

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation  
September 22, 2022

**HIDDEN BEACH RESTROOM**

Project No. 20-028-03  
Project Manager: Timothy Duff

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Authorization to disburse up to \$590,000 to the County of Santa Cruz to prepare final plans and construct a new restroom at Hidden Beach County Park.

**LOCATION:** Hidden Beach County Park, Santa Cruz County.

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EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
  - Exhibit 2: [Photos](#)
  - Exhibit 3: [Sample Restroom Design](#)
  - Exhibit 4: [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 ninety thousand dollars (\$590,000) to the County of Santa Cruz (“the grantee”) to prepare final plans and construct a new restroom at Hidden Beach County Park, located in Aptos, Santa Cruz 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.
  4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.
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In addition, to the extent appropriate, the County of Santa Cruz shall incorporate the guidelines of the Conservancy's "Coastal Access Project Standards."

### 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 and Guidelines.

## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

### PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a grant of up to \$590,000 to the County of Santa Cruz to prepare final plans and construct a new restroom at Hidden Beach County Park located in Aptos (Exhibit 1). The Park provides visitors with parking, picnic tables, and a beach access path that leads to a wide sandy beach popular with County residents and visitors (Exhibit 2, Photos). Currently, the park and beach are served by a single user porta-potty and as the park's popularity continues to increase, the porta-potty has become inadequate for serving the needs of both park and beach visitors. Unfortunately, some visitors find the porta-potty occupied or inconvenient and opt instead to utilize the beach or wooded areas, resulting in adverse environmental impacts and socially compromising situations.

In 2020 the Conservancy granted funds to the County to prepare plans for the proposed restroom. At that time the Conservancy also approved a plan for the transfer of Conservancy-owned property adjacent to the park. The County has agreed to accept the land transfer before the restroom project is completed. The planning grant also funded the implementation of a community outreach program, and last spring the County hosted a community workshop to present the proposed restroom building concept to the public. Approximately 25 people participated in the workshop and 16 questionnaires were completed. The County also held two public hearings on their permitting and funding for the project.

The proposed project consists of preparing the final plans and purchasing and installing a prefabricated double unit restroom building to provide both park and beach users with flushing toilets and hand washing sinks (Exhibit 3). The plumbing will connect to an existing wastewater pumping station at the site via existing infrastructure owned and operated by the County. The proposed project includes the installation of signage to direct beach users to the restrooms. The restroom will be accessible. An existing path from the parking lot to the restroom is accessible although the path from the beach to the restroom is too steep to meet accessibility standards.

**Site Description:** Hidden Beach County Park is located in unincorporated Santa Cruz County about a mile downcoast from Aptos. The park is located on a low bluff approximately 1,000 feet

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from a wide sandy beach along Monterey Bay, a National Marine Sanctuary (Exhibits 1 and 2). The one-acre park is bordered to the north by railroad tracks that are expected to serve as the future Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail, to the west by Conservancy-owned parcels totaling approximately 2.6 acres that will be transferred to the County, to the east by residential neighborhoods, and to the south by the Monterey Bay coastline. The park and Conservancy properties encompass a broad, gently sloping valley that contains an unnamed ephemeral stream and a steep, densely vegetated riparian valley and hillside, and sandy beach areas. The valley and hillside support mature eucalyptus trees, coastal live oaks, and understory vegetation. The park's amenities include a play structure, lawn area, picnic tables, and trails. The park has numerous pedestrian access points from the adjacent neighborhoods, a paved path and scenic coastal overlook that connects the park to a broad sandy beach. Conservancy-owned parcels to be transferred provide informal, unimproved access to sandy beach and upland areas.

