

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
February 3, 2022

**OneShoreline Regional Bay Shoreline Project**

Project No. 21-069-01  
Project Manager: Jennifer Fields

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) to the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District to develop plans, designs, environmental review documents, and permit applications for a sea level rise and flood resilience project along Millbrae-Burlingame shoreline, and to conduct regional planning and coordination activities throughout San Mateo County.

**LOCATION:** Millbrae-Burlingame shoreline, San Mateo County

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EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Site-specific Maps](#)

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**RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS**

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

Resolution:

The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes a grant of an amount not to exceed eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) to the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District to develop plans, designs, environmental review documents, and permit applications for a sea level rise and flood resilience project along Millbrae-Burlingame shoreline, and to conduct regional planning and coordination activities throughout San Mateo 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.

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 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the Climate Ready Program.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**PROJECT SUMMARY:**

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a grant of eight million dollars (\$8,000,000) to the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District (“OneShoreline”) to develop plans, designs, environmental review documents, and permit applications for a sea level rise and flood resilience project along Millbrae-Burlingame shoreline, and to conduct regional planning and coordination activities throughout San Mateo County.

San Mateo County is a largely urbanized county and faces a significant flood risk particularly in low-lying areas due to its intensity of development and its expansive exposed shoreline along the Bay and Pacific coast. Flooding is the most significant recurring hazard affecting San Mateo County causing it to be the most vulnerable California county to sea level rise. In the Millbrae and Burlingame project area, flood hazards that threaten people and property include high tides and storm surges from San Francisco Bay, and major rainfall events which overwhelm local creeks and storm drain systems. Recent studies have shown flood hazards from future conditions and the vulnerable assets at risk have been extensively studied and are significant. The value of properties impacted by sea level rise in Burlingame and in Millbrae are estimated to be over \$2 billion in critical infrastructure and \$369 million in building assets, and these numbers will only increase as several proposed developments are built. Critical infrastructure vulnerable to a 100-year event and ~6 feet of sea level rise include: electrical distribution facilities, regional public transit corridors (Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and Caltrain) and an intermodal transportation center, a regional water treatment plant, hazardous material sites, U.S. Highway 101, and San Francisco International Airport (SFO).

San Mateo County has more people and property value at risk from the first few feet of sea level rise than any other county in California, and meeting that challenge requires a holistic, aligned approach across jurisdictions. OneShoreline was established by Assembly Bill 825 (Mullin, 2019) as an independent, countywide, special district to leverage funding and partnerships across jurisdictional boundaries to develop long-term resilience to sea level rise. Soon after it was established, OneShoreline brought together different entities to advance multi-jurisdictional projects that connect and align long-term sea level rise protection across jurisdictions, including those involved in the proposed project. Budget Trailer Bill SB 170 (Skinner, 2021) appropriated \$8 million to the Conservancy for OneShoreline.

The project contains two components 1) developing plans, designs, environmental review documents, and permit applications for a sea level rise and flood resilience project along

Millbrae-Burlingame shoreline (“Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project”) and 2) regional planning and coordination. The Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project (“Shoreline Project”) will be designed to provide flood protection against the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year flood event with approximately 6 feet of sea level rise (equal to approximately 10 feet above today’s high tide). Ultimately, the Shoreline Project will remove the project area from the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area designation and establish long-term resilience against sea level rise. The plan for the Shoreline Project will incorporate environmental, recreation, connectivity, and community-building enhancements where possible. This includes evaluating the potential for nature-based solutions, such as developing enhanced Bay habitats (e.g., “living shorelines”), waterfront parks, and green spaces to enhance recreation and bike/pedestrian access on the Bay shoreline. Due to the presence of the Bay Trail and many shoreline parks in the project study area, any built shoreline protection would aim to preserve and improve these recreational assets. Finally, opportunities to innovate and incorporate community spaces, public art, and green infrastructure into proposed improvements will be considered and employed where possible, in partnership with other governmental agencies as well as non-governmental organizations.

The proposed project includes conducting studies and collecting data necessary for design and environmental review (e.g., elevation and land surveys, geotechnical data, hydrologic, and hydraulic, and information on listed species), conducting stakeholder and community outreach, developing design plans, and preparing draft environmental documentation under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) & likely under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and preparing regulatory permit applications. In carrying out the project, OneShoreline will collaborate with multiple jurisdictions and partners, including with the Cities of Millbrae and Burlingame, San Mateo County, BART, Caltrain, and SFO.

The regional planning and coordination component of the proposed project will expand OneShoreline’s capacity to plan and coordinate partnerships and projects across the 20 City jurisdictions and unincorporated areas along the Bay and Pacific Coast of San Mateo County. OneShoreline’s leadership on regional planning and coordination is necessary to ensure sea level rise and flood protection, as well as trails and environmental enhancements where possible, are aligned and connected across these jurisdictions and planned in the context of neighboring counties. This alignment will be achieved through projects, led by OneShoreline or cities, and in some cases tied through new General Plan and zoning ordinances of the cities. The proposed project’s regional planning and coordination activities will consist of developing new partnerships with other public entities and stakeholders, identifying new regional projects for shoreline resilience and habitat restoration, and facilitating enhanced coordination with Bay Area regional entities.

