

MARIN CONSERVATION LEAGUE

Climate Action Working Group: June 16, 2017

Mt. Tam Conference Room, 175 N. Redwood Blvd., San Rafael

Present: Doug Wilson, Pam Reaves, David Kunhardt, Roger Roberts, Sarah Loughran, Judy Teichman, Belle Cole, Susan Stompe, Bill Carney, Pat Nelson, Bob Miller, Kate Powers, Linda Novy, Judy Ford.

Doug called the meeting to order at 9:07.

Introductions

Agenda and Minutes

The agenda was revised to reflect the unavailability of the anticipated speaker. Discussion items were added re welcoming and mentoring new members, mayors' sign-on to climate agenda, Novato ballot measure re flooding and sea level rise, and a catch-up free discussion. The agenda was adopted by consensus.

Discussion

CCL Annual Conference

David reported on the Citizens Climate Lobby's annual conference that he attended. Among the highlights of the conference were meetings with members of Congress. CCL was organized in its approach to members. Teams are putting their reports in a database. There were representatives from almost all of the states, from Canada and Nigeria. There was a discussion re changing attitudes in the country. There has been 18% growth in the far right in this country; something has to be done.

Interesting developments include a good decision issued by a judge in Oregon. The decision allows a groundbreaking case to proceed to hearing in the 9th Circuit. Opposed by the Trump Administration, young people are suing for climate justice under the auspices of Our Children's Trust. The young plaintiffs want the court to declare that the government violated their constitutional rights by allowing the release of greenhouse gas emissions. They cite the public trust doctrine and the 5th Amendment. Their key objective is to force the government to phase out fossil fuels. Fossil fuel and chemical companies had joined the lawsuit on the government side, then withdrew from the case in order to avoid stating false facts on the record. Entities lined up on the plaintiff's side include NOAA scientists reporting on ocean impacts such as acidification. Also DOD; the Navy understands the risks.

The Climate Solutions Caucus is growing rapidly. The Caucus is a bipartisan group in the US House of Representatives which will explore policy options that address climate impacts and possible solutions. Twenty-two Republicans have signed on. The tipping point is 23.

There is a real power shift occurring via conversations. There are four CCL studies re projected outcomes of a carbon fee dividend. Ted Halstead concluded that when it passes, all parts of the political spectrum will celebrate. It is more important than the Clean Power Plan.

Roger: Jumping on the bandwagon.

Belle: Jared Huffman is a part of this. Earlier, he indicated it was the perfect tool, but it was too early. Now we can attribute it to him if Republicans are found to go in with him on the fee-dividend approach. Not everyone has to be for the fee dividend approach. A. Yes, that's right. Canada has different approaches in different provinces.

Sarah: Effectiveness depends on the amount of the tax; \$40/ton is the social cost of carbon. One approach is to start low (\$15) and go up \$10/year. The advantage to that approach is predictability. The other approach is to start high and advance irregularly. Both approaches end up at approximately \$80/ton, which will result in massive changes in behavior.

Doug read a supportive clause from the Board of Supervisors resolution. The Supervisors want to retain liability in the toolbox.

Roger: Fran Pavely raised a point at our Annual Dinner. When cap-and-trade was being discussed, oil companies came to the table and suggested increasing the tax on the end user, probably a regressive tax. How can we avoid that? A. That is on the CCL agenda. Under fee-and-dividend, the bottom majority of households will benefit. One issue is: should the dividend be taxed? If it is taxed, that will have more impact on high-income individuals—a progressive tax.

Bob: High-income households have the greatest carbon footprint.

Pam: Does everyone get a dividend, even if they do not use carbon? A. Yes. Place the tax as far upstream as possible. Make more money available for retail spending. Retailers are in favor of this.

Belle: This is separate from the cap-and-trade approach. There are multiple bills on cap-and-trade. Help the governor to determine the highest priority to help re cap-and-trade. Cal FACT is supporting SB 775, which is a hybrid of cap-and-trade and fee-dividend. This offers more predictability, a collar on auction and a floor. It is progressive re environmental justice. Ninety percent of the money is dividended out.

Bill: What is the state impact? Re a Washington decision, could it preempt state systems? What ended up on the cutting room floor in the national context? All we get from Washington is a market-based approach. There are fossil fuel approaches on representatives to keep cap-and-trade. This muddies the waters re approaches that are at least as strong. A. There is state-level action in Oregon, Washington, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maryland, DC. There is a worry that they will lose business to neighboring states. States have limited ability to solve border issues. State programs should not be incompatible with a national level program. Some state programs do not encompass fossil fuel. Conversations with conservative Caucus members

indicate that they are looking for a program to jump into. They don't want to hurt the economy, be on the wrong side of history, or break up the party. There is movement on the right. There is also state forward momentum after Paris.

