

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
May 5, 2022

JUG HANDLE CREEK FARM CABINS AND AMENITIES IMPROVEMENTS

Project No. 07-061-04
Project Manager: Fanny Yang

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$508,400 to Jug Handle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) to build cabins, additional campground bathroom facilities and related infrastructure on the JCFNC property located in the community of Caspar, Mendocino County.

LOCATION: Caspar, Mendocino County

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
 - Exhibit 2: [Cabin and Campground Bathroom Design Plans](#)
 - Exhibit 3: [Septic Design Plans](#)
 - Exhibit 4: [Photos](#)
 - Exhibit 5: [Project Letters](#)
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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 five hundred eight thousand and four hundred dollars (\$508,400) to Jug Handle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) (“the grantee”) to construct two cabins with restrooms and two new campground bathrooms and improve related infrastructure on the grantee’s property located in the community of Caspar, Mendocino 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.
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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 and recorded an agreement sufficient to protect the public interest in 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 JCFNC 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 a \$508,400 grant to Jug Handle Creek Farm and Nature Center (JCFNC) to construct two cabins with restrooms and two new campground bathrooms, and to improve related infrastructure to accommodate the increase in bathroom facilities at the JCFNC property.

JCFNC provides low-cost visitor serving accommodations and nature educational programs to a wide range of people including low and middle income families and school groups, Native American and Indigenous tribes, and nonprofit organizations. In 2021, JCFNC served over 17,250 people, providing low-cost accommodations in the form of hostel rooms, camping and cabins, nature experiences, Indigenous retreat spaces, and cultural educational activities. The proposed project will increase the opportunities for those with limited budgets to experience JCFNC, Jug Handle State Reserve, and the Mendocino Coast. Current cabin rates range between \$50 per night in the winter and \$70 per night on summer weekends. The same rates will be applied to the two new cabin units, which will accommodate up to six people each; groups with more than two guests are asked to pay an additional \$15 per night per extra person. A 2014 study by the Mendocino Lodging Study found that the average visitor to Mendocino spends \$220 per day on lodging.

The value of JCFNC's programs is recognized by schools, environmental groups, and government agencies; much of JCFNC's programming takes place on-site and is centered on bringing lower-income people to the property to engage in camping and to experience nature.

Recent programs bring tribal communities to the coast for retreats and coastal reconnection to ancestral lands. JCFNC routinely engages with a wide range of school groups – 4th through 12th grades at all income levels at the nature center by providing environmental education. Recently, JCFNC started an initiative with Mercy Housing to bring formerly homeless families to the property to experience coastal recreation and nature.

The proposed project follows a series of Conservancy funded planning and implementation projects at JCFNC to increase lower-cost coastal accommodations (LCCA) and other visitor-serving amenities on the property. In 2007, the Conservancy provided a \$87,300 grant to JCFNC to prepare an enhancement plan to guide improvements to the site's facilities, such as additional lodgings, classrooms, and sanitary facilities, and trail improvements. Another \$315,000 was granted to JCFNC in 2010 to continue architectural programming, schematic designs, and construction and permitting cost estimates for the envisioned site and trail, including cabins for student groups and counselors, two bathhouses, and a teaching shelter. In 2020, JCFNC completed the construction of a bunkhouse and educational space, funded through a \$883,500 Conservancy grant. JCFNC subsequently constructed a bathhouse using privately donated funds.

The proposed additional cabins and sanitary facilities will enhance JCFNC's ability to continue providing educational programs and to support future environmental, community, and tribal groups that seek affordable lodging and coastal experiences in Mendocino. Adding two cabin units, with restrooms, that sleep six people each will increase the lower-cost accommodations available and accommodate an additional 12 people per night at JCFNC. Existing sanitary facilities for visitors in the campground area are currently limited to two outhouses, four faucets and a sink at the campground area. As the current septic system is inadequate, the proposed project will make improvements to the septic field to accommodate the two new cabins with bathrooms and the two new campground bathrooms. The two existing outhouses will be demolished and replaced by the new campground bathrooms.

The proposed project includes preparation of final designs, engineering, coastal development permit amendments, and the construction bid package as well as construction. Two campground cabins, each with one bathroom stall, and two new campground bathrooms will be constructed on site. The existing septic system will be improved by installation of the corresponding septic field to support the new bathrooms. The two new campground bathrooms will collectively have 6 stalls and 1 ADA stall for a total of 7 stalls.

Site Description: The JCFNC site is comprised of 33 acres, and includes forests and meadows, nature trails, a century-old Victorian farmhouse, an eleven-site campground with one group campsite, bunkhouse with classroom, cabins, and a nursery and greenhouse. The site is located adjacent to Highway One just east of the town of Caspar in Mendocino County and was originally a dairy ranch supporting cows and sheep. The farmhouse, which currently provides lodging for up to 17 visitors, was built in the 1870's and the old creamery (a former dairy barn) serves as office space and a residence for the JCFNC caretaker. JCFNC was established at the same time as the Jug Handle State Reserve and is about a five-minute walk to the Reserve's

1.74 miles of trails and 1,000 acres of trail networks. There are opportunities for hiking, sun-bathing, beach play, and fishing at nearby beaches and coastal headlands. JCFNC was intended to provide lodging and educational facilities to enhance public enjoyment of the Reserve.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: JCFNC is a nonprofit organization that provides environmental education programs for youth from Mendocino County and other areas, affordable lodging and camping for tourists and environmental groups, and a greenhouse and nursery where students, youth groups and others can learn about and participate in native plant restoration projects. JCFNC staff is dedicated to improving the property and facilities at JCFNC and is experienced in handling and managing state grants. The Executive Director has managed numerous large and small state and federal grants totaling more than \$30 million over the course of her career; the Finance Director has managed state grants of more than \$800,000 for the Bunkhouse Expansion Project previously funded by the Coastal Conservancy's lower-cost coastal accommodations program. The organization has sufficient cash reserves to be able to address cash flow for the proposed project.

