

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
May 5, 2022

YMCA CAMP SURF: OCEAN PROGRAM CENTER DESIGN

Project No. 19-060-01
Project Manager: Rodrigo Garcia

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$150,000 to the YMCA of San Diego County to prepare designs and environmental review documents for amenities at the YMCA Camp Surf facility including a restroom, equipment storage, classroom space, an outdoor kitchen, and outdoor showers to support on-beach camping at Imperial Beach in San Diego County.

LOCATION: City of Imperial Beach, San Diego County

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)

Exhibit 2: [Project Photos](#)

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 one hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000) to the YMCA of San Diego County (“the grantee”) to prepare designs and environmental review documents for amenities at the YMCA Camp Surf facility including a restroom, equipment storage, classroom space, an outdoor kitchen, and outdoor showers to support on-beach camping at Imperial Beach in San Diego 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 10 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines.
3. The YMCA of San Diego County is a nonprofit organization organized under section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize up to \$150,000 to the YMCA of San Diego County (YMCA) to prepare designs and environmental review documents for amenities at the YMCA Camp Surf facility (Camp Surf) including a restroom and an Ocean Program Center that will include equipment storage, classroom space, an outdoor kitchen, and outdoor showers to support on-beach camping at Imperial Beach in San Diego County.

One of the biggest barriers for low and middle-income Californians to accessing and enjoying the coast, in addition to the lack of affordable overnight options, is the lack of visitor-serving amenities in many areas (“Explore the Coast Overnight – An Assessment of Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations,” State Coastal Conservancy, 2019). The proposed project will help increase overnight accommodations and improve visitor-serving amenities in Southern California through the planning and design of a restroom and the Ocean Program Center at Camp Surf. As it stands today, the Camp Surf facility serves 10,000 annual visitors, mostly children, with overnight experiences, through collaborations with over 250 nonprofit organizations. Camp Surf includes beach-camping for up to 100 tents at a time and serves families on the weekends who participate in YMCA programs. Beach-camping participants are required to use a small restroom that does not meet American Camp Association guidelines. In addition, existing storage for camping and recreational equipment is limited.

The grantee’s goal is to design improved amenities that will allow them to serve 100 additional people at one time, or up to 4,500 more participants per year. The new ADA-compliant restroom would alleviate the current site limitations and allow the grantee to serve more participants. The new storage room would include rinse stations, storage racks, and security. Additional features of the Ocean Program Center would include a projector and screen for ocean education classes, sinks, a stove and oven, a refrigerator, food preparation counters, and food storage.

Project tasks include preparing design documents and environmental review documents. Deliverables will include necessary permit applications, including a Coastal Development Permit, schematic design drawings, studies needed to complete environmental review, and a draft environmental review document.

Camp Surf offers four major programs:

- **Summer Youth Camp:** In this model, children register individually for a week of overnight camp. All meals, activities, and supervision are provided by the YMCA.
- **Year-Round Rental Groups:** In this model, groups reserve space in either cabins or camping on the beach. Groups include church youth groups, Girl and Boy Scouts, schools, and other nonprofits.
- **School-based Environmental Education and Team Building Programs:** Camp Surf provides experiential education, where campers explore and immerse themselves in the marine world. Classes are designed to align with Common Core Educational Standards and the California State Educational Framework.
- **Family Camping Programs:** Especially on holiday weekends, this model makes camping available for families.

The YMCA works with groups like Outdoor Outreach to provide camping programs at minimal cost. In addition, the YMCA has an endowment and has fundraised dollars that are used to subsidize these programs. This model allows the YMCA to serve all youth, including those that cannot afford the full cost of a YMCA overnight camp, and fulfill their promise to never turn a child away due to their inability to pay.

Overnight camping programs are advertised to surrounding communities, including the severely disadvantaged communities (SDACs) of Chula Vista, San Ysidro, and National City. Camp staff visit YMCA Child Care Centers at Title 1 schools in the South Bay region and invite the parents and children to day outings at camp at no cost. As participants become more familiar, the YMCA moves to occasional overnight stays. The YMCA also collaborates with over 250 nonprofits to leverage their outreach. Significant parts of these communities have been identified as areas that lack equitable access to parks and nature, according to The San Diego Foundation's 2020 Parks for Everyone Report.

Site Description: Camp Surf is located on 45 acres of U.S. Navy land at the southern end of the Silver Strand Training Center. The YMCA has leased this property from the U.S. Navy since 1969. The U.S. Navy supports the grantee's goal of improving the facility and their service to the community. Camp Surf is located close to Imperial Beach, Chula Vista, San Ysidro, and National City, four communities identified as SDACs.

The 45-acre Camp Surf site sits right on the beach. Campers are permitted to camp right above the high tide line, offering a unique outdoor camping experience. Visitors enjoy a waterfront located directly in front of the camp, north of a rock jetty. Camp Surf allows visitors to immerse themselves in the Pacific Ocean through activities like surfing, body boarding, sandcastle building, and hand surfing. Camp Surf also focuses on teaching visitors ocean safety through classes like "Sand, Waves and Rips" where participants learn about rip currents, how to spot a shallow water sand bar and how to discern deep holes just by looking at the waves.

