

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation

May 27, 2021

GARRAPATA STATE PARK RESTROOMS

Project No. 21-003-01

Project Manager: Timothy Duff

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$60,000 to the California Department of Parks and Recreation to prepare plans, environmental review documents, and permit applications for two new restrooms in Garrapata State Park in Big Sur, Monterey County.

LOCATION: Garrapata State Park, Big Sur Coast, Monterey County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site Maps and Photos](#)

Exhibit 3: [Letters](#)

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution and findings.

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000) to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (“the grantee”) to prepare plans, environmental review documents, and permit applications for two new restrooms in Garrapata State Park in Big Sur, Monterey 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.

GARRAPATA STATE PARK RESTROOMS

4. In addition, to the extent appropriate, the grantee shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's "Standards and Recommendations for Accessway Location and Development."

Findings:

Based on the accompanying staff recommendation 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.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Conservancy staff recommends authorizing disbursement of up to \$60,000 to the California Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) for the planning of two new restrooms in Garrapata State Park on the Big Sur Coast, Monterey County. The proposed Conservancy funds will be directed to the completion of several planning tasks, including the preparation of plans, permit applications and environmental review documents needed to install the proposed restrooms.

The Big Sur Coast as a whole, and Garrapata State Park in particular, has experienced an exponential increase in visitors over the past 10 years, due in part to the rapid rise in use of social media platforms attracting visitors from near and afar. This dramatic increase in visitors has unfortunately damaged the region's sensitive coastal habitat, including impacts associated with visitors not having access to bathrooms and opting to relieve themselves wherever they can. In addition to damaging the region's abundant natural habitats and water quality, this activity diminishes the user experience for everyone.

The urgent need for additional restroom facilities along the entire Big Sur Coast is more severe at Garrapata State Park due to its proximity to the highly popular tourist destinations on the Monterey peninsula. Located within a 15-minute drive from cities of Monterey, Pacific Grove and Carmel, the Park is a gateway to northern Big Sur Coast's world-famous coastline and is easily accessed by scenic Highway One. The proposed restrooms will be located at two of the most popular destinations within the Park at Soberanes Point and at Garrapata State Beach, one of the few publicly-accessible long and wide sandy beaches on the Big Sur Coast (Exhibit 2).

The Garrapata State Beach site poses several challenging but surmountable constraints due to its topography, plant habitat, lack of existing road access and location west of the highway. The restroom will be designed and positioned to minimize potential impacts to coastal bluff vegetation, cultural and visual resources. A new service road from the highway to the site will be constructed to provide access by maintenance vehicles and waste pumping trucks. The other restroom location at Soberanes Point is located inland and adjacent to Highway One and serves as the trailhead to a network of trails that extend up to the park's ridgeline (Exhibit 2, page 2).

GARRAPATA STATE PARK RESTROOMS

The increase in tourism along the Big Sur Coast and the urgent need for additional restroom facilities in the region has been a widely discussed community topic for the past decade. Members of the Big Sur Multi-Agency Advisory Committee comprised of local, state and federal elected officials, agencies and community stakeholders meet on a quarterly basis, and for the past several years have discussed the urgent need for more restrooms. This Committee also established a subcommittee several years ago specifically to address this need. In addition, community members sitting on the Monterey County Land Use Advisory Committee have supported efforts to install restrooms along the Big Sur Coast, including within Garrapata State Park. Several years ago the Monterey County Planning Commission formally adopted a policy that prohibits State Parks from obtaining future county permits for any proposed new public access and recreation facilities to be located south of Granite Creek in Garrapata State Park until one or more restrooms are installed in the Park.

This proposed project will also fulfill goals and objectives framed in Lobos-Corona Parklands Project that is a collaborative effort by State Parks, Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District, Point Lobos Foundation, and the Big Sur Land Trust to enhance regional public recreation.

In addition, the Coastal Commission Executive Director has expressed an intent to recommend funding a portion of the construction of the restrooms from the Violation Remediation Account, which is funded by penalties for past permit violations in the region.

Site Description: The two project sites are located within Garrapata State Park in northern Big Sur where approximately seven miles of rugged coastline extend along a coastal terrace seaward of State Highway One (Exhibit 1, page 2). The park's other 2,600-plus acres are east of Highway One and extend up steep hillsides toward the ridgelines of the coast range. The panoramic ocean and open space views along this stretch of the California coast are well known for their drama and scope. The proposed Garrapata Beach restroom site is located on the ocean side of Highway One at the park's main beach on a terrace adjacent to a network of bluff trails that lead to the beach that feature coastal scrub habitats (Exhibit 2, page 1). Located inland and adjacent to Highway One, the Soberanes Point restroom site serves as a trailhead to a network of trails on the park's coastal bluffs and to the park's ridgeline (Exhibit 2, page 2). There is an existing portable restroom at this site that serves visitors to both the upland trails and the adjacent network of bluff trails on the ocean-side of Highway 1, including the Coastal Trail that was constructed in 2017 with Conservancy funding. The site is easily accessed from the highway on an existing service road and has relatively few topographical, visual, natural or cultural resource constraints.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: Monterey District State Parks staff worked closely with Conservancy staff to successfully plan, permit and construct the Garrapata Coastal Bluff Trail Project between 2014 and 2017. The Conservancy regularly provides grants to State Parks and Conservancy staff collaborates with their District staff on a wide variety of public access and recreation projects within their coastal park units. State Parks has a long history of successfully completing high priority projects funded by the Conservancy and has the staff capacity and resources both in their Districts and in their Sacramento offices to manage the proposed Conservancy grant.