**Site Description:**

The San Mateo County shoreline extends 53 miles along the San Francisco Bay (‘Bay’) and 56 miles along the Pacific coast. The regional planning and coordination work will cover the entire San Mateo County Shoreline and coastal and Bay watersheds, including Colma Creek, San Bruno Creek, San Mateo Creek, Belmont Creek, Atherton Channel, San Francisquito Creek, and Pescadero Creek, and relevant others. The Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project is located in

the Cities of Millbrae and Burlingame along the Bay shoreline (Exhibit 1). The Millbrae-Burlingame Bay Shoreline Project extends from Landing Lane neighborhood in Millbrae in the northwest portion of the project to Burlingame's boundary with the City of San Mateo in the southeast. Moving inland from the Bay shoreline, the study area also encompasses the tidally-influenced, flood-prone reaches of the Highline, Lomita, and El Portal Canals in Millbrae, as well as the Easton Creek, Mills Creek and Gilbreth Creek channels in Burlingame, that will be tidally-influenced with substantial sea level rise (Exhibit 2). In addition, existing gaps in the San Francisco Bay Trail along the 11-mile project footprint provide a critical opportunity for enhancing public access and recreational connectivity.

**Grant Applicant Qualifications:**

OneShoreline was established via State legislation (Assembly Bill 825, Mullin, 2019) to expand the mission, geographic reach, and make-up of the governing board of the long-standing San Mateo County Flood Control District to work across jurisdictional boundaries and leverage public and private resources for the long-term resilience of San Mateo County. OneShoreline has the financial resources, staff, and key partnerships in place to ensure successful grant management and project implementation. OneShoreline currently employs a staff of four and is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors. Two Board members serve on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, and five serve on different city or town councils that govern municipalities throughout the County. When OneShoreline was established in January 2020, San Mateo County and all 20 cities within the County provided start-up operational funds for the new resiliency district. Grants acquired since then, including these grant funds, will extend the duration and augment the capacity provided by these start-up funds, and OneShoreline and San Mateo County are currently developing a potential source of long-term, stable funding for OneShoreline and its climate resilience work.

OneShoreline leadership has a record of success completing projects similar to those proposed and the agency was founded with the purpose to see these types of regional projects to completion. Therefore, OneShoreline is well-positioned, both in terms of staff expertise and legal authority, to facilitate regional projects that align and connect protection against sea level rise and creek flooding, as well as provide environmental, recreation, and community connectivity enhancements where possible. OneShoreline's CEO, Len Materman, previously served as the Executive Director of the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority (SFCJPA), where he led the largest completed multi-jurisdictional sea level rise protection effort in the state. In addition, OneShoreline is currently leading the construction of another \$9.5 million multi-jurisdictional flood protection project that is scheduled to be completed in January 2022. Finally, this project has the strong support of the cities of Burlingame and Millbrae, as well as SFO, BART, and other key stakeholders.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:**

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines, last updated on September 23, 2021, in the following respects:

## **Selection Criteria**

### **1. Extent to which the project helps the Conservancy accomplish the objectives in the Strategic Plan.**

See the “Consistency with Conservancy’s Strategic Plan” section below.

### **2. Project is a good investment of state resources.**

Budget Trailer Bill SB 170 (Skinner, 2021) appropriated \$8 million to the Conservancy for OneShoreline.

Although San Mateo County has more people and property value at risk from the first few feet of sea level rise than any other county in California, the County is not alone in addressing this transformative threat. OneShoreline’s holistic and multi-benefit approach to shoreline protection projects and regional planning can serve as a model for the many areas in the state facing similar challenges.

The Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project will build on prior sea level rise adaptation studies completed in late 2019 and in early 2020 by the Cities of Burlingame and Millbrae, and is also consistent with SFO’s Shoreline Protection Program. Furthermore, the project is aligned with, and supported by, Burlingame’s citywide zoning ordinance (approved December 6, 2021), which is the first in the Bay Area to incorporate requirements for new development related to future sea level rise. The project aims to take a holistic approach to protection of regionally-significant infrastructure in order to enhance existing natural assets and increase recreation access, including restoring existing marsh and establishing new marsh in conjunction with engineered structures while maintaining and creating new Bay trail connectivity.

### **3. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.**

Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline specific tasks/deliverables are designed to ultimately inform a complete FEMA funding application for a shovel-ready construction projects along the Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline, including preparation of draft environmental documentation/permitting and a required benefit-cost analysis. Regional planning and coordination by OneShoreline will identify and work to develop future shoreline sea level rise and flood resilience projects across multiple jurisdictions of San Mateo County.

In addition, the Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline scope may take an adaptive management approach to achieve sea level rise protection objectives. While the long-term objective of the infrastructure in the project study area is to achieve flood protection from the FEMA 100-year event with approximately 6 feet of sea level rise, in some areas the project team may plan to take an iterative, phased approach rather than building all infrastructure to its full elevation at once. Benefits of this approach include increased adaptability to improved projections of future sea level rise, greater public buy-in, and to make permitting and funding more feasible.

