

Project/Event Title: Trinidad Festival of the Sea
Hosted by Trinidad Coastal Land Trust (TCLT)

Festival Dates: Friday October 23 - Sunday Oct 25th

Amount of Funding Requested \$30,000

What is the Return on Investment?

- HLA Investment: \$35,000
- Projected Room Nights: 250
- Average Daily Rate (ADR): \$126.50
- Direct Lodging Revenue: $250 \times \$126.50 = \$31,625$

Describe how overnight bookings are tied to the event through promotions with lodging partners, packages, extended stays, and explain how tourist participation will be measured.

The **Humboldt Festival of the Sea** is designed to increase overnight visitation during Humboldt County's shoulder season through a three-day format: Friday evening welcome reception, a full Saturday of educational programs and guided coastal adventures, and Sunday guided experiences including the Sea Birding Exploration. This structure is built to convert single-day interest into two- and three-night stays.

Working with lodging providers throughout western Humboldt County, TCLT will promote overnight stays through coordinated marketing, visitor information, and lodging packages that encourage multi-night visits.

Participating lodging partners will promote the festival through their websites, reservation confirmations, guest communications, and social media. Festival packages may include discounted multi-night stays, welcome information, dining promotions, and priority registration for guided experiences.

Tourism impacts will be measured through participant registration, ZIP code analysis, lodging partner surveys, ticket sales for guided programs, attendance counts, website analytics, social media engagement, and post-event visitor surveys. Voluntary lodging information collected during registration will help quantify overnight stays, visitor spending, and length of stay, and will establish the baseline data described in the Projected Room Nights section below.

Seasonal Impact

Explain how the project increases tourism during shoulder/off-season months (September–June) or fills a gap in the local calendar.

The Festival of the Sea is scheduled for late October, squarely in Humboldt County's shoulder season, to generate visitation after the peak summer months. By attracting overnight visitors during a traditionally slower period, the festival will support local lodging providers, restaurants, retailers, outfitters, and other tourism-related businesses while extending the economic benefit of the visitor season.

Unlike traditional entertainment-first festivals, the Festival of the Sea offers an immersive weekend centered on coastal exploration, environmental education, outdoor recreation, arts, culture, and stewardship: guided hikes, tidepool exploration, whale and wildlife viewing, seaweed foraging, live music, local food, and the **North Coast's first Adaptive Sea Kayak Exploration**.

The festival also fills a specific gap in the county's event calendar: while Humboldt hosts many strong community events, none currently focus exclusively on the North Coast's combination of marine ecology, wildlife, conservation, equitable coastal access, and maritime heritage. Rather than competing with existing events, the festival complements them.

Supported by partnerships with the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, Visit Humboldt, area Chambers of Commerce, local businesses, conservation organizations, Tribal partners, and regional tourism agencies, the goal is for the Festival of the Sea to become a recurring fixture in the county's fall calendar.

Feasibility & Track Record

Demonstrate your capacity to deliver on the proposal. Please include key staff/partners, volunteer resources, relevant experience, and past successes.

The Trinidad Coastal Land Trust (TCLT) has more than 20 years of experience protecting coastal lands, expanding public access, restoring habitat, and delivering community stewardship and education programs throughout the Trinidad region. As the lead organization, TCLT provides project management, fiscal oversight, volunteer coordination, partner engagement, permitting, communications, and event logistics.

The festival is led by Executive Director Dave Feral, whose background includes developing regional partnerships, managing complex grants, coordinating multi-agency projects, organizing public events, and leading volunteer-based conservation initiatives.

He is supported by TCLT staff, the Board of Directors, and a growing planning committee of educators, scientists, recreation professionals, business leaders, artists, and community volunteers.

Confirmed and developing partners include Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC), Cal Poly Humboldt Outdoor Adventures, Friends of the Dunes, the Humboldt Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, area Chambers of Commerce, Visit Humboldt, lodging providers, and numerous local businesses and conservation organizations; together providing expertise in outdoor recreation, accessibility, environmental education, destination marketing, volunteer recruitment, and visitor engagement.

Marketing is led by Lynette Nutter of A Nutter Production, a Humboldt-based marketing and video production agency, with both deep local roots and national account experience. Locally, Nutter has worked on campaigns for Cal Poly Humboldt and many local businesses. Nationally, she has produced marketing content for organizations including Boeing, Tribal Health, and the Detroit Institute of Music Education. Portfolio: anutterproduction.com.

