



**November 12, 2021**

**Agenda Item: 2.e.iii**

To: Executive Committee, Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission

From: Marissa Caringella, Chief Administrative Director  
Caitlin Gray, Environmental Scientist

Re: **Consideration of Approval of the Proposition 50 Grant Program  
Recommended Project List and Standby List**

### **Action Requested of the Executive Committee**

Schedule the consideration of approval of the Proposition (Prop) 50 grant program Recommended Project List and standby list for the December 14, 2021 Governing Board meeting.

### **Background**

Prop 50 – the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 – allocated \$100 million to the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) to finance projects to restore and protect the water quality and environment of coastal waters, estuaries, bays and nearshore waters, and groundwater. Of that \$100 million, section 79543, subdivision (c), of the Water Code allocated \$20 million to implement priority actions specified in the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) of the Santa Monica Bay National Estuary Program (NEP), formerly known as the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Plan. The Commission currently has \$3,228,700 remaining for grant funding recommendations, an increase of \$1,700 from what Commission staff last reported. Of those remaining funds, \$3,190,000 is now available to encumber by June 30, 2023 and \$38,700 is in the process of being approved for an encumbrance end date of June 30, 2024.

At its June 17, 2021 meeting, the Governing Board approved the Prop 50 grant program award process and [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#). The RFP called for projects that: are located within and primarily benefit the waters, habitats, natural resources or other beneficial uses of Santa Monica Bay and its watersheds; provide comprehensive capability for monitoring, collecting, and analyzing ambient water quality, pursuant to section 79148.8 of the Water Code; support one or more of the seven overarching goals of the CCMP Action Plan; and meet additional applicable eligibility requirements in the enabling legislation. In addition, the RFP prioritized projects that fulfill monitoring needs identified in the Comprehensive Monitoring Program of the Santa Monica Bay NEP.



*The Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission's mission is to restore and enhance Santa Monica Bay through actions and partnerships that improve water quality, conserve and rehabilitate natural resources, mitigate the impacts of climate change and sea level rise, and protect Santa Monica Bay's benefits and values.*

Applications for the Prop 50 grant program opened July 12, 2021 and closed September 24, 2021. On August 12, 2021, Commission staff conducted a virtual public workshop to provide information on the grant program to prospective applicants. Entities eligible to apply included California Native American Tribes (as defined in the State Water Board's Tribal Consultation Policy), and educational institutions, local public agencies, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations (all as defined in section 79148.2 of the California Water Code).

Commission staff consulted with State Water Board Division of Financial Assistance (DFA) and Office of Chief Counsel staff, as needed, and determined all eight proposals submitted by the application deadline were complete and eligible for funding under this grant program (see [Attachment 1](#): Prop 50 Grant Program Project Proposal Summaries). The eight proposals were reviewed by a panel of nine reviewers representing eight organizations: California State Parks, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Coastal Commission, Ocean Protection Council, Los Angeles Sanitation and Environment, University of Southern California Sea Grant, Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, and Commission staff. The panel evaluated and scored proposals based on ability to address grant program goals and priorities, technical feasibility, applicant qualifications, and proposed budget. All reviewers completed a conflict of interest certification and were not permitted to review or participate in discussion of proposals for which they have a conflict of interest.

On November 9, 2021, the review panel met to review the proposal scoring results and ensure consensus on the ranked list of projects to be recommended to the Governing Board for consideration. The review panel agreed to recommend seven projects for funding, ranked by average score, up to the amount of available funds. The eighth project is a standby. Commission staff will continue to consult with DFA staff and applicants regarding proposed budget modifications to address any ineligible costs or opportunities to increase cost effectiveness. Therefore, recommended funding dollar amounts are still pending; in particular for the seventh project for which remaining funds only allowed recommendation of partial funding.

The RFP states that Commission staff will submit the Recommended Project List adopted by the Governing Board to the State Water Board for consideration of approval. However, [State Water Board Resolution No. 2011-0045](#) "authorizes the [Deputy Director of DFA] to execute grants and amendments to implement additional projects meeting the goals of the [CCMP Action Plan] and selected by the [Commission] until funding is exhausted" (provision #3, page 2). Commission staff will develop a staff report with this information and the draft Recommended Project List and standby list and submit it to the Governing Board for review in early December 2021.