Pam: According to Pavely, people who are most affected by pollution don't care about retaining cap-and-trade, because this approach allows the polluting facilities in their neighborhoods to keep emitting for a long time. A. A tax on carbon will force substitution. Under cap-and-trade, polluters can still emit. The environmental justice community walked away from cap-and-trade.

Bill: There are revisions pending to cap-and-trade that will address social justice via regulation. We could move forward in a hybrid fashion.

Doug: The Sierra Club is pushing social equity.

David: Halstead is not getting rid of all regulations.

Bob: The Borenstein blog at UC Berkeley and the Haas Institute separate GHGs and local pollutants. These are two separate issues requiring two approaches.

Roger: Is there a MCL position? A (Doug). No. Roger: Why wait? A. We are working on stating broad principles.

Belle: In about a week, we will have something to look at from the governor.

Pam: Are California Republicans on board? A. Yes. By this week, there will be 42, including Darrell Issa.

Judy Ford: On the conservative side, George Schultz uses the term "insurance policy." Most Republicans get it, but they are painted into a corner. Paint them a bridge.

David: BCL is the business community's sister organization to CCL. The insurance industry, for example, looks at maps and is aware of looming, catastrophic losses related to climate change.

Roger: Forces include a potential insurance industry collapse and long-term energy independence.

Pam: There was a PBS show describing carbon sequestration. Ironically, they were using carbon sequestration to enhance oil recovery in the name of "energy independence." The PR re carbon sequestration is not carried out to help with climate change.

Doug: There are abuses. Carbon pricing is a master game, a cure at the root. Price it at the source.

Pam: How do we address Roger's urgency? Doug: Pricing carbon is the most effective way possible. Pam: We should bring in someone from the environmental justice community.

Judy F.: Does MCL write policy resolutions? A. Yes. Judy F.: There could be a principle re what should be included in whatever gets passed.

Pam: What stood out in the discussion today? A. Judy F.: Environmental justice, disparity in impacts, equity.

Roger: Make it consistent with the MCL Mission Statement, a spinoff effect from the main position.

Pam: Environmental justice is a part of the Mission Statement. It affects people living in the natural environment. A. There is pushback historically if we go beyond the Mission Statement.

Judy F.: We need to work on this. It plays into an “us v. them” mindset. We need to look more broadly to achieve the goals in the Mission Statement.

Kate: The issue has come up, re environmental justice and other issues. The more inequality there is, the more jeopardy there will be worldwide. Look at that. Get basic tenets in a policy, then look at how a particular bill aligns with policy.

Doug: We have much work to do. Climate presents new challenges to MCL and an evolution of generalized policy. We have a foundation to work from in the next three months.

Susan: We have done things at a local level. We should be able to pull them together into a policy statement.

Pam: It’s time for a subcommittee. Judy Ford, Roger, Belle, Bill, Bob, Doug, with Susan assisting in a limited role.

Bob: We need to forge relationships with organizations outside of Marin. There is a precedent in state water issues. Climate is an international issue. We need to give thought to a change from a Marin-centric approach.

Roger: There is a conundrum in forming alliances with organizations. For example, we don’t always agree with the Sierra Club. Alliances must be issue-specific.

Bill: Start with items pending in Sacramento, the concern re terminology and putting a price on carbon. We don’t know what will come out of the Washington grinder. We’d rather keep and enhance the current pricing system.

Judy F.: This group is well versed. The policy should be transparent and simple, reflecting high-level ambitions. The actual measures will be compromises.

Doug: Develop a process for teasing out principles.

Pam: I will send out a Doodle for the subcommittee.

Kate: We should understand issues in terms of how they inform and further the MCL mission.

Reports

Novato Measures (Susan)

Susan discussed Novato measures that are related to the Climate Action Plan and BayWAVE vulnerability Assessment re sea level rise.

One measure concerns the Novato Creek watershed, which is pretty well preserved. On the November ballot, there will be a proposal to implement a \$47/year parcel tax for work on Novato Creek to keep it from flooding parcels. Flooding problems arise when there is a combination of high tides, heavy rain, and a south wind. Previous work has helped, but levee breaks caused recent flooding on Hwy. 37. Previously, the levee has been breached to relieve flooding downtown. Then it cost \$1 million to repair the levee. The current proposal would remove the levee on the north side of the creek and create some other levees. The effect would be to create a tidal marsh, keep water in an area naturally designed to be a marsh. This proposal is at the juncture of climate, land use, and resiliency. It will be considered at a Board of Supervisors meeting at the end of July.