The California Coastal Commission reports that there has been unpermitted development on the site in the past. A notice of violation was issued in late 2006. The grantee has indicated that

they will apply for a Coastal Development Permit as part of this project to resolve the unpermitted development on the site.

Of the 45 acres, about 70% are protected wetlands. Endangered species on site include the Snowy Plover and the Palmate Salty Bird's-Beak plant. Wildlife sightings include dolphins, seals, whales, hawks, gulls, ospreys, skunks, raccoons, and coyotes. The beach to the north is undeveloped for about seven miles until it reaches Coronado and two miles to the south to the Tijuana River National Estuarine Research Preserve making Camp Surf feel like an isolated outdoor environment.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: The YMCA was established in 1928 and is dedicated to improving the quality of human life and helping all people realize their fullest potential through the development of the spirit, mind, and body. The organization has many years of experience managing government grants and has robust systems in place to ensure compliance with all State guidelines. The YMCA has managed similar size projects in the past. Such projects include the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA, a 45,000 square foot recreational facility funded through private contributions, tax credits, and state and county grants. The project's cost was over \$18 million and was constructed in 18 months, within budget and schedule.

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.

In 2017, AB 250 (Gonzalez-Fletcher) declared that lower-cost coastal accommodations are essential elements of coastal and park access because they enable Californians and visitors from a variety of backgrounds to enjoy California's beaches and parks. The proposed project, if constructed, would help improve existing lower-cost coastal accommodations in San Diego County.

The proposed project is consistent with Goal 1 of the Explore the Coast Overnight Assessment (2019) because it will help to improve lower-cost coastal accommodations within 1.5 miles of the California Coast.

3. Project includes a serious effort to engage tribes. Examples of tribal engagement include good faith, documented efforts to work with tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated to the project area.

In July 2021, the Conservancy sent a letter to all tribal groups in San Diego County and invited them to discuss the project. The Conservancy did not receive any responses or requests to initiate any form of consultation.

4. Project benefits will be sustainable or resilient over the project lifespan.

The proposed project design will be developed to be resilient to future sea-level rise. The United States military implements sea level rise mitigation measures for all construction projects potentially impacted by sea-level rise. These measures will be part of the Site Approval Process for the proposed project. The YMCA anticipates these measures to ensure a building with a lifespan of at least 50 years.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The proposed project, if constructed, would both help improve existing overnight options in the City of Imperial Beach and support a range of programs for young and under-resourced populations through programming managed by the YMCA of San Diego County.

6. Project planned with meaningful community engagement and broad community support.

The YMCA has engaged with community groups to ensure that the proposed project and program activities (overnight and day camps, outdoor education and outdoor recreational activities) reflect and address community needs and interests. Public outreach will continue as part of the proposed project.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$150,000
Project Total	\$150,000

The expected source of funds for this project is the FY 2021/22 appropriation to the Conservancy from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68, Public Resources Code Sections 80000-80173). Chapter 9 of Proposition 68 (Sections 80120-80121) allocates funds to the Conservancy to enhance and protect coastal and ocean resources, and, in particular, to grant funds to public agencies and nonprofit organizations to provide for lower-cost coastal accommodations. (Public Resources Code Section 80120(b)).

Consistent with the purposes of this funding source, the proposed project consists of developing plans to construct a restroom and an Ocean Program Center that will include equipment storage, classroom space, an outdoor kitchen, and outdoor showers to increase overnight capacity and enhance the experience of campers at an existing lower-cost overnight campground. The project would be carried out in accordance with Chapter 10 of Division 21 regarding lower-cost coastal accommodations (see “Consistency with Conservancy’s Enabling Legislation” section below).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with Chapter 10 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31411-31414. Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 31412(a), the Conservancy may award grants and undertake projects as part of its Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations Program (Explore the Coast Overnight) to facilitate improvement of existing lower-cost accommodations within 1.5 miles of the coast.

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Explore the Coast Overnight program because it will help improve existing lower-cost coastal accommodations through the design of a restroom for campers and an Ocean Program Center that will include storage, classroom space, an outdoor kitchen, and outdoor showers at Camp Surf. These new amenities will enhance campers' experience and allow the YMCA to host larger groups.

Consistent with Section 31412(c)(1), the proposed project was selected through a collaborative effort with California State Parks and the California Coastal Commission.

Consistent with Section 31412(c)(2), engagement with community groups to ensure that future program activities that use the improvements to be planned through the proposed project reflect and address community needs and interests has begun and will continue throughout the project.

Pursuant to Section 31413, the Conservancy's implementation of the Explore the Coast Overnight Program must be guided by a lower-cost accommodations assessment. The Conservancy completed the "Explore the Coast Overnight – An Assessment of Lower-Cost Coastal Accommodations" (Assessment) on March 14, 2019. The proposed project will help improve existing lower-cost coastal accommodations, as called for in the Assessment.

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

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

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project was prioritized due to its direct benefit to disadvantaged communities.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is statutorily exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15262, because it involves only planning studies and feasibility analyses for possible future actions that have not yet been approved or funded, and it will include consideration of environmental factors. The project is also categorically exempt under Section 15306, which exempts basic data collection and resource evaluation activities. The project will not result in disturbance to an environmental resource.

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