

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 22, 2022

Santa Ana River Trail: San Bernardino County Phase III Construction

Project No. 13-015-02
Project Manager: Greg Gauthier

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$3,000,000 to the County of San Bernardino to augment an existing Conservancy grant authorized on January 29, 2015, to construct a 3.8-mile segment of the Santa Ana River Trail in San Bernardino County.

LOCATION: From Waterman Avenue, City of San Bernardino, to California Street, City of Redlands, San Bernardino County (Exhibit 1)

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Map](#)
- Exhibit 2: [January 29, 2015, Staff Recommendation](#)
- Exhibit 3: [Project Letters](#)
- Exhibit 4: [Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration](#)

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 three million dollars (\$3,000,000) to the County of San Bernardino (“the grantee”) to augment the Conservancy grant of \$3,399,500, authorized on January 29, 2015, which was subsequently augmented by \$509,925 on August 7, 2019, to construct a 3.8-mile segment of the Santa Ana River Trail from Waterman Avenue, City of San Bernardino, to California Street, City of Redlands, County of San Bernardino.

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:

SANTA ANA RIVER TRAIL: SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY PHASE III CONSTRUCTION

1. A revised work program, schedule, and budget.
2. Names and qualifications of any contractors to be retained in carrying out the project.
3. An updated plan for acknowledgement of Conservancy funding and Prop 68 as a source of that funding.
4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.

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 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, regarding the recreational goals of the Santa Ana River region.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Conservancy Project Selection Criteria.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a grant augmentation of up to \$3,000,000 to the County of San Bernardino to construct a 3.8-mile segment of the Santa Ana River Trail from Waterman Avenue in the City of San Bernardino to California Street in the City of Redlands.

At its January 29, 2015 meeting the Conservancy authorized disbursement of up to \$3,399,500 to the County of San Bernardino, augmented on August 7, 2019, by \$509,925 through executive officer delegated authority for construction of the above-mentioned Santa Ana River Trail segment. Staff recommends the Conservancy authorize a further augmentation of up to \$3,000,000 to enable the County of San Bernardino to proceed with construction.

The trail segment to be constructed through the proposed project will consist of a paved Class I bikeway—a shared use path that is physically separated from the street and/or highway and may be used by pedestrians, bicyclists, people who use wheelchairs, and other non-motorized users. The Santa Ana River Trail will connect the Inland Empire to the coast, from the crest of the San Bernardino Mountains to the mouth of the Santa Ana River in Huntington Beach.

Since the original grant authorization, the County of San Bernardino has worked diligently to address multiple project start-up delays. These have included trail realignment challenges due to railroad crossing restrictions and changing requirements, the need to conduct subsequent additional biological surveys to account for special status species considerations, and the onset and subsequent timeline ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic. Most recently, the County has dealt with managing project bids and budget analysis amidst construction materials supply chain interruptions and associated cost escalation. All these challenges have combined to

create project start delays (nearly eight years) and near doubling of construction costs since the 2015 project approval.

The proposed project will be jointly managed by the San Bernardino County Departments of Public Works and Regional Parks.

The site and grantee remain as described in the January 29, 2015, staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria, 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 recreation and health benefits to residents and visitors to the Santa Ana River Trail by constructing a segment of trail to be used for walking, biking, nature viewing, and a nonmotorized commuter route (see number 3 below).

The project additionally supports the recreational goals of the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan and is ready to proceed upon funding.

3. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

The proposed project will deliver multiple benefits by providing a trail for users to recreate along the Santa Ana River. The trail provides a means for active recreation and the appurtenant health benefits. It further provides access to open space along the river in this extremely urbanized region of the Inland Empire. Finally, it provides a route for nonmotorized local commuter traffic potentially helping to alleviate traffic congestion and associated greenhouse gases.

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

The proposed project is part of the Santa Ana River Parkway and Open Space Plan. Completion of the Santa Ana River Trail is the top priority of the plan. The plan was developed with rigorous community involvement and outreach through in-person community meetings, participation at local and regional events, and through an online platform to allow comment and input through all stages of plan development.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$3,000,000
Caltrans Active Transportation Program	\$1,105,000
Previous Conservancy Grant Funding	\$3,909,425
Project Total	\$8,014,425

Funding for this augmentation is anticipated to come from the FY 2020/2021 appropriation from the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006 (Proposition 84, Public Resources Code section 75001, *et seq.*), and the FY 2020/2021 appropriation from the California Drought, Water, Parks, Climate, Coastal Protection, and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 (Proposition 68, Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 80000-80173).

Forty-five million dollars is allocated to the Conservancy in Proposition 84 for projects to “expand and improve” the Santa Ana River Parkway. (Public Resources Code section 75050(i)). These projects must be developed “in consultation with local government agencies participating in the development of the Santa Ana River Parkway.” Proposition 84 further specifies that at least \$10 million of these funds should be spent in each of the three counties, specifically San Bernardino, Orange, and Riverside Counties.

Consistent with the Prop 84 funding source, this project will construct a segment of the Santa Ana River Trail located in San Bernardino County. The proposed project was developed in partnership with the local governments, particularly the San Bernardino County Public Works and Regional Parks Departments and the Cities of Colton, San Bernardino, Highland, and Redlands.

Chapter 7 of Proposition 68 authorizes grants for projects consistent with the Conservancy’s Santa Ana River Conservancy Program (PRC Section 80100(a)(2)). Pursuant to Chapter 7, the Conservancy must “to the extent possible” distribute funds “equitably geographically” along the river. The Conservancy is tracking Proposition 68 expenditures to enable equitable geographic distribution. The trail to be constructed through this project passes through a severely disadvantaged community in the City of San Bernardino.

The County further secured \$1,105,000 in Caltrans Active Transportation Program funding to implement the construction phase of this project.

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

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project is consistent with the provisions of Chapter 4.6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code, Sections 31170 and 31174(c) regarding the Santa Ana River Conservancy Program and prioritization of river-related projects that create expanded opportunities for recreation. The proposed project will help implement the Santa Ana River Trail and Parkway, which will become a major inland trail connecting to the California Coastal Trail and will expand opportunities for recreation near the river.

Section 31173 states that the Conservancy may undertake projects and award grants to public agencies to help achieve the program goals of recreational opportunities and trails. It further states that the Conservancy may undertake projects for "Public access to, enjoyment of, and enhancement of recreational and educational experience on, program lands in a manner consistent with the protection of land and natural resources and economic resources in the area." This project will complete construction of a portion of the Santa Ana River Trail for the purpose of public access and recreation.

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

Consistent with **Goal 9, Objective B** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will construct a new section of the Santa Ana River Trail.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

On January 29, 2015, the Conservancy independently evaluated and concurred with the Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) prepared by the County of San Bernardino Department of Public Works (lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act) for the "Santa Ana River Trail Phase III" project and adopted on December 16, 2014. See Exhibit 4.

A complete discussion of mitigation measures identified in the IS/MND, to be implemented through a MMRP (Mitigation, Monitoring, and Reporting Plan), is contained in the January 29, 2015, staff recommendation (Exhibit 2).

The project elements have not changed since that authorization and there have been no changed circumstances or new information that triggers the requirement for additional documentation under CEQA. Therefore, this authorization remains consistent with the January 29, 2015 findings, and no further review pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act is required.