Volunteer engagement is a core strength: TCLT has a long history of mobilizing volunteers for habitat restoration, trail stewardship, beach cleanups, environmental education, and public outreach. Festival volunteers will support visitor services, activity registration, information booths, logistics, parking, guided programs, and event operations, while partner organizations recruit additional volunteers through their own membership networks.

Innovation & Uniqueness:

What makes this proposal new, significantly expanded, or uniquely compelling as a destination draw?

The Humboldt Festival of the Sea is the first event on California's North Coast built to integrate coastal conservation, accessible outdoor recreation, environmental education, and destination tourism into one coordinated visitor experience. A defining feature is the launch of the **North Coast's first Adaptive Sea Kayak Exploration**, developed with Environmental Traveling Companions (ETC) and Cal Poly Humboldt Outdoor Adventures - expanding coastal access for people with mobility limitations and positioning Humboldt County as a leader in inclusive outdoor recreation.

The festival's collaborative structure - conservation organizations, educational institutions, tourism organizations, local businesses, artists, scientists, and recreation

providers working together - delivers programming no single organization could produce alone, which also expands the event's combined marketing reach. The festival is also designed to scale: while the inaugural event is centered in Trinidad, future years can incorporate additional coastal communities, public lands, and conservation organizations, encouraging repeat visitation as new experiences are added.

Success & Sustainability:

How will you define success with your project and ensure sustainability?

Success will be evaluated against tourism impact, visitor engagement, community participation, and organizational growth. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) include:

- Total festival attendance and participation in guided experiences.
- Number of overnight visitors and estimated room nights generated.
- Visitor origin (ZIP code analysis) to measure regional and out-of-county travel.
- Lodging occupancy trends and feedback from participating lodging partners.
- Registrations for guided programs and premium experiences.
- Visitor satisfaction and likelihood of returning.
- Website traffic, online registrations, and social media engagement.
- Media coverage and earned media impressions.
- Growth in TCLT memberships, volunteers, sponsors, and community partners.
- Economic feedback from lodging providers, restaurants, retailers, and outfitters.

On sustainability: HLA's investment functions as seed funding for the inaugural year. TCLT is contributing significant in-kind 160 work hours of capacity toward this launch - staff project management time, its existing volunteer base, and coordinated promotion through partner organizations' own marketing channels. HLA's \$30,000 is intended to fund the direct regional marketing and visitor-facing costs that TCLT's existing capacity does not otherwise cover.

Beyond year one, the festival is intended to become financially self-supporting within three to five years through corporate and business sponsorships, lodging/tourism partnerships, vendor and exhibitor fees, registration fees for premium experiences, merchandise sales, individual donations, and grants supporting environmental education, recreation access, and conservation.

Requested Amount & Use of Funds:

TCLT respectfully requests \$30,000 from the Humboldt Lodging Alliance to fund the inaugural Trinidad Festival of the Sea, covering event production and regional marketing costs as detailed in the attached budget sheet and marketing plan.

Risk & Contingency:

Outdoor coastal programming in late October carries weather risk - Pacific storm systems are common on the North Coast by this point in the season.

TCLT will designate rain/wind contingency plans for guided outdoor programs, with the Community Hub at Trinidad City Hall, the Cal Poly Telonicher Marine Lab, and TCLT coastal learning center are available as indoor fallback for presentations and exhibits.

Room Night Strategy

Outline the concrete tactics you will use to convert interest into overnight stays (target markets, marketing channels, ticketing/registration data capture, lodging packages, digital campaigns).

Primary target markets are visitors within a 3-5 hour drive: Redding, Chico, Medford, Brookings, Crescent City, Southern Oregon, and the northern San Francisco Bay Area; weekend travelers seeking authentic coastal recreation, wildlife viewing, and immersive outdoor experiences during the shoulder season.

The regional campaign, led by Lynette Nutter, combines regional radio, digital advertising, social media, email marketing, tourism websites, earned media, and event listings, coordinated with Visit Humboldt, the Humboldt Lodging Alliance, the Trinidad, McKinleyville, Arcata, and Eureka Chambers of Commerce, conservation partners, and participating lodging providers.

Campaign phasing: an awareness phase beginning roughly 8 weeks before the event (regional digital and radio launch, earned media outreach), a conversion phase in the final 3 weeks (lodging package promotion, retargeting, Chamber/partner email pushes), and a final-week reminder phase (last-call social and radio spots).

Precedent:

Has this project or idea been successfully tried elsewhere? If yes, provide examples or references.

