent fenced landfill site. The City of San José owns all impacted properties at Singleton Crossing. This site is part of the larger Coyote Creek Trail system which extends through San José and Santa Clara County jurisdictions. The existing southern reach of the trail system currently extends 7.5 miles, from Tully Road to Morgan Hill.

In 1990, this section of the Coyote Creek Trail was designated as part of the Ridge Trail. The Singleton Crossing pre-dates formal trail development and was in place in the late 1800's per site maps. SSCVWD authored the *Coyote Creek Water Resources Master Plan* which identified Singleton Crossing as the most significant fish barrier for migrating steelhead in the Coyote Watershed.

Grantee Qualifications: The City of San José Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services' Trail Program team has master planned, designed, and/or built over 61 miles of trails as part of the City of San José urban Trail Network. By adhering to the State of California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans') guidelines, San José's trails are Class I bikeway trails. The City of San José is a recognized national leader in trail development, having secured both the 2010 Transportation Planning Excellence award from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration and the 2010 Exemplary Human Environment award from FHWA for encouraging non-motorized transportation. In recent years, the California Trails & Greenway Conference recognized the City of San José with its Merit Award for Planning the Coyote Creek Trail and the Three Creeks Trail (a project that also converted a railway corridor to a landscaped trail corridor). Additionally, the City of San José

has received several Conservancy grants in the past and shows a successful track record of managing State funding.

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 below.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section below.
3. **Promotion and implementation of state plans and policies:** This project will improve a portion of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, which helps implement the following regional and state plans:

"400 miles and Beyond: A Strategic Plan for Completing the Bay Area Ridge Trail". This report released by the Bay Area Ridge Trail in 2006 lays out priorities for the completion of the 500-plus mile multi-use trail encircling the ridgetops of the San Francisco Bay Area.

"California @ 50 Million: The Environmental Goals and Policy Report" (Governor's Office of Planning and Research, Draft 2013): 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" (California State Parks, Phase I, June 2002): The Bay Area Ridge Trail is identified in this 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 the nonprofit Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (BARTC). Supporters of the Singleton Crossing project include Alameda Creek Alliance, California Trout, Keep Coyote Creek Beautiful, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Santa Clara County Creeks Coalition, Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD), Save Our Trails, and Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition (Exhibit 3).
5. **Location:** See the "Project Summary" above.
6. **Need:** In order to complete this project and address the fish passage issue in a timely manner, Conservancy funding is needed.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** This project will serve the residents of Santa Clara County, and provide access to the Ridge Trail which is a region-wide recreational resource that connects multiple habitats, landscapes, and jurisdictions along a multi-use trail. Additionally,

removing the fish passage barrier will expand steelhead fishery habitat in Coyote Creek, a regionally significant stream.

8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The project is in the interior of San José and not directly impacted by sea level rise.

Additional Criteria

9. **Urgency:** The barrier at Singleton Crossing is known to impede fish passage and subject to fines by NOAA Fisheries. Unless improvements are planned and implemented soon, the City of San José will receive heavy fines.
10. **Resolution of more than one issue:** Removing the existing barriers and reconstructing the bridge at Singleton Crossing will open up Coyote Creek to anadromous fish migration, while also improving public access and safety along the trail.
11. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section above.
12. **Readiness:** Consultations with regulators and permit applications are underway, with the project expected to be ready for construction in 2021.
13. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** Completion of the Ridge Trail is a specific objective of the Conservancy’s 2018 Strategic Plan and this authorization will implement the enhancement of a Ridge Trail segment that is currently unreliable and unsafe. In addition, this authorization furthers the Conservancy and MTC partnership to support protection and enhancement of Priority Conservation Areas.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$140,000
Santa Clara Valley Water District	\$1,000,000
City of San José	\$250,000
Project Total	\$1,420,000

It is anticipated that \$140,000 for this project will come from the Conservancy’s FY 2019-2020 appropriation from the “Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006” (Proposition 84, Public Resources Code Section 75001-75103). Section 75060 authorizes the use of Proposition 84 funds for several purposes including projects that protect coastal watersheds and projects that promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state. Section 75005(m) defines the term “protection” to include restoration. Section 75060(b) allocates funds for projects consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31000-31414), and Section 75060(c) specifically allocates funding for San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program projects consistent with Public Resources Code, Division 21, Chapter 4.5. The proposed project will protect the Coyote Creek watershed by restoring and enhancing the natural habitat of Coyote Creek at Singleton Crossing. The project will also improve public

access to coastal resources by improving safety of a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail, and is consistent with Conservancy legislation (see “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section below).

The PCA grant program requires a 2:1 match of \$280,000, which the grantee will provide with local funds and a grant secured from Valley Water. The City of San Jose’s contributions will come from local park development fees, derived from Parkland Dedication and Parkland Impact Ordinances, and Construction & Conveyance Tax revenues sourced from real estate transactions.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

Pursuant to Section 31162 of the Public Resources Code, the Conservancy may award grants for projects in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area that (a) improve public access to, within, and around the bay, ridgetops, and urban open space through completion of trail systems, and (b) restore and enhance natural habitats and watersheds. The proposed project will improve the safety of Singleton Crossing, a segment of the Coyote Creek Trail, which is part of the Ridge Trail and which provides public access to open space in the middle of urban San José. Singleton Crossing is located within the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area and is consistent with the rights of private property owners because it is located on publicly owned lands. Removing the fish passage barrier at the project site will restore and enhance the habitat of Coyote Creek, thereby enhancing the Coyote Creek watershed, as well as San Francisco Bay, reconnecting anadromous fish habitat.

Consistent with Section 31163(a), the Conservancy cooperates with nonprofit land trusts and other organizations in identifying and adopting long-term resource and outdoor recreational goals for the San Francisco Bay Area. Completion of the Ridge Trail is identified in (1) “The San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program Regional Needs Briefing Book (Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, July 1999)” and (2) “400 Miles and Beyond: A Strategic Plan for Completing the Bay Area Ridge Trail (BARTC, Draft 2006).”

Consistent with Section 31163(c), the proposed project is a priority for funding because it: (1) is supported by an adopted local and regional plans, including the above mentioned Ridge Trail plans and the “Envision San José 2040 General Plan”; (2) is multijurisdictional/serves a regional constituency by enhancing Priority Conservation Areas, which are resources of regional significance, and by improving a regional trail; (3) can be implemented in a timely way; (4) provides opportunities for benefits that could be lost if project planning does not continue; and (5) includes matching funds.

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 Singleton Crossing project removes a barrier to fish passage, enhancing riparian and riverine habitat for the benefit of wildlife.

Consistent with **Goal 13, Objective G**, the Project will reconstruct .017 miles of Ridge Trail to improve safety and year-round access of this key connector that supports the trail transition from East to West bank along Singleton Road.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is categorically exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15333, as it involves a restoration project smaller than five acres in size that will restore and enhance habitat for fish. The project will have no significant adverse impact on endangered, rare, or threatened species or their habitat pursuant to Section 15065, is not located in a hazardous area, and would restore natural habitat function. Additionally, the reconstruction of the creek crossing is exempt pursuant to Section 15302 of 14 Cal. Code Regs. because it will replace an existing structure that will be located on the same site and have substantially the same purpose and capacity of the structure replaced.

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