



## **Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition**

San Mateo County (SMC) seeks State assistance for the implementation of a regionally significant coastal resource project to ensure safe public access and protect natural resources in the unincorporated South Coast of San Mateo County at the Tunitas Creek Beach working with the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST). SMC and POST are actively working with the State Coastal Conservancy (SCC) to accomplish shared goals of urgent community concern which also benefit State objectives.

### **Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition**

The Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition will enable the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to acquire approximately 57.5 acres of private coastal property on the southern side of Tunitas Creek at Tunitas Creek Beach, 12 miles south of Half Moon Bay in unincorporated San Mateo County. The purpose of the Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition is to secure the permanent protection of the Tunitas Creek Beach property for natural and cultural resource protection, open space, and public access. San Mateo County anticipates entering into an agreement with POST for: 1) interim management upon close of escrow no later than November 15, 2017, and 2) subsequent transfer of the property to the County for long-term management and operation of the Tunitas Creek Beach property as a new San Mateo County park.

The Tunitas Creek Beach property is currently privately owned, however, in the past three years an overwhelming increase in unregulated public access over an illegally graded trail through Tunitas Creek has resulted hundreds of people camping overnight and leaving human waste and garbage on the beach, incidents of vandalism on a house on the property, and severe damage to natural resources. Social media promotion of this remote beach as a destination for raves and “Burning Man” type recreation without local control has resulted in multiple injuries, a drowning, and significant health and safety concerns. California Fish and Wildlife staff and San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office staff confirm estimates as high as 1,500 people camping overnight on Tunitas Creek Beach. Severe in-creek damage to Steelhead habitat has occurred from individuals illegally chain sawing trees for access following a landslide in spring 2017 and others removing tree limbs for fire wood. In addition, in spite of CA Fish and Wildlife involvement, the site continues to be impacted by crab poaching.

POST entered into a purchase agreement with the willing seller of the Tunitas Creek Beach property in November 2016 and is actively performing due diligence in coordination with San Mateo County. POST will complete due diligence by September 30, 2017, and will close the acquisition on the property no later than November 15, 2017, contingent upon reaching agreement with the County for interim management and long-term ownership of the property. While other areas of the California coast are managed by California State Parks, State Parks is not in a position to accept any new lands for park management due to financial constraints. Based on the strong outpouring of community concern for the negative environmental and community impacts of unregulated public access at Tunitas Creek Beach, and the value of safe, environmentally appropriate public access to the residents of San Mateo County, the County is actively working with POST on the Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition and anticipates signing an agreement with POST to assume full responsibility for interim maintenance and management under POST ownership in the near-term, and ownership, maintenance, and operation of a County park in perpetuity.

The acquisition and initial management planning for the Tunitas Creek Beach project is estimated to be \$5 million. POST will contribute up to \$2 million for the acquisition and interim management planning for Tunitas Creek Beach. Based on discussions to date, State Coastal Conservancy staff anticipate proposing a \$1 million grant with existing bond funds to support the Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition at the September 28, 2017 Conservancy Board Meeting. With limited remaining State bond funds available, there is a strong need for additional State support for the Conservancy.

Upon successful acquisition and agreement for transfer from POST, SMC will pursue plans to design, permit, and develop a safe, environmentally responsible public access trail and related amenities including restrooms, parking, interpretive signage on cultural and natural resources, and a potential ranger station to provide 24-hour presence of County Parks’ staff. County ownership of the property will enable San Mateo County to enforce appropriate access and eliminate the overnight camping, illegal dumping, and human waste and environmental health impacts to water quality and special status species’ habitat. The County will fund operation of the park to ensure safe public access and recreation compatible with natural resource protection at Tunitas Creek Beach. A parcel to the north completes the approximately 1 mile of sandy beach at Tunitas Creek Beach, and the private property owner of the northern property is entering a Memorandum of Agreement with San Mateo County for continued cooperation on official access. Emergency vehicles currently have access over the northern property. Helicopter and emergency response at the beach have increased with the rave activities the past few years.

The open coast of San Mateo is protected as a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Sanctuary and improvements to water quality, salmonid habitat, sand dune, coastal riparian forest, and coastal marsh habitat will add to the regional significance of resource protection and compatible access along the South Coast of San Mateo. Resources of particular interest to be protected through the Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition include nearly a third of a mile of the Tunitas Creek riparian corridor with Steelhead habitat, 2/3 of a total 1 mile of sandy beach south of the creek, areas of beach dune habitat for federally threatened snowy plover, special status plants, and remarkable ocean views from coastal bluffs and the shoreline. The property offers potential for a future link in the California Coastal Trail and the Ohlone/Portola Heritage Trail, and for interpretation of the beach as the historical site of the Native Californian Indian/Cotegen Tribe’s Torose Village.

POST and SCC have completed numerous successful acquisitions in the Bay Area in which the long-term ownership and management responsibilities are met by local governments and special districts including San Mateo County Parks and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

### **San Mateo County Tunitas Creek Beach Acquisition**

<b>Proposed Revenue Sources</b>	<b>Amount</b>
State of California Request	\$2,000,000
State Coastal Conservancy (anticipated, existing funds)	\$1,000,000
Peninsula Open Space Trust	\$2,000,000
<b>TOTAL SOURCES</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Acquisition/Initial Management Planning	\$5,000,000
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$5,000,000</b>