



Memo

Date: September 23, 2021

To: Members of the State Coastal Conservancy

From: Mary Small, Interim Executive Officer

CC: Oversight Members

RE: Informational Update on proposed Endless Summer License Plate

Endless Summer License Plate

The Endless Summer is a 1966 surfing documentary directed and narrated by the late Bruce Brown. The movie follows two California surfers, Mike Hynson and Robert August, who go on a yearlong surfing trip around the world in a quest to experience an endless summer. The image from the movie's poster is perhaps even more famous than the film itself and has been broadly licensed and widely used.

Bruce Brown Films owns the image related to the *The Endless Summer* movie and movie poster and has received approval from the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for a full color license plate with slogan, image, and design below. Representatives of Bruce Brown Films have approached the California Natural Resources Agency and the State Coastal Conservancy about creating an Endless Summer Specialized License Plate.



Endless Summer Coastal Access Program

To proceed, the Coastal Conservancy would need to create an Endless Summer Coastal Access Program to be funded by the License Plate. The DMV requires that specialized license plates issued have a design or contain a message that publicizes or promotes a state agency or the work of a state agency. DMV has requested that the Coastal Conservancy establish an Endless Summer program to satisfy this requirement. Staff anticipates that this program would be broadly framed around the Coastal Conservancy's coastal access activities.

Basic Terms of Proposed Agreement

The benefit to the Coastal Conservancy of participating in this initiative is that it could potentially generate stable ongoing funding to support coastal access programs. Florida has an Endless Summer license plate that is extremely popular and generates about \$1.6 million annually in a state with fewer vehicles and lower fees. The proceeds from the plate sales would be used by the Coastal Conservancy to fund programs that expand access to the coast.

Under the terms of a draft agreement, Bruce Brown Films would allow the use of the Endless Summer image on the specialty plate. They would also pay for expenses incurred in the design, license, and application process. Bruce Brown Films would market the plate and collect the required 7,500 pre-sold applications. Bruce Brown Films would receive 20% of the net proceeds from the plate sales for marketing and promotion costs. The Coastal Conservancy would receive the remaining net proceeds for administration (5%) and the Endless Summer Coastal Access Program (75%).

Considerations

One important consideration is whether an Endless Summer license plate would perpetuate the image of an historically white surf culture. Many programs funded by the Conservancy are focused on creating a more welcoming culture to directly counter dominant white surf culture embodied in the 1966 Endless Summer movie. The poster image has a life of its own in pop culture – from posters to Gap t-shirts – often sold to people who have never seen the movie. The image is broadly associated with southern California beach culture.

Staff is proceeding with the initiative because the image is already widespread, and the Endless Summer License Plate would create funding directed to programs that are specifically expanding inclusivity. The benefit of expanding funding for these specific programs outweighs the downside of expanding the presence of an already ubiquitous image. Further, the Conservancy would control the future Endless Summer access program and could prioritize appropriately. The Conservancy board would review and approve all future grants funded by the proceeds of this license plate.

A second concern is whether this license plate would take away from sales of the Whale Tail plates that provide funding for the Coastal Commission. Revenue from the Whale Tail plates has been declining for years and recently the Commission has received additional funding to expand the marketing for that plate. There is no evidence that adding new specialty plates detracts from existing plates; there is likely a large untapped market for specialty license plates.

Bruce Brown Films is offering to license the image, complete the DMV application, market the plate, and handle pre-sales of the plates. The Endless Summer License Plate could offer continued sustained funding for the Coastal Conservancy and its coastal access program. Staff is working on this license plate because of the potential long-term benefit to coastal access in California.