JCFNC has demonstrated its ability to work with subcontractors and permitting agencies to plan for facilities enhancement projects through its efficient implementation of Phases I and II of the JCFNC Enhancement Planning Project also funded by the Coastal Conservancy. JCFNC received a Coastal Development Permit for the project on May 28, 2015 and staff has been working with JCFNC on the expansion of a 2,300 square foot bunkhouse and educational space. The bunkhouse and bathhouse were completed in 2020.

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.

The proposed project provides important benefits to Californians such as increasing opportunities for the public to access and enjoy the state's coastal resources. The project is feasible as it is part of a continued facility enhancement effort at JCFNC, in which previous improvements such as a bunkhouse expansion, bathhouse, and additional group lodging have been completed, in part with previous Conservancy funding support.

The proposed project advances statewide goals as it is consistent with the *California Coastal Act of 1976*, Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 30210 and 3021. PRC Section 30210 relates to public access and recreation, and call 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", and PRC Section 30213, states that "lower cost visitor and recreational facilities shall be protected, encouraged, and where feasible, provided".

The proposed project is consistent with regional and local plans as it is consistent with County of Mendocino's General Plan (1991) - Coastal Element, which implements the state policies of the California Coastal Act. The project is consistent with Policy 3.7-5 of the Plan, which states "Lower-cost visitor and recreational facilities for persons and families of low and moderate income shall be protected, encouraged and, where feasible, provided. Developments providing public recreational opportunities are preferred."

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.

The proposed project increases tribal ties to the California coast by helping tribal members regain access to their ancestral lands on the coast; JCFNC operates programs that bring tribal elders, youth, and groups from the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, the Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians, and the Pinoleville Pomo Nation to stay at JCFNC and enjoy the Mendocino coast.

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

The proposed project site is located east of Highway 1 at a minimum elevation of approximately 80 feet above sea level and approximately 2,000 feet east of the coastal bluff edge; therefore, constructed facilities are not expected to be vulnerable to sea level rise and will continue to deliver project benefits over time. To address wildfire risk due to climate change, JCFNC intends to remove non-native invasive pine trees.

5. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The proposed project provides co-benefits and alleviates multiple stressors within the low-income communities and indigenous tribal groups such as improving public health, addressing the need for additional recreational amenities, and access to coastal and natural spaces in Mendocino, specifically to State Park's Jug Handle Nature Reserve. The additions of the cabins and bathroom facilities will increase opportunities for underserved and/or frontline communities to affordably stay overnight along the coast, increasing equity and environmental justice.

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

JCFNC engaged the community in an extensive visioning process in 2007 to 2010. The organization held workshops and surveyed a variety of non-profit and school partners about needed improvements at the facility. Bathrooms in the campground were always identified as a high priority improvement, as were the two new cabins to accommodate researchers, educators, and the general public with low-cost visitor serving accommodations.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy

\$508,400

JCFNC Board Donations	\$93,700
Mendocino Community Foundation	\$2,300
Project Total	\$604,400

Additionally, the project is supported by \$3,000 of in-kind labor services to cover overhead costs for staff time and project review tasks.

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

The expected source of funds for this project are funds appropriated 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 (section 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 for lower-cost coastal accommodations. (Public Resources Code Section 80120 (b)). Consistent with the purposes of this funding source, the proposed project consists of constructing two cabins, campground restrooms and related infrastructure to provide lower-cost overnight accommodations on the coast. The project will 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 PRC 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 one and one half miles of the coast.

The proposed project is consistent with PRC Section 31411(e) as it “invest[s] in new strategies and partnerships to improve the availability of lower-cost coastal accommodations, particularly for low and middle-income families” by increasing the availability of cabins and campground bathrooms for public reservation and use at JCFNC. The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy’s Explore the Coast Overnight program, established through PRC Section 31412(a), and meets the program goals of “help[ing] improve existing and develop new lower-cost coastal accommodations” by improving the septic field at JCFNC to accommodate increased sanitary facilities and constructing cabins. The proposed project is consistent with Section 31413 as JCFNC is identified in the Conservancy’s 2019 LCCA assessment as a potential project providing lower-cost coastal accommodations in Northern California. Lastly, the proposed project is consistent with Section 31414(d), which describes lower-cost accommodations as including

campgrounds and cabins. The proposed project will construct cabins and improve camping facilities as a form of lower-cost coastal accommodations at JCFNC.

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

Consistent with **Goal 2, Objective D** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will fund construction of new restroom facilities and related septic improvements, replacing old facilities that have reached the end of their useful life and improving the visitor experience at JCFNC.

Consistent with **Goal 3, Objective E** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will create more cabins, to complement the campground, bunkhouse, and hostel facilities at JCFNC, adding to the variety of lower-cost overnight accommodations along the Mendocino coast.

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will improve the facilities of a regional environmental education center that educates the public about environmental issues affecting the coast and inland watersheds.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will support JCFNC in providing increased coastal experiences to underserved populations by providing lower-cost lodging.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

On October 1, 2015, the Conservancy adopted the "Initial Study/Proposed Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Jug Handle Creek Farm and Nature Center Enhancement" Project (IS/MND) and authorized funding for the project. The project remains substantially unchanged from its description in the IS/MND, and no new environmental information or change in circumstances require a re-evaluation of the potential environmental effects of the project. (14 Cal Code. Regs. Section 15162(b)). Accordingly, the proposed authorization remains consistent with the CEQA findings adopted by the Conservancy in connection with the October 1, 2015 authorization.