

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
September 22, 2022

WESTERN FLYER BOAT RESTORATION

Project No. 22-020-01
Project Manager: Timothy Duff

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$260,000 to the Western Flyer Foundation to restore the Western Flyer boat for the purpose of marine education and exploration on Monterey Bay.

LOCATION: Moss Landing Harbor, Monterey Bay

EXHIBITS

- Exhibit 1: [Project Location Maps](#)
Exhibit 2: [Photos/Drawings](#)
Exhibit 3: [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 two hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$260,000) to the Western Flyer Foundation (“the grantee”) to restore the Western Flyer boat for the purpose of marine education and exploration on Monterey Bay.

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.
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4. Evidence that all permits and approvals required to implement the project have been obtained.

In addition, to the extent appropriate, the Western Flyer Foundation 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.
3. The Western Flyer Foundation 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 \$260,000 to the Western Flyer Foundation ("WFF") to restore the Western Flyer boat for the purpose of marine education and exploration on Monterey Bay. The Western Flyer is a 1937 purse seiner, which was chartered in 1940 by the writer John Steinbeck and marine biologist Edward Ricketts for a six-week exploration of the Gulf of California intertidal zone. WFF is restoring the vessel to operate marine education research programs, including programs serving low-income student groups in the region. The programming will blend the sciences and humanities in the spirit of the unique partnership between Steinbeck and Ricketts.

With much of the external restoration nearly complete, the remaining project tasks include completing the interior and the education-oriented aspects of the boat, including a state-of-the-art research laboratory and classroom, along with ancillary plumbing and electrical work (Exhibit 2). The woodworking style used to build the laboratory will mirror the original woodworking techniques of the crew quarters using a combination of painted tongue and groove Douglas Fir and varnished Mahogany accent trim. The flooring in the laboratory will be traditional oiled Douglas Fir wood. Each of the nine student workstations will have a computer linked to the onboard computer network. A remote operated vehicle (ROV) will communicate marine life images and data to both onboard and shore-based students in real-time. A series of sub-zero freezers will be located under a wet worktop, and a restroom in the laboratory will be equipped with a sink and toilet.

With private funds the WFF will also build a ramp to the boat and a lifting rail which would allow people who use wheelchairs to access the deck of the boat. However, the wheelhouse doors are too narrow for a wheelchair. The foundation is researching options to increase the boat's accessibility.

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The vessel will be berthed most of the year in Monterey to provide student groups from the region with marine education and exploration trips on Monterey Bay beginning next year. The boat will also visit other communities along the Pacific coast and in Baja California to encourage regional educational and research programs and cultural exchanges.

For the past several years the Western Flyer Foundation has been actively engaging with numerous schools in the region, including ten high school and community college teachers in Monterey County who will help co-develop onboard education programs and internship opportunities. A majority of students from all the participating schools are from demographics that have been traditionally underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields. A majority of students attending Title 1 schools are English learners and/or are foster youth. For the first three years, funding from a California Coastal Commission's Whale Tail grant will cover all bus transportation and substitute teacher costs for classes that participate in this WFF project. After that, WFF will fund these costs as an ongoing operating expense.

Site Description: The renovation will take place at the Moss Landing Boat Yard (Exhibit 1). With a 300-ton haul-out capacity the site is the only haul-out facility on the California Central Coast large enough to safely haul vessels up to 120 feet. The larger lifting capacity allows the boatyard to service larger vessels, and over the last six years has expanded its welding and metalworking department. The boatyard has grown its electrical and mechanical capabilities and today offers a full-service woodworking shop. The yard has also updated its onsite ship's store into a first-class ship chandlery. Over the past six years the Moss Landing Boat Yard has grown into an outstanding commercial vessel and yacht maintenance facility.

Grant Applicant Qualifications: WFF has raised nearly \$4 million for the renovation work done to date, contracting with highly skilled craftspeople with the skills required to do traditional wooden boat restoration. WFF has secured and successfully administered several community, state, and federal grants, including a Coastal Commission Whale Tail grant. A new Executive Director with 20-plus years of non-profit and grant management experience joined the organization in July 2022. Other WFF staff include a treasurer and accountant.

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 Conservancy's investment would be leveraged by \$4 million in private funding and will provide low-income students in the Monterey Bay region with the opportunity to learn about marine ecology while aboard the boat operating on Monterey Bay. WFF has demonstrated the

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capacity to complete the remaining restoration work and has already implemented a broad outreach program to recruit a variety of schools to participate in their marine education curriculum beginning next year. In addition to securing other state funds for the first three years of education programming, they have built into their long-term budget the allocation of funds needed to maintain their programming.

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

Given the extensive restoration, it is expected that the boat will operate for decades to come. WFF's long-term budget planning allocates ongoing funds to run its marine education programming.

4. Project delivers multiple benefits and significant positive impact.

WFF's education and research programs will provide integrative project-based learning experiences for students from underserved communities that have been traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields. A majority of students from most of the participating high schools receive free/reduced price meals, are English learners and/or are foster youth. WFF's programs, including field trips on Monterey Bay, will have a positive impact on these targeted school groups.

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

For the past several years WFF has been actively engaging with the local community around Moss Landing. Numerous high school and community colleges and teachers in the region have been assisting with the development of education programs and internship opportunities and will participate with their classes beginning in the 2023/24 school year.

PROJECT FINANCING

Coastal Conservancy	\$260,000
Western Flyer Foundation	<u>\$354,000</u>
Project Total	\$614,000

The anticipated source of 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 Section 75001 *et seq.* (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, Public Resources Code Section 31000 *et seq.* (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. "Interpretation" is defined in Public Resources Code Section

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75005(i)) to include “a visitor serving amenity that educates and communicates the significance and value of natural, historical, and cultural resources in a way that increases the understanding and enjoyment of these resources and that may utilize the expertise of a naturalist or other specialist skilled at educational interpretation.”

Consistent with these provisions, the proposed project will serve to protect the Monterey Bay coast through the restoration of the Western Flyer to support marine education research programs. 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 does it require documentation of expenditures from other funders. Typical grant conditions require grantees to provide any funds needed to complete the project. In addition to the \$4 million spent to date on the restoration, WFF has pledged \$354,000 in additional funds for this phase of 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 coastal access and thereby further access to and enjoyment of coastal resources on Monterey Bay.

Section 31400.1 allows the Conservancy to award grants to nonprofit organizations for development of access to and along the coast that serve more than local public needs. With its location on Monterey Bay the proposed project will enhance access along the coast and on Monterey Bay for visitors from throughout the region and beyond. The Monterey Bay region attracts 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). WFF has committed to provide funds to this project, as well as the funds necessary to operate and maintain the boat and conduct its marine education programs. WFF does not have sufficient funds available to complete the project without assistance.

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

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will provide educational programs and interpretive events that improve public understanding and promote stewardship of coastal resources.

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective C** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project entails restoring a boat that will serve to educate the public about environmental issues affecting the coast and inland watersheds.

Consistent with **Goal 16, Objective A** of the Conservancy's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, the proposed project will benefit several disadvantaged communities in the region by providing educational programs for Title 1 schools and other organizations.

CEQA COMPLIANCE:

The proposed project is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to 14 California Code of Regulations, section 15331, Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation (Class 31) that consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995). The proposed historic boat restoration project is consistent with this section and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

The Western Flyer also meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code § 5024.1; 14 California Code of Regulations, section 4852) as it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage and is associated with the lives of persons important in our past. In addition, the boat embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction.

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