

Refugio Beach Oil Spill Settlement: South Coast Shoreline Parks and Outdoor Recreation Grants Program Update and Proposed Project Summaries

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On 19 May 2015, an underground pipeline ruptured near Refugio State Beach in Santa Barbara, California, spilling over 123,000 gallons of crude oil. Much of the oil flowed down a ravine under Highway 101 and entered the Pacific Ocean. The incident impacted birds, marine mammals, fish, and other species; closed commercial and non-commercial fisheries; and affected recreational uses like camping and beach use. The spill also impacted other human use activities, including research, education, and outreach at the University of California's Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve. Following the spill, the natural resource Trustee agencies (State Trustees), including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), the California State Lands Commission (CSLC), the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR), the Regents of the University of California (UC Regents), as well as the Department of the Interior through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Department of Commerce through National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), conducted a Natural Resource Damage Assessment to quantify the injuries to natural resources. The Trustees executed a settlement with the parties responsible for the spill in October 2020.

As part of the settlement for natural resource damages, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) received more than \$1.7 million on behalf of the State Trustees to fund projects that compensate the public for loss of use and enjoyment of public beaches, parks, and other public or natural resources in areas downcoast of El Capitan State Beach to Long Beach in Los Angeles County. Consistent with the [Final Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan for the Refugio Beach Oil Spill](#), and in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement among NFWF and the State Trustees, NFWF is implementing the competitive South Coast Shoreline Parks and

Outdoor Recreation Grants Program with oversight by the State Trustees. NFWF is paid administrative fees for implementing the program.

A request for proposals was released on October 18, 2021, with the goal of allocating up to \$1.5 million to projects. Pre-proposals were submitted by local cities, counties, and other public and non-profit entities. The 8 pre-proposals best matching the grant program's funding priorities were selected for full proposal submission. Seven full proposals totaling over \$1.04 million were submitted, and the review of full proposals began on April 6, 2022.

Table 1 below provides a brief description of the 7 full proposals received and currently under consideration for funding through the South Coast Shoreline Parks and Outdoor Recreation Grants Program. While there are many deserving projects, funding the full amount requested will not be possible based on the funding limitations per locale category. Locale categories that received projects exceeding the amount available include: (1) Downcoast of El Capitan State Beach to Coal Oil Point, and (2) Santa Barbara County downcoast of Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve (Table 2). Projects are being evaluated for funding based on their geographic distribution, total funding request, and other evaluation criteria listed in the request for proposals and found in the [Final Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan for the Refugio Beach Oil Spill](#) (p.59). Comments on the proposed projects are welcome and should be submitted to Eliza Braendel at RBOSRFP@nfwf.org by July 25, 2022, in order to ensure consideration. The State Trustees will submit the list of projects selected for funding to the Refugio Beach Trustee Council, composed of representatives from USFWS, NOAA, CDFW, CDPR, CSLC, and UC Regents, for concurrence. Thereafter grant recipients will be notified.

Table 1. Proposed Project Summaries

Project Title	Organization	Project Description	Locale Category	Funds Requested
Bridge to Nature	Wilderness Youth Project	This project would support the implementation of the Bridge to Nature program, which connects low-income and marginalized students in Santa Barbara with nature and mentorship. This program would take 534 students on a series of 9 field trips to coastal zones and other natural destinations, providing outdoor education, mentorship, and an opportunity to explore.	Downcoast of El Capitan State Beach to Coal Oil Point Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve Santa Barbara County downcoast of Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve	\$100,001.11
MeWater Foundation Surf Education Camps	MeWater Foundation	This project would support the expansion of the MeWater Surf Camps to Santa Barbara County. This program would hold 30-40 Surf Education Camps over two years at various beaches in Santa Barbara County, providing local at-risk youth with access to natural and cultural resources, health and leadership programming, and recreation.	Downcoast of El Capitan State Beach to Coal Oil Point Santa Barbara County downcoast of Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve Ventura County	\$25,000
Ellwood Beach Public Access and Habitat	City of Goleta	This project would complete design, permitting, and the first	Downcoast of El Capitan State Beach	\$208,500

Project Title	Organization	Project Description	Locale Category	Funds Requested
Enhancement Project		phase of implementation to improve two public access points at Ellwood Beach and would restore 5 acres of the surrounding habitats to improve user-experience.	to Coal Oil Point	
Arroyo Burro Beach Park Interpretive Signs Project	Santa Barbara – CSD Parks Division	This project would develop and install nine interpretive signs along the boardwalk at Arroyo Burro Beach Park to educate visitors on the local wildlife and ecosystems of the watershed, estuary, and ocean.	Santa Barbara County downcoast of Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve	\$49,900
Goleta Beach Park Beachfront and Coastal Access Improvements	Santa Barbara – CSD Parks Division	This project would contribute to the renovation of the beachfront park area at Goleta Beach County Park including reinforcement of the beach sediment deposit accessway, reduction of beachfront lawn area, installation of recreational and educational components, water saving irrigation upgrade, and non-invasive carbon-sequestration plantings.	Santa Barbara County downcoast of Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve	\$514,500
Ventura Port District: Six Project Request	Ventura Port District	This project would support public access and safety enhancements at Ventura Harbor and nearby beaches, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchasing radio repeaters for Harbor 	Ventura County	\$93,301.02

Project Title	Organization	Project Description	Locale Category	Funds Requested
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patrol • Replacing 3 light poles at Harbor Cove Beach • Purchasing a mobile traffic sign • Purchasing a MobiChair Floating Wheelchair • Purchasing Aqua Creek Beach Access Chair with Rear Articulated Wheels • Purchasing Blue Jay Roll-up Walkway 		
Nick Gabaldón Day – Celebrating Diversity, Environmentalism, and Ocean Readiness	Heal the Bay	This funding would support the planning and execution of Nick Gabaldón Day activities in June 2023 and June 2024, including educational presentations by naturalists and historic preservationists, hands-on beach cleanups, and swimming/surfing lessons.	Los Angeles County	\$50,000

Table 2. Total Funds Requested in Full Proposals per Locale Category

Locale Category	Total Funds Requested in Full Proposals*	Target Allocation
Downcoast of El Capitan State Beach to Coal Oil Point	\$208,500-\$333,500	\$208,500
Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve	\$0-\$28,500	\$28,500
Santa Barbara County downcoast of Coal Oil Point Nature Reserve	\$564,800-\$689,400	\$514,500
Ventura County	\$93,300-\$118,300	\$298,500
Los Angeles County	\$50,000	\$450,000
Total Amount Requested in Full Proposals	\$1,041,200	\$1,500,000

*Categories showing ranges include projects identified as being within multiple locale categories. Values shown in table are rounded approximations of funding requests.