

1330 Broadway. 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, California 94612  
(510) 286-1015  
FAX (510) 286-0470

# Coastal Conservancy

Date: April 24, 2008

To: Conservancy Board

From: Sam/Tim Duff

Re: Response to public comment received at the Conservancy board meeting 1/17/08 regarding the East Sweet Springs acquisition

At the Conservancy board meeting held 1/17/08 in Avila Beach, public comment was received by two members of the public with concerns regarding the item on the agenda titled the "East Sweet Springs Acquisition" located along the Morro Bay shoreline in San Luis Obispo County. The board approved the proposed grant to the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for the project, and requested staff to provide a response to the public comment on the project.

**1) Public comment was received expressing concern with past MCAS performance managing the existing Sweet Springs Marsh Preserve, and a potential lack of capacity and funding to manage the additional East Sweet Springs property.**

## **Response:**

The 8-acre East Sweet Springs property is located adjacent to the Sweet Springs Marsh Preserve, a 24-acre property the State Department of Fish and Game (DFG) acquired in 1990 with Conservancy funding support. DFG contracted with MCAS to prepare a management plan for the site and to build trails, a boardwalk with foot bridges, fences, and viewing platforms using staff of the California Conservation Corps. MCAS also began thinning some of the eucalyptus trees and reintroducing native vegetation on the site. In 1991 the Conservancy formally approved the transfer of the property from DFG to MCAS.

MCAS is currently in the process of revising their Sweet Springs Marsh Resource Enhancement and Access Management Plan to include the adjacent East Sweet Springs property. Surveys will be done to determine existing geology and hydrology conditions, vegetation, wildlife, cultural resources, and public access. Based on the survey findings, MCAS will update the plan to include resource management zones and criteria, specific resource enhancement recommendations, and an access management plan consistent with resource protection. In addition to the \$100,000 in Conservancy funds awarded for improvements and management of the East Sweet Springs and Binscarth sites, MCAS manages a \$60,000 endowment for the long-

term maintenance of the Preserve. MCAS also intends to apply for other land restoration grants. See the attached MCAS work plans and budgets for the proposed use of the Conservancy management and restoration funds.

**2) Public comment was received expressing concern with lack of bathroom facilities at the existing Sweet Springs Marsh Preserve.**

**Response:**

The Sweet Springs Marsh Resource Enhancement and Access Management Plan previously prepared with Conservancy funds outlines goals and objectives for the Preserve, including include minimal disturbance to the site. MCAS's current policy recommends that other than a kiosk, boardwalk, interpretive signs, and viewing platform, no other structures are allowed on the site.

Although there are no bathrooms on or in the vicinity of the Preserve, prior to the Conservancy board meeting MCAS had not received any complaints regarding lack of such facilities on this property. The one sanitation issue that did arise was in regards to people not picking up after their dogs. MCAS remedied this situation by providing mutt mitts and a disposal can at the entrance to the property. In the update to the management plan, MCAS will evaluate opportunities and constraints associated with providing a bathroom on the Preserve.

**3) Public comment was received expressing concern with inadequate ADA-compliant access facilities at the Preserve.**

**Response:**

When updating the management plan, MCAS will include recommendations for upgrading the site to be fully ADA compliant.