## **Attachments**

[Attachment 1](#)      Prop 50 Grant Program Project Proposal Summaries

## Attachment 1

### PROP 50 GRANT PROGRAM PROJECT PROPOSAL SUMMARIES

**Applicant:** Pepperdine University

**Proposal title:** Looking Back to See Ahead: Using long-term monitoring data to predict species persistence across the NSMBW

**Requested funding amount:** \$285,079

**Project summary:** This project will use long-term amphibian and chaparral monitoring data to quantify impacts of recent extreme climate events and predict species persistence across the North Santa Monica Bay Watershed under changing conditions. Using models, it will isolate key stressors driving population trends and predict persistence in this region through the coming decades.

**Applicant:** City of Culver City

**Proposal title:** Citywide Bioretention Basin Project

**Requested funding amount:** \$800,000

**Project summary:** The project will install landscaped bioretention basins in locations around Culver City. Basins will capture dry-weather runoff to irrigate native plants, allow excess water to infiltrate into the ground, and reduce pollutant loading to Ballona Creek.

**Applicant:** Occidental College

**Proposal title:** Assessment of the Nearshore Rocky Reef Resources of Santa Monica Bay

**Requested funding amount:** \$601,991

**Project summary:** This project is designed to build upon previous assessments and address the emerging challenges facing rocky reef ecosystems through a quantitative and comprehensive evaluation of nearshore reefs in the Bay. The project aims to inform habitat extent, ecological condition, major stressors, vulnerability and adaptability to climate change, and remaining data gaps associated with this habitat.

**Applicant:** CSU Fullerton Auxiliary Services Corporation

**Proposal title:** Monitoring rocky intertidal habitats in the Santa Monica Bay to support habitat assessments

**Requested funding amount:** \$377,263

**Project summary:** This project addresses all four indicator categories and 9 of 14 data gaps identified for rocky intertidal systems in the Comprehensive Monitoring Program, toward the goal of improving monitoring and ability to assess effectiveness of management actions. The data, including surveys, maps, risk indices, and temperature, will be archived in MARINE's database.

**Applicant:** Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation

**Proposal title:** Collaborative Sandy Beach Monitoring and Assessment in Santa Monica Bay

**Requested funding amount:** \$594,465

**Project summary:** Sandy shores are complex, highly dynamic ecosystems that link marine and terrestrial ecosystems and provide important ecological functions. This collaborative project will monitor and evaluate all 14 indicators from the Comprehensive Monitoring Program, address data gaps, evaluate climate vulnerability metrics, and engage the public.

**Applicant:** Santa Monica Bay Restoration Foundation

**Proposal title:** Establishing a baseline census and ecological monitoring program for *Zostera pacifica* habitats in coastal Southern California

**Requested funding amount:** \$690,369

**Project summary:** Seagrasses provide myriad ecosystem services but are experiencing staggering rates of loss. This project will create a census of *Zostera pacifica* habitat within Santa Monica Bay, develop a baseline of the ecological conditions within extant *Z. pacifica*, and fill gaps in understanding habitat conditions for *Z. pacifica* persistence to inform seagrass restoration efforts.

**Applicant:** Southern California Coastal Water Research Project

**Proposal title:** Support of CMP Wetlands Evaluation through Monitoring and Assessment of Santa Monica Bay Estuaries

**Requested funding amount:** \$447,555

**Project summary:** Santa Monica Bay is a network of estuaries that provide a suite of functions and key aquatic habitats. Little information is available for the smaller, intermittently open systems. This project will fill this critical data gap and support wetland assessment under the Comprehensive Monitoring Program by evaluating habitat extent, condition/function, and stress at several small estuaries.

**Applicant:** Heal the Bay

**Proposal title:** Marine Debris Data Collection Program

**Requested funding amount:** \$250,000

**Project summary:** This project proposes to develop a more robust marine debris data collection system to better improve water quality and habitats of Santa Monica Bay and its watersheds. It will include historical data, a trash tracker app, and an online analysis tool. The upgraded database will provide annual trash reports and trash indices for locations including beaches and Ballona Creek.

**Total Grant Funds Requested:** \$4,046,722