Yes. Coastal-themed festivals are a proven tourism driver elsewhere in California, and one comparable event has already run successfully in Humboldt County:

- California Seaweed Festival - its 5th annual event was held in Humboldt in 2024 and drew 1,200+ attendees, demonstrating that Humboldt can support a marine-ecology-themed event of this scale in its first local iteration. This is the closest available benchmark for the Festival of the Sea's own inaugural-year attendance target.
- Mendocino Coast Whale Festival - a long-running, month-long series of coastal whale-watching and community events on the North Coast; demonstrates sustained regional appetite for marine-wildlife tourism, though as an established multi-decade event it is a scale reference rather than a first-year comparison.
- Dana Point Festival of Whales - running since 1972, one of the longest-standing whale festivals in the country, drawing large crowds over its two-weekend run; illustrates the long-term ceiling for a well-established marine festival brand, not a Year 1 expectation.

The Festival of the Sea differentiates itself from all three by launching the North Coast's first Adaptive Sea Kayak Exploration and by being the first event on California's North Coast to integrate coastal conservation, accessible recreation, environmental education, and destination tourism into a single coordinated visitor experience.

Projected Room Nights:

Provide a clear, quantitative estimate of room nights your project will generate. Include totals, how calculated, expected occupancy impact within the jurisdiction, and timing of stays.

TCLT estimates the inaugural festival will generate approximately 250 room nights within Trinidad and western Humboldt County over the October 23–25, 2026 weekend, based on:

- 700–1,000 total attendees - an initial target informed by the California Seaweed Festival's 1,200+ turnout in its first Humboldt appearance in 2024; this should be treated as a working target rather than a validated model until registration data exists.

- 30% traveling from outside Humboldt County (210–300 visitors).
- 70% of out-of-county visitors require overnight accommodations (150–210 visitors).
- Average lodging party of 2 guests per room; average stay of 2.8 nights.
- Calculation: ~180 overnight visitors ÷ 2 guests/room = 90 occupied rooms × 2.8 nights ≈ 250 room nights.

Based on Humboldt County's 2025 fall shoulder-season average daily lodging rate of approximately **\$126.50**, 250 projected room nights would generate an estimated **\$31,625** in direct lodging revenue. Additional visitor spending on restaurants, retail, outfitters, fuel, and attractions would substantially increase the total economic impact, consistent with HLA's own reporting that visitors spent more than **\$470 million** in Humboldt County during 2024. Final projections can be refined using HLA's current Western Humboldt ADR and occupancy data.

Festival	Year	Location	Attendance (reported)
1st Annual	2020	Virtual (statewide livestream)	Not reported
2nd Annual	2021	Santa Barbara, CA	450+ in-person, 100+ virtual (California Seaweed Festival)
3rd Annual	2022	Tiburon, CA	500+ attendees (California Seaweed Festival)
4th Annual	2023	Waterfront Park, San Diego, CA	2,000+ attendees (California Seaweed Festival)
5th Annual	2024	Humboldt Bay Region (Samoa, Arcata, Eureka & Trinidad)	1,200+ attendees (California Seaweed Festival)

6th Annual 2025 Los Angeles, CA
(AltaSea/Cabrillo Marine
Aquarium & SeaFair events)

3,000+ attendees ([California Seaweed Festival](#))

This table reveals, these types of Sea Life events are growing and scalable. The greatest occupancy impact is expected within Trinidad's immediate lodging market (hotels, inns, vacation rentals, B&Bs), with overflow demand extending into McKinleyville, Arcata, and Eureka. Actual room nights will be measured through participant registration, ZIP code analysis, voluntary lodging information, visitor surveys, and lodging partner feedback - establishing a Year One baseline for future growth. Within three years, the goal is to exceed 500 annual room nights.

Conclusion:

Your investment directly furthers the Humboldt Lodging Alliance's core mission: reinvesting Tourism Business Improvement District revenue into programs that generate measurable overnight visitation and strengthen the county's shoulder-season lodging economy.

The Trinidad Festival of the Sea is a shoulder-season destination event designed to increase overnight visitation, generate room nights, and support local businesses through an authentic, immersive coastal experience. Built on TCLT's 20-year conservation track record, a strong regional partnership network, and a dedicated marketing campaign, the festival is designed to grow into an annual event with expanding attendance and economic impact. Humboldt Lodging Alliance's investment provides the seed funding needed to launch this initiative in its first year - establishing a measurable baseline that will guide both TCLT's future fundraising and HLA's own case for continued investment.