Roger: There was additional work on the bridge in conjunction with the SMART project. A. This was done pretty well. It took five years to convince SMART that it was a chokepoint.

Roger: What happens to Hwy. 37? A. A group is forming to address long-term needs.

Kate: Who owns the area that keeps flooding?

Susan: This is a County ordinance re Flood Zone 9. The Supervisors must approve the plan. The tax will be imposed in the watershed area.

Bob: How does Bel Marin Keys complicate the problem? A. This is a bind point. We're not looking to get rid of the levee, but to reduce the sharp turn, keep water in the channel. Pump stations are a part of the project; the pump Big Bertha died. Audubon acquired some properties and did some restoration work, are working with the County to control the flow of water. The Land Use Committee heard a presentation by Laurie Williams of the Marin Department of Public Works. We will present the wording to the Climate Action Working Group. She wants more support from CAWG. After passage, we will need fine-tuning re how the money will be used.

Bill: Pumps use energy. We need a carbon balance. Creek restoration is also an issue.

Linda: Tules sequester much carbon. This was discussed in a Bay Nature article.

Doug: We should look at it from a climate/carbon perspective, and monitor as it's formulated.

Deep Green Report (Sarah)

San Rafael and Ross have gone “Deep Green.” Eight entities are now committed. The County is holding final budget hearings on Monday – Tuesday. A couple of people are needed to speak at the hearings; we don’t need to inundate them. The county has more than 100 special districts. A County vote does not necessarily cover all of them. Going forward, the Deep Green Initiative will continue to focus on the “big fish,” not individual residences. We want to keep the momentum going.

Tiburon will hold a hearing on July 5. Mill Valley has a two-year budget cycle. They won’t review year two until August-September, but they will review the issue.

Kate: Re covering 100% of County ops, the pump should be in the Deep Green Commitment. Municipal use of 2500 seems small in comparison to the entire county. The San Rafael City Council is a first step. Bio Marin and Autodesk are big users. Buy stock and go to meetings to influence their choices.

Sarah: It’s small, but a good place to start. MCE should do a better job of marketing vis-à-vis expansion, capitalize on the Deep Green campaign momentum.

Doug: Take the example of glyphosate. The real issue is with stores and individual homeowners overbuying pesticides. Make the county an example, and then address the behavior of individuals. This could be a template for Deep Green.

Judy F.: What are PG&E’s obligations to let people know about MCE. A. None (Doug and aSarah).

Sarah: MCE is reluctant re aggressive marketing. They have found people more receptive to a message coming from the government.

Pam: In Mary and Heather’s efforts to promote Deep Green to individuals, it became clear that this needs to be spoken of in terms of what individuals can do about climate change.

Doug: The pushback consists of about three vocal people. There is consensus. A jurisdiction can promote climate efforts. It’s not a touchy issue.

Sarah: Much time is required to convert a few people, special districts and businesses. We want to make a bigger impact.

Sustainable Organizations and Resilient Neighborhoods (Bill)

Tamra had a Marin Voice article in the IJ yesterday. Teams in Tiburon and Novato are still taking signups.

The San Rafael City Council meeting is available to watch on video. It is an exercise in democracy, with those advocating a revenue-neutral standard for switching to Deep Green counteracted by speakers from the public, and suggestions to go after businesses. Sustainable

San Rafael will focus on Deep Green; Sustainable Marin and others will present an umbrella idea at Lead on Climate. This sets the stage for going carbon neutral as governments.

Lead on Climate (Belle and Bill)

Lead on Climate is planning a new event: How to Reach Paris Without Stopping in Washington. They are in touch with Christiana Figueres of Mission 2020 and are acquiring speakers and expertise. Since Trump's actions in June, there has been enormous response in a "do it without him" vein. We need to address how to do it. Lead on Climate will be giving a talk with Bob at Seniors for Peace at The Redwoods. This talk will address budget cuts and Paris.

Doug: At the next meeting, we will have a presentation on BAAQMD GHG initiatives, electric vehicles, renewable energy battery storage, other ideas. We will have a speaker recommended by Katie Rice. We will follow up on carbon pricing at our August meeting.

Bill: We should get someone from 350.org at the same meeting with the Air Board speaker.

Doug: General news: Tesla is coming up with solar roofing tiles. Russia can hack into power grids. There will be a climate conference on October 23 directed toward businesses: Sustainable Enterprise.

Meeting adjourned 11:13.

Minutes: PN.