GARRAPATA STATE PARK RESTROOMS

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:**
 - **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." The proposed project is consistent with this section in that it will facilitate safe and sanitary public access to the bluffs and beaches along the Big Sur Coast while protecting private property owner rights and natural resource areas from overuse. Once constructed, State Parks will be responsible for posting and operating the restroom facilities in a manner that is consistent with this section.
 - **Coastal Act (1976), Public Resources Code Section 30240** on environmentally sensitive habitat areas states that "environmentally sensitive habitat areas shall be protected against any significant disruption of habitat values, and only uses dependent on those resources shall be allowed within those areas," and "development in areas adjacent to environmentally sensitive habitat areas and parks and recreation areas shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade those areas, and shall be compatible with the continuance of those habitat and recreation areas." The proposed restrooms will be sited and designed consistent with this section.
4. **Support of the public:** The project has support of the public, including elected officials as demonstrated by the letters attached as Exhibit 3.
5. **Location:** See the "Project Summary".
6. **Need:** Conservancy funds are needed to match State Park funds to complete the project.
7. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Big Sur region attracts hundreds of daily visitors from throughout the state, the country and the world, many of whom seek to access and enjoy the region's coastline and beaches.
8. **Sea level rise vulnerability:** The two project restroom sites will be located between 80 and 130 feet above mean sea level and as such will not be vulnerable to sea level rise.

GARRAPATA STATE PARK RESTROOMS

Additional Criteria

9. **Resolution of more than one issue:** When constructed the two new restrooms will serve to both enhance the public’s coastal recreation experience and protect environmentally sensitive habitat areas and water quality.

10. **Leverage:** See the “Project Financing” section below.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$60,000
State Department of Parks and Recreation	<u>\$40,000</u>
Project Total	\$100,000

The anticipated source for the Conservancy funds for this project is an appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006, Public Resources Code Section 75001 *et seq.* (Proposition 84). Proposition 84 authorizes the use of bond funds for projects that promote access to and enjoyment of the coastal resources of the state and are consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Section 31000 *et seq.* (Public Resources Code Section 75060(b)).

Consistent with these provisions, the proposed project will serve to protect and improve the use and enjoyment of property and natural resources along the Big Sur Coast by planning for development of restrooms in Garrapata State Park. The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s enabling legislation, as discussed in the “Consistency with Conservancy’s enabling legislation” section below. The proposed project is thus consistent with the funding requirements of Proposition 84.

Unless specifically labelled “Required Match” the other sources of funding listed above are provided as estimates. The Coastal Conservancy does not typically require matching funds, nor does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders. Typical grant conditions require Grantees to provide any funds needed to complete the project.

State Parks staff will be providing in-kind services. The value of these services is estimated to be \$117,000.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 9 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31400-31410), regarding public access and enjoyment of coastal resources. Section 31400 states that the Conservancy shall have a principal role in the implementation of a system of public accessways to and along the state’s coastline. Section 31400.1 authorizes the Conservancy to award grants to public agencies to develop lands for public access purposes to and along the coast. The recommended grant to State Parks will facilitate the development of

GARRAPATA STATE PARK RESTROOMS

restrooms to enhance coastal access and the enjoyment of coastal resources along the Big Sur Coast.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the project will serve to enhance opportunities for barrier-free access to and along the coast.

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the project entails the design of restrooms to increase and enhance coastal recreational opportunities and enable people to enjoy natural, cultural, and historical resources.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ACCESSWAY STANDARDS

Standard No. 1, Protect Public and Coastal Resources: Consistent with Standard No. 1, the proposed restrooms will be located to safely accommodate public use and will be designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms and be subordinate to the setting's character.

Standard No. 12, Support Facilities: Consistent with Standard No. 12, the proposed restrooms will make it easier and more convenient for the public to use and enjoy a coastal park.

Standard No. 13, Barrier-Free Access: Consistent with Standard No. 13, the proposed restrooms will be designed to be wheelchair-accessible.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed preparation of plans and permit applications for the Garrapata State Beach Restrooms project is statutorily exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Title 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15262, in that it would involve only planning studies and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved, adopted or funded. The project is also categorically exempt from CEQA under Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection and resource evaluation activities that will not result in serious or major disturbance to an environmental resource. Environmental factors will be considered in the studies undertaken pursuant to this authorization.

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