

February 21, 2023

Honorable Governor Newsom  
1021 O Street, Suite 9000  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Anthony Rendon  
State Capitol Room 219  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Phil Ting  
1021 O Street, Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Toni Atkins  
1021 O Street, Suite 8518  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Nancy Skinner  
1020 N Street, Room 502  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Josh Becker  
1021 O Street, Suite 7250  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Steve Bennett  
1021 O Street, Suite 4710  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: OPPOSE proposed budget cut to State Coastal Conservancy *Explore the Coast* program**

Dear Governor Newsom and Honorable Legislative Budget Committee Chairs,

As leaders of the undersigned organizations, we are dedicated to protecting and restoring California's environment, and to ensuring that all Californians share equitably in the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from it. From this basis, we write to respectfully and adamantly urge you to oppose and reverse the \$2.6 million budget cut to the State Coastal Conservancy's *Explore the Coast* (ETC) grant proposed by the Newsom administration in the January FY 2023-24 budget proposal.

The goal of ETC, [according](#) to the Coastal Conservancy, is "to provide coastal experiences for people and communities who face challenges to accessing or enjoying the coast." Since 2013, the Conservancy has awarded over \$18.2 million in 296 separate *Explore the Coast* grants to nonprofit organizations, federally recognized tribes, and public agencies that deliver on that vital mission. Through these grants, tens of thousands of Californians-- including many from vulnerable and underresourced communities-- have been able to experience the coast, often for the first time.

Eliminating these funds from this successful, broad-reaching program would have an immediate, significant, and harmful impact on members of the vulnerable communities that the Conservancy's program focuses on. Specifically, ETC's "priority communities" include lower-income individuals and households, people with disabilities, people of color, immigrant communities, and foster youth, among others. More than 60 percent of ETC's grantmaking supports initiatives that bring and connect these people to the California coast. These are the same communities that have long been marginalized and systematically excluded from accessing, enjoying, and benefiting from the California coast, including the Bay shoreline, our state's most iconic and beloved publicly owned natural feature.

In other words, ETC grants are a critical force in a long-neglected need to bring equity to California's great outdoors, and uphold state law and the state constitution that enshrine public access to the California coast. Furthermore, this extraordinary program aligns with Governor Newsom's [Outdoors for All initiative](#), which asserts a goal of "equitably expanding outdoor access to all Californians through focused investments in open space infrastructure, outdoor programming, and improvements to state systems."

Unilaterally cutting already appropriated funds that directly advance these critical goal makes little sense, especially since the amount in question, \$2.6 million, represents approximately 0.01 percent of the state’s projected \$22.5 billion revenue shortfall.

California’s non-profits, Tribes, and other partners need reliable, sustained funding to connect all its people to nature and eliminate inequitable and racist barriers to the outdoors. Cutting ETC appropriations will have a negligible impact on the state budget outlook, but directly harm the state’s champions for outdoor equity and justice, and the communities they serve.

California’s people depend on your actions to protect nature and ensure all benefit from it. Please reconsider and reverse the Governor’s proposal to cut ETC program funding in the FY 2023-24 budget, and instead, commit to sustained appropriations for it, so that all California’s children, households, and communities can share in the joy and the physical and mental health benefits of connecting to the coast.

Thank you for your attention. We look forward to additional conversation with you and your staffs on this issue, and to providing any additional information on it that you may need.

Sincerely,



Laura Walsh  
California Policy Manager  
Surfrider Foundation



Katie Hawkins  
California Program Manager  
Outdoor Alliance



Mackenzie Sandy  
Director of Philanthropy  
Ocean Discovery Institute



Lisa Gilfillan  
Ocean Conservation Manager  
WILD COAST



Erin Wooley  
Policy Advocate  
Sierra Club California



Victoria Rome  
CA Government Affairs  
Director  
Natural Resource Defense  
Council



Annelisa Ehret Moe  
Water Quality Scientist  
Heal the Bay



Noorjahan Akbar  
Director of Communications  
and Advocacy  
Justice Outside



Karla Garibay Garcia  
Sr. Conservation Manager  
Azul



Ashley Eagle-Gibbs  
Legal and Policy Director  
Environmental Action  
Committee of West Marin



Amy Ricard  
 Policy Advocate  
 Sonoma County Ag + Open  
 Space



Sean Bothwell  
 Executive Director  
 California Coastkeeper  
 Alliance



Amy Wolfrum  
 Senior Manager, California  
 Ocean Policy  
 Monterey Bay Aquarium



Stephanie Bastianon  
 Executive Director  
 Friends of the Petaluma River



Andy Dosev  
 Chair, Ventura Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Allison Webster  
 Chair, Santa Cruz Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Jessie Misha  
 Chair, Humboldt Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Jim Miers  
 Chair, San Luis Obispo  
 Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Mary Simun  
 Co-chair, South Bay Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Mitch Silverstein  
 Chair, San Diego Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Denise Erkeneff  
 Chair, South Orange County  
 Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Newara Brosnan-Faltas  
 Chapter Manager  
 Los Angeles Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Kimberly Williams  
 San Mateo County Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Nina Atkind  
 Chair, San Francisco Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation



Richard Busch  
 Chair, North Orange County  
 Chapter  
 Surfrider Foundation

Cc:

Honorable Damon Connolly  
 Honorable Bill Essayli  
 Honorable Laura Friedman

Honorable Eduardo Garcia  
 Honorable Jim Patterson  
 Honorable Luz Rivas