**Grantee Qualifications:** Santa Cruz County Parks Department manages over 1,500 acres of parkland, including 38 neighborhood, community, regional, or rural parks; 27 coastal access points; 23 playgrounds; 19 parks with athletic facilities; five parks with community rooms; and one regional swim center. The Department includes financial analysts who administer and track grant funding, planners who oversee the public engagement, permitting, design, and construction processes, and park operations and maintenance staff who maintain the parks in a safe manner. Over the past several years County Parks has successfully designed, secured permits, purchased, and installed prefabricated restrooms similar to the one proposed at Hidden Beach County Park at three other county parks. This extensive staff experience in permitting, site preparation, construction, and installation of these facilities will guide staff through the process required to complete the proposed Hidden Beach restroom project.

### **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 project provides important benefits to Californians by enhancing coastal access to a popular beach destination, advances statewide public coastal access goals and is consistent with Coastal Act and Local Coastal Program public access and recreation policies. The initial planning and design efforts confirm the project is feasible and will serve to both enhance public access and protect coastal resources.

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

The restroom facilities are expected to last at least 25 years. The restroom will be located at an elevation of approximately 60 feet and will not be impacted by projected sea level rise or bluff retreat within the next 20 years. The project will not make future climate adaptation more difficult.

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

The project will both enhance public access and protect coastal resources by providing visitors with a new restroom facility that will feature flushing toilets and a hand washing station.

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

The County hosted a community workshop to present the proposed restroom building concept to the public. An estimated 25 people participated in the workshop and overwhelmingly supported the project.

## **PROJECT FINANCING**

<b>Coastal Conservancy</b>	<b>\$590,000</b>
County of Santa Cruz	<b><u>\$150,000</u></b>
<b>Project Total</b>	<b>\$740,000</b>

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 Sections 75001-75130 (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, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31000-31414 (Public Resources Code Section 75060(b)).

Public Resources Code Section 75060(e) allocates funds to the Conservancy for the protection of Monterey Bay and its watersheds. "Protection," as defined in Public Resources Code Section 75005(m), includes "actions necessary to allow the continued use and enjoyment of property or natural resources and includes acquisition, development, restoration, preservation and interpretation," as defined. "Development" is defined in Public Resources Code Section 75005(f) to include physical improvement of real property.

Consistent with these provisions, the proposed project will serve to protect and improve the use and enjoyment of property and natural resources along the Santa Cruz County coast by developing physical improvements of real property. 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

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does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders. Typical grant conditions require Grantees to provide any funds needed to complete the project.

### **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. Through the proposed project, the Conservancy will help enhance a coastal accessway and thereby further access to and enjoyment of coastal resources along the Monterey Bay shoreline.

Section 31400.1 allows the Conservancy to award grants to a public agency for development of accessways to and along the coast that serve more than local public needs. With its location on the Monterey Bay shoreline and adjacent to the future Santa Cruz County Rail Trail segment of the California Coastal Trail, the proposed project will enhance access along the coast for visitors from throughout the region and beyond. Santa Cruz County and the Monterey Bay region attract millions of visitors per year.

Section 31400.2 requires the Conservancy to consider a number of factors in determining the amount of funding for an access project. Consistent with this section, the proposed level of funding was evaluated relative to the total amount of funding available to the Conservancy for coastal access projects, the fiscal resources of the applicant, and the Conservancy's project selection criteria (see Consistency with Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines). The County of Santa Cruz has committed to provide funds to this project, as well as the funds necessary to operate and manage the proposed restroom; however, the County does not have sufficient funds available to complete the project without assistance.

Section 31400.3 authorizes the Conservancy to assist public agencies in developing and implementing a system of public accessways to and along the state's coastline. The proposed project will further these goals by enhancing public access in a heavily visited coastal region.

### **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 entails the construction of a new restroom building that will serve to increase and enhance coastal recreational opportunities at a local park and beach.

### **CEQA COMPLIANCE:**

The proposed project is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations, Section 15303, Class 3, New Construction or conversion of small structures. Consistent with this section the project consists of construction and location of a new, small restroom structure and installation of small new equipment and facilities.

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