### **4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.**

The Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project’s main objective is to protect against long-term sea level rise on a multi-jurisdictional level. Both Millbrae and Burlingame contain critical infrastructure vulnerable to sea level rise that serves not only their own populations, but also

the larger Bay area, especially transportation networks, access, and services related to the SFO, and the protection of two local wastewater treatment plants, which potentially will include recycled water infrastructure. In addition, planning for the Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project will prioritize nature-based solutions where possible, such as developing enhanced Bay habitats (e.g. “living shorelines”), waterfront parks and green spaces to enhance recreation and bike/pedestrian access on the Bay shoreline, which will also mitigate extreme heat effects.

The Landing Lane neighborhood in Millbrae, located immediately west of San Francisco International Airport, has experienced disproportionate, chronic flooding over many years and is mapped in the FEMA 100-year floodplain. Although there is no shoreline in the immediate vicinity of this community, the Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project will address constricted flood pathways from this community to the Bay shoreline.

The regional planning and coordination will engage partners across the 20 City jurisdictions and unincorporated communities along the Bay and Pacific Coast of San Mateo County to ensure sea level rise protection and trails are aligned and connected across all jurisdictions. This effort will develop new partnerships with other public entities and stakeholders, identify new regional projects for shoreline resilience and habitat restoration, and facilitate enhanced coordination with Bay Area regional entities.

**5. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.**

OneShoreline has ongoing relationships with the key local jurisdictions and stakeholders that will benefit from this project, and these partners are deeply invested and involved in the project development efforts to date. The City of Burlingame has applied for a federal grant to support early project planning and design and have agreed to act on behalf of the local agencies to ensure that the required local match is provided if needed. In addition, OneShoreline’s Board of Directors includes two members from Burlingame, a County Supervisor (Chair Dave Pine) and a City Councilmember (Donna Colson), who have been instrumental in facilitating a strong relationship with the City. On a countywide scale, OneShoreline coordinates its outreach efforts regularly with San Mateo County’s Office of Sustainability (OOS), which works closely with community-based organizations throughout the County and augments OneShoreline’s network as OneShoreline builds its capacity.

OneShoreline has a proven track record of inclusive outreach efforts, including a year-long climate resilience forum series co-hosted with the League of Women Voters that was provided in multiple languages, including English, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. OneShoreline is committed to meaningful community engagement in future outreach as part of its regional planning work. Project development and visioning of the Millbrae-Burlingame Shoreline Project’s stakeholder and community outreach tasks will facilitate direct engagement of shoreline property developers, community groups, and members of the public to inform decision criteria, development, and refinement of project alternatives design.

**PROJECT FINANCING**

**Coastal Conservancy**

**\$8,000,000**

<b>FEMA BRIC Project Scoping (anticipated)</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$8,300,000</b>

The funding source is a Fiscal Year 2021-22 appropriation from the General Fund specifically for this project. Budget Trailer Bill SB 170 (Skinner, 2021) appropriated \$8,000,000 to the Conservancy for “the San Mateo County Flood Control and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District for the OneShoreline project.” (Section 174 of SB 170, adding Section 19.56(e)(271) to the Budget Act of 2021.) The proposed project is consistent with the anticipated funding source.

**CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY’S ENABLING LEGISLATION:**

The recommended project would be undertaken pursuant to Section 31113 of Chapter 3 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, which authorizes the Conservancy to address the impacts and potential impacts of climate change on resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction (Section 31113(a)). The recommended project will address resources within the Conservancy’s jurisdiction because it will be undertaken within the County of San Mateo, one of the nine counties of the San Francisco Bay Area (Chapter 4.5 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code).

Pursuant to Section 31113, subsections (b) and (c), the Conservancy is authorized to award grants to nonprofit organizations and public agencies to undertake projects that include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and addressing extreme weather events, sea level rise, flooding, and other coastal hazards that threaten coastal communities, infrastructure, and natural resources.

Pursuant to Section 31113(c), the Conservancy must prioritize grants for projects that maximize public benefits and have one of several purposes, including reducing flood risk and providing recreational opportunities

The proposed project meets these criteria because it will develop plans to protect important infrastructure in San Mateo County from sea level rise; reduce flood risk, including in Millbrae’s Landing Lane neighborhood; and enhance recreational opportunities on the San Mateo shoreline, including by developing waterfront parks and green spaces and improving the local segment of the Bay trail.

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

Consistent with **Goal 8, Objective B** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the project will plan and design adaptation projects to increase resilience to sea level rise and other climate change impacts.

Consistent with **Goal 13, Objective H** of the Conservancy’s 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will create plans to connect regionally significant public trails and community connectors along the Bay trail.

**CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The proposed project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines at California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15262, which exempts feasibility and planning studies for possible future actions from the requirement to prepare an Environmental Impact Report or negative declaration, and 15306, which exempts from CEQA basic data collection, research, and resource evaluation activities that will not disturb environmental resources. The proposed project consists of planning activities, preparation of designs, and review of environmental effects, none of which will impact any environmental resources and all of which will be undertaken for possible future actions that the Conservancy has not yet approved, adopted, or funded. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption upon approval of this project.