



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Emily Sinkhorn, Director of Environmental Services

PREPARER: Morguine Sefcik, Environmental Programs Manager

DATE: April 1, 2026

TITLE: **Approve an Application for Grant Funds from the California State Coastal Conservancy for the Jolly Giant Creek and Butcher Slough Coastal Resilience and Restoration Planning Project; and Authorize the City Manager to Execute All Applicable Documents.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council:

- 1) Approve application for grant funds from the State Coastal Conservancy for the Jolly Giant Creek and Butcher Slough Coastal Resilience and Restoration Planning Project; and
- 2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents.

INTRODUCTION:

The Environmental Services Department proposes to request grant funds to help fund a multi-benefit coastal resilience and habitat restoration planning project for the lower two miles of Jolly Giant Creek and Butcher Slough. The project will range from Shay Park through downtown Arcata and the Little Lakes Property to the outlet in Humboldt Bay at the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary.

BACKGROUND:

The Arcata Wetlands and Creeks Committee has had a goal for several years to pursue funding for restoration of Jolly Giant Creek. Environmental Services Department staff have researched various grant funding opportunities to pursue restoration planning for Jolly Giant Creek and the SCC Climate Bond (Proposition 4) funding program has been identified as a good fit. In addition, the City Council has a priority project to continue to pursue sea level adaptation projects. SCC allocates the Climate Bond funding through a rolling grant application process to support a variety of climate related priorities, including multi-benefit coastal resiliency projects. The City submitted a required pre-application to the SCC in late 2025 and was approved to submit a full grant proposal.

DISCUSSION:

The Environmental Services Department intends to request approximately \$600,000 to identify and prioritize habitat restoration and sea level rise adaptation opportunities of the two-mile study area in Jolly Giant Creek and Butcher Slough. The planned project will develop a feasibility study report for the project area and 30% design plans for a multi-benefit project that would provide sea level rise and flood resilience, along with salmonid habitat restoration, utilizing a portion of the Little Lakes property in the lower Butcher Slough reach. This work will build off the recently completed Arcata

Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and Capital Improvement Project Adaptation Concept Plan project, funded by the California Coastal Commission. In addition, the proposed project would fit within Council's direction to staff provided at the February 26, 2026 Study Session to prioritize adaptation and restoration on the eastern edge of the Little Lakes property which could benefit habitat and sea level rise protection for the South H and South G neighborhoods.

The project will include the following tasks: 1) Community Engagement and formation of a Technical Advisory Committee, 2) Data Collection and Hydraulic Assessment 3) Feasibility Study Report, 4) Restoration Concepts Development, 5) Alternatives Analysis and 30% Design Plans, 6) CEQA Documentation.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

This action is consistent with the City's Sea Level Rise Chapter of the recently adopted Local Coastal Element and is listed as a Council Priority Project for 2025/2026 to continue sea level rise adaptation planning and implementation strategies including research, analysis, and project implementation and strategic property acquisition to support long term climate change adaptation.

COMMITTEE/COMMISSION REVIEW:

The Wetlands and Creeks Committee have expressed support for this grant application.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

This grant proposal is for a planning-level study only and exempt from CEQA, as it does not meet the definition of a project. If funded, the study would include a CEQA documentation task to conduct environmental review for a potential project in the Butcher Slough/Little Lakes portion of the project area.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

The grant request for funding will be approximately \$600,000. If the City is awarded funding, a budget adjustment would be completed to add both revenue and expense funds into the upcoming 2026/2027 budget.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

Motion to approve application for grant funds from the State Coastal Conservancy for the Jolly Giant Creek and Butcher Slough Coastal Resilience and Restoration Planning Project; and authorize the City Manager to execute all applicable documents. Consent Calendar vote.