

March 13, 2015

San Rafael Parks and Recreation Commission
618 B St.
San Rafael, CA 94901

Attn: Carlene McCart, Director of Community Services

Re: Measure A Funding for Managing San Rafael Open Spaces

Dear Chairman Mihan and Members of the Commission:

The Marin Conservation League is asking you to consider our proposal to secure dedicated, significant, long-term funding under Measure A for the management of San Rafael's open space areas. San Rafael has more than a dozen open space areas totaling over 3800 acres, and they comprise a quarter of the city's total land area, according to the General Plan. That is almost a quarter of the open space area managed by the county.

These open space areas are highly varied. Some are large enough to attract people from all over the county, like Barbier Park. Others are small but appealing because of their location, views, or natural resources. Many have poor access, suffer from misuse by the homeless, and are heavily infested with broom and other invasive plants. They have one feature in common, however, and that is neglect. All suffer from underfunding and a lack of dedicated staffing and management programs. The consequence is potential liability to the city for fire hazards, homeless camping and other unsafe conditions.

Now that Measure A funding is available, we would like to see these open spaces managed as valuable contributors to the quality of life in the city. To do so, they must be made more inviting and accessible, protected from invasive plants and wildfire, and restored to their natural beauty and biological diversity.

To address these goals, we propose that a portion of the city's Measure A funding be dedicated to the management of its open spaces. We understand that the city expects to receive approximately \$400,000 in Measure A funding for Fiscal Year 2015-16. One approach would be to allocate one-fourth (\$100,000) of that to open spaces and one quarter each to parks, community services, and fire prevention (e.g., fuel management). The need to manage invasive species and wildfire fuels, alone, is justification for dedicating funds to managing vulnerable open space areas. Dedicating funds to managing open spaces would ensure that these areas receive their fair share of Measure A funds.

The open space management programs MCL envisions could follow the models set by the county and the Marin Municipal Water District:

1. Assign employees or engage consultants to carry out needed studies and programs;
2. Inventory biological and recreational resources in each open space area;

3. Develop management plans to protect sensitive species, control invasive plants and manage hazardous fuel loads;
4. Develop management plans for specific needs such as signage, trails and access, and;
5. Develop volunteer work and education programs to increase citizen engagement with open space areas.

This is an ambitious undertaking that might require prioritizing certain open space areas over others as resources and other assets are better understood. It has the advantage, however, of developing a much-needed comprehensive approach to areas within the city that constitute an important part of San Rafael's legacy to present and future generations.

We look forward to presenting this proposal to you at your next meeting on March 19.

Sincerely yours,



Nona Dennis, Chair
Parks and Open Space Committee



Paul Minault
Chair, Invasive Plant Subcommittee

cc: MCL President Jon Elam and Board of Directors