



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Scott Brodhun 707 778-4380
Susan Starbird 707 778 7277

CITY RECEIVES GRANT FOR PETALUMA RIVER ACCESS PLANNING

The City of Petaluma has been awarded a technical assistance grant from the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program to prepare an implementation and funding strategy for river trail improvements between the Turning Basin and the Petaluma Marina. The effort will guide design and development of river related amenities identified in city plans, including a pedestrian and bicycle path, water access points, a river heritage center, a public boathouse, and other river related features.

The RTCA program provides the expertise and time of a National Park Service outdoor recreation planner to work with community members and other stakeholders to understand the challenges and opportunities for enhanced Petaluma River access. No funding is included. Upon completion of the project the community will have a tactical plan for completing the river trail and access system.

The City's Parks and Recreation Department made the application with help from the Healthy Community Consortium, the Petaluma Visitor Program, and the Petaluma Small Craft Center Coalition. "The community's been clear in its desire to enhance access and enjoyment of the natural and recreational resource in our midst," said Parks director Scott Brodhun. "This plan will help us identify public and sources of funding for various river access amenities and will help to develop a logical and sequential plan for project implementation."

Kayaker and volunteer Susan Starbird, who assisted the city in its application, expressed optimism that the grant would accelerate realization of planned-for recreational features along the waterfront. "With this grant the community's long-held vision for river-oriented recreation will take a leap closer to reality," she said. "Having this plan will help fill in the missing links in what will most certainly be one of Petaluma's most significant public assets."

Work on the plan will begin this winter. Persons wanting information can contact the Parks and Recreation Department at 707/778-4380 or volunteer project coordinator Susan Starbird at 707/778-7277. For further information about the NPS and its community assistance programs contact Barbara Rice, NPS, RTCA Program Manager at 510-817-1449.

FACTS ABOUT THE RTCA GRANT

BACKGROUND: City of Petaluma planning documents show a waterfront pedestrian/bike trail along the river, with several access points for launching a small nonmotorized boat, fishing, or just admiring the view. (Parts of this trail already exist around the Turning Basin, Steamer Landing Park, and the McNear neighborhood.) The plans rely on redevelopment of waterfront properties to fund and construct the trail and water access features. A group of citizens and stakeholders agreed that a Water Access Implementation and Funding Strategy could help accelerate completion of this tremendous community asset. The City of Petaluma applied for National Park Service assistance to help develop the Strategy, and the grant was approved in October 2008.

HOW WOULD IT HAPPEN? The National Park Service's Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance program serves communities wishing to develop water trails, riverfront parkways, and other water access amenities. *It is not a cash grant;* only staff assistance is given to assist in a process involving local stakeholder and citizen collaboration. The purpose of the grant is to develop an Implementation and Funding Strategy for the community's pre-approved plans, as well as a suggested sequence for installation or construction of improvements. These improvements may include planned elements such as pedestrian and bike paths; a public boathouse; interpretive signage; wildlife habitat improvements; public bathrooms; overlooks and fishing piers; boardwalks, ramps, steps to the water or low docks; a maritime heritage center; and other amenities.

WHO APPLIED? The City of Petaluma's Parks and Recreation Department in partnership with the Petaluma Small Craft Center Coalition, the Healthy Community Consortium, and the Petaluma Visitor Program.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE? Familiarize yourself with the water access features of Petaluma's General Plan 2025, Petaluma's 1996 River Access and Enhancement Plan, and the activities of the Petaluma Small Craft Center Coalition (all are on the web); and get on the mailing list at PSC3.org.

CONTACT: Parks and Recreation director Scott Brodhun 707 778-4380 or project coordinator Susan Starbird at paddler@susanstarbird.com or 